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Research article

Father Christmas: Magic and Technology

Daria Bylieva (✉)  and Anton Zamorev 

Peter the Great St.Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytechnicheskaya, 29,
St.Petersburg, 95251, Russia

bylieva_ds@spbstu.ru

Abstract

Father Christmas is the last generally accepted domain of belief in miracles in today's world. Focused on his two most important functions, which are to collect children's wishlists and deliver presents in a single night, Santa Claus almost from the very start has used not only magic tricks, but has also adopted technologies from people. These technologies (like snail mail or sleigh), however, now seem outdated. In this study we examined hundreds of examples (postcards, films, tales, toys, games, etc.) demonstrating the use of new technologies by Santa Claus, Papá Noel, or Ded Moroz. In the 20th century the image of the wizard is often used to showcase the latest technology. The new trend to attribute Father Christmas's magical powers both in popular culture and by scientists to the use of uber-complex technologies both real-life and science fiction (drones, tensor cores, ion-shield of charged particles, curvature of the space-time continuum, etc.) is an interesting feature of today's technology-driven society. The article suggests that the emergence of the need to deprive even Father Christmas of magic can be accounted for by a simplification of cultural views, a departure from symbolic/figurative interpretation and an emergence of “post-logical” thinking that is unable to derive meaning from a magical story.

Keywords: Santa Claus; Father Christmas; Magic; Technology; Wizard; Belief; Mass culture; Fairy-tale; Science

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Научная статья

Рождественский дед: Волшебство и технологии

Дарья Быльева (✉)  и Антон Заmoreв 

Санкт-Петербургский политехнический университет Петра Великого,
Политехническая, 29, 195251, Санкт-Петербург, Россия

bylieva_ds@spbstu.ru

Аннотация

Рождественский дед является последним островком веры в чудесное, оставшимся в современном мире. Практически изначально для выполнения двух главных функций: собрать письма с пожеланиями детей о новогодних подарках и раздать подарки детям в течение одной ночи, Санта Клаус не ограничивается магическими артефактами, а использует людские технологии, которые, однако, современному человеку кажутся устаревшими. В работе проанализировано несколько сотен примеров использования новых технологий Санта Клаусом/Пер Ноэлем/Дедом Морозом (в открытках, фильмах, сказках, игрушках, играх и т.п.). В XX веке образ волшебника часто используется для демонстрации новейших технологий, чтобы “блеснуть” новыми возможностями перед стариной. Новая тенденция объяснения магических способностей Рождественского Деда как в массовой культуре, так и учеными использованием суперсложных технологий, как реально существующих, так и научно-фантастических (дроны, тензорные ядра, ионный экран из заряженных частиц, искривление пространственно-временного континуума и т.п.) – интересная черта современной техногенной цивилизации. Является ли данная тенденция свидетельством возрастающей рациональности, или, наоборот, симптомом упадка логического мышления? В статье высказывается предположение, что потребность лишить магии даже Деда Мороза можно объяснить упрощением культурных представлений, уходом от символически-образной интерпретации и формированием постлогического мышления, теряющего способность извлекать смысл сказочного сюжета.

Ключевые слова: Санта Клаус; Дед Мороз; Магия; Технологии; Волшебник; Вера; Массовая культура; Сказка; Наука

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INTRODUCTION

The character of Father Christmas or Father Frost is one of the most significant mythical figures in the modern world. As early as 1959, J. Shlien suggested that the American Santa Claus may be the most sacred folk hero after Christ. Russian Ded Moroz (Father Frost) is a part of just New Year's holiday celebration and therefore can easily enter homes of people of any religion or none. But even for those who associate Father Frost with Christmas, he remains a generally accepted secular symbol of the festive season. In this age of technology, to believe in him is one of the few universally allowed forms of belief. In fact, it can hardly be called “belief” in the full sense of the word. Rather, it is a sort of indulgent “permission to believe” given to the younger ones. Still, many authors say that there are great similarities between belief in Santa Claus and belief in God (Larivée, Sénéchal, & Baril, 2010; McGowan, 2007; Verba, 1996).

Given all the effort and investment put into this project, it seems that the preservation of this last remaining tiny piece of belief *in miracles* is somehow important. And it cannot be down to just commercial pressures alone, although these do play a significant role and are seen by many as the opposite of spiritual values. Following Belk's (1987) lead, Batinga et al. (2017) refer to Santa Claus as the “god of materialism” (p. 564), if for no other reason than Christmas spending accounting for around a third of the annual retail turnover in many Western economies (Hancock & Rehn, 2011, p. 738). However, the boom of Christmas season consumption alone is not enough to justify the existence of the Winter Wizard. For some reason, people wish to keep children's belief in miracles intact, although some authors tend to place a greater focus on the development of disbelief in Santa Claus as a “rite of passage” (Breen, 2004; Dushechkina, 2001) or transition from ignorance to scepticism (Lévi-Strauss, 1993).

Although the origins of the winter gift-bringer figure vary across nations, today's Santa Claus (Ded Moroz, Papá Noel) is quite an independent character enjoying integration in people's lives to as high a degree as conceivably possible for a magical creature in the age of technology. During the festive season, you cannot avoid coming into contact with this famous character, be it at children's centres, theatres, shops, in the street – or just on television and online (at least when exposed to advertising).

MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY

Magic and technology can be thought of as alternative ways of achieving complicated goals. To the uninitiated, there is no difference between the two at all. Just like the magic apple from the Russian fairy tale that rolled on the saucer enabling the owner to see what was going on in far off lands, modern web cameras, television, etc. can be used to the same effect. Indeed, why would a girl from the tale need all these gadgets, if her apple works just as well?

Father Christmas is not only the most well-known magical character. He is also the one who most actively interacts with people rather than being just a tokenistic element of *holiday celebration*. Significantly, almost from the very start, he adopts certain technologies that are useful to people and therefore does not confine himself only to magic tricks to solve his complicated communication and logistics tasks. Technology



helps Father Christmas perform two functions which are the most important (as they involve direct communication with children): collect children's wishlists and deliver all their presents in just one night.

However, in this age of accelerating life-changing breakthroughs, technologies like snail mail or sleigh look archaic. Theoretically, as the embodiment of traditions, Father Christmas could just as well stay old-fashioned, but our study shows that technology is aggressively imposed on him. We examined about one thousand pieces of items and materials (postcards, films, tales, toys, games, etc.) demonstrating the use of new technologies by Santa Claus, Ded Moroz and other national Christmas characters.

Apart from the key functions, technology helps Father Christmas carry out supplementary duties: reveal the well behaved and naughty children (tracking cameras, high-tech crystal balls, etc.), manufacture gifts (production facilities with higher or lower technological capacity), protect his place of residence from detection. There are also a number of optional technologies such as an air-filled dome to breathe underwater and a wind tunnel (“The Secret World of Santa Claus-1”, 1998), automated doors (“The Santa Clause”, 2006), machine voice translation from reindeer language (“Saving Santa”, 2013), night vision goggles to navigate the house (“Arthur Christmas”, 2011) as well as all sorts of household gadgets commonly used by people (a television, headphones, an electric guitar, a phone, a laptop, etc.).

Furthermore, Father Christmas must keep abreast of modern technological developments as many of them are required for the presents demanded by children. Even in a late-nineteenth century illustration we can see a bicycle among the toys that Saint Nicholas is about to give to children (Perrot, 1994, p. 128).

We can also note a special Christmas mood created by an array of lights switching on as Santa trucks carrying soft-drink bottles drive past, as shown in iconic adverts (1995–2018) by the beverage company credited for popularizing a world-famous image of Santa Claus.

Technology in Communication with Children

Santa Claus's first task to collect children's letters is also the least supernatural of all (apart from the task of reading all those letters). Accordingly, technology which helps the Christmas character in this matter develops in line with the latest communication innovations in the human world.

In a 1889 drawing by Thomas Nast – the cartoonist who is remembered as the creator of a meticulously detailed image of the mythic figure – we see Santa Claus reading the letters which the children sent. However, mail is not the only possible way of delivering letters from kids – there are dozens of others, ranging from traditional Scandinavian snowball lanterns (structures made of tightly packed snowballs with a candle inside) to one of the latest Russian traditions of putting the letter into the freezer. Still, delivery by mail remains the most popular method.

In the 1950s, some children in France received letters signed by Père Noël. This was the personal initiative of postal clerks who had instruction to discard letters to an incorrect addressee, but scruples to do so. In 1962, a dedicated Santa's Secretariat of the French post office started responding to all letters to Father Christmas, no matter what



address was indicated on the envelope (De la Ville & Georget, 2015), and in Canada a similar service was created in 1974. Today, letters from the Winter Wizard can come not only in France and Canada, but also in Germany, Austria, Belarus, Finland, USA and other countries.

The telephone became a new means of communication with Father Christmas with the advent of the phone era. Thus, organisations emerged that would provide the phone number of the magical old man and employ switchboard operators or establish an appropriate automated answering service. In 1955, due to an error, an advertisement encouraging children to call Santa Claus included the phone number of U.S. Air Force Continental Air Defense Command (the ancestor of today's NORAD). Thus the annual NORAD tracking of Santa's sleigh originated (Faubert, 2005).

E-mail as a new communication tool was not lost upon Father Christmas as well. Unlike ordinary letters that can be sent to any address, the wrong address of an e-mail recipient can be spotted immediately. Today, e-mail correspondence complements rather than replaces handwritten letters. For example, in 2012 as many as 1,700,000 letters and 200,000 e-mail messages to Père Noël were received by the French team (De la Ville & Georget, 2015, p. 197).

At the beginning of the 21st century, as social media began to take over the world, most Christmas characters set up their own account. As a way of distinguishing themselves from fake profiles, winter wizards used a validated account. Soon after, technology went further and allowed children to use the benefits of video conferencing, so that now they can make a video-call to Father Christmas. The service is available on the market and featured in films such as “PAW Patrol” (2017).

Technology in Logistics

Father Christmas traditionally used animal-drawn transport. The Russian Ded Moroz journeys in a “troika,” or sleigh pulled by three horses running side by side. The American Santa Claus and the Finnish Joulupukki fly through the sky in a sleigh pulled by reindeer while the Norwegian Julenissen uses foxes instead. The French Père Noël, the Chinese Shengdan Laoren and the Uzbek Qorbobo ride a donkey whereas the Dutch Sinterklaas has a horse.

Unlike Santa's magic sleigh, Ded Moroz's “troika” was a common mode of transportation in Russia. And the Slavic hero often used other vehicles as well (for example skis, a car, a train, a motorbike, an aircraft, etc.) In Soviet-era cartoons Ded Moroz was regularly provided with a car and a snowman driver (“When They Light the New Year Trees” (1950), “Father Frost and the Grey Wolf” (1978)).

Some early-twentieth century postcards show Father Christmas sitting in a car (at the wheel or next to a driver) or driving a train, flying an airplane (fig. 1).



Figure 1. New Santa Claus transport (John Winson, 1913)

Soviet-era postcards portray the Russian equivalent of Father Christmas riding a sputnik or a nuclear-powered icebreaker. In the “Grandfather Frost and Summer” cartoon (1969) Ded Moroz embarks on a journey to find out what summer is, and in the process gets exposed to children's comfortable ways of lifewhere public transportation, refrigerators for ice-cream, and other technologies are widely used (fig. 2). Both summer and sputniks are apparently of no use to Ded Moroz, but such examples make it clear that people at that stage wished to demonstrate their inventions to the Winter Wizard in order to impress him by showcasing their technological capabilities.



Figure 2. Frame from the cartoon *Grandfather Frost and Summer* (1969)

The tradition of showcasing the latest innovations and offering them to Father Christmas is taken up by today's TV adverts. The magical character is most often engaged by vehicle producers (primarily car-makers, but also manufacturers of snowmobiles or off-road vehicles), airlines and telecommunication companies. Sometimes advertisers employ the image of Santa to promote gift ideas (for example, GameStop ran a TV commercial with Santa advertising its video games). The key message of 21st century



advertising is: “Santa Claus needs to change his look and lifestyle, as people are ready to offer him something better than he already has.” This idea is perfectly conveyed in the advert with the tagline: “Progress is rewriting your own story,” which shows the big man adopting a workout regime, shedding weight, taking on a modern look and getting a sports car as a gift (fig. 3, Audi Presents: New Santa, 2018).

Not only does the early 21st century invite Santa Claus to use aircrafts, helicopters, aerosledges, rocket engines, etc. and sophisticated built-in computer equipment, but it also envisages technologies that would help the Christmas hero accomplish his mission. What we are referring here to is not just a spate of cartoons and feature films that showcase all sorts of technology ranging from computer-controlled sleighs (“The Santa Clause”, 1994) and sleigh helicopters (“Santa’s Magic Crystal”, 2011), to superfast flying vessels for the delivery of presents (“Arthur Christmas”, 2011) and teleportation from chimney to chimney (“The Christmas Chronicles”, 2018). The trend is also evident in academic studies dealing with cutting-edge science.



Figure 3. Metamorphosis of Santa Claus
(commercial *Audi Presents: New Santa*, 2018)

ACCOUNTING FOR MAGIC IN TERMS OF TECHNOLOGY

As Gérald Bronner's survey has shown, in thirty percent of cases, the reason why children give up their belief in Père Noël is because they eventually realise that his acts go against physical laws (the old man cannot get around the whole earth in a single night, his sack and sleigh are too small to hold all toys, he is too fat to come down a chimney, etc.) (Bronner, 2004). We might therefore surmise that technical gimmickry of modern filmmakers is to make up for the lack of faith. However, some claim that such doubts are easily dismissed by children on grounds such as the use of a magical wand, availability of help, high speed, etc. (Larivée et al., 2010). Yet, the authors emphasize that even



“naïve” human cognitive mechanisms require that Père Noël as a “superhero” be bound by the laws of physics (Larivée et al., 2010, p. 439). Be that as it may, in today's age, it is not possible to get away with supernatural powers such as omnipresence or not being confined by time and space. As Mina Verba (1996) wrote, Père Noël dies due to “an excess of extraordinary abilities,” with new technologies only extending his agony.

Trend is also evident in academic studies dealing with cutting-edge science. In fact, scientists have been attempting to find Santa's most efficient present delivery route – or to solve what is known as Travelling Santa Problem (or TSP) – since the late 20th century. Vernon P. Templeman demonstrated that Santa Claus would have to travel faster than light, which is not feasible, and in any case fatal to any living being due to heating and centrifugal forces (Waller, 1991). Physicists Matthew Davies and Martin Slaughter refuted many of the claims made by Templeman and proposed a number of possible explanations of Santa's properties, including a model that views Santa as a waveform (Carroll, 2015). Another version of solving Santa's logistics problems is based on papers dealing with the latest scientific developments in various fields. For example, a hyper-fast gift distribution network powered by Amazon delivery drones and Hyperloops can solve the transportation problem, whereas to collect data about children's behaviour TPU devices can be used. The latter will transmit high-frequency sound waves to specific regions of the brain to control naughty behavior, and will transmit information to an Exabyte-capable data storage facility (Chang, 2013).

Norwegian astrophysicist Knut Jørgen and Røed Ødegaard contributed to the discussion by pointing out that Santa Claus obviously has equipped his sleigh with an ion-shield of charged particles, which makes him and his reindeers heat-resistant (as cited in (Westin & Skjetne, 2016). North Carolina State University's Dr. Silverberg posits that Santa uses his knowledge of the space/time continuum to form what the physicist calls “relativity clouds”. “Based on his advanced knowledge of the theory of relativity, Santa recognizes that time can be stretched like a rubber band, space can be squeezed like an orange and light can be bent,” Silverberg says. “Relativity clouds are controllable domains – rips in time – that allow him months to deliver presents while only a few minutes pass on Earth. The presents are truly delivered in a wink of an eye.” With a detailed route prepared and his list checked twice through the onboard computer on the technologically advanced sleigh, Santa is ready to deliver presents (Shipman, 2011). The tongue-in-cheek article quickly went viral and was translated into many languages, suggesting that the kind of explanation is highly demanded and relevant for today's readers. In other words, people now want to deprive Santa Claus of his magical essence and show that the latter is based on sophisticated, but still feasible technologies. However, in case of solving problems that lie beyond the reach of modern technologies, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the properties of Santa's gadgets are of magical or technical nature, for example, a gingerbread detector used to make sure there aren't any creatures stirring (“Prep & Landing: Operation: Secret Santa”, 2010). As Arthur C. Clarke's famous Third Law states, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”



Even though this scientific discussion is apparently of a joking nature, the very fact of its emergence is indicative, as no other era could have produced a desire to find such rational explanations for mythical happenings.

In Russia, fairy-tale characters experienced a period of persecution during Soviet times. Children's poet Korney Chukovsky recounts how, in 1929, he was reading “The Adventures of Baron Munchausen” aloud to a roomful of sick children in a convalescent home. But the supervising staff snatched the book out of his hand explaining that “books for Soviet children must not be fantasies, not fairy-tales, but only the kind that offer most authentic and realistic facts” and demanding that instead of “Gulliver's Travels”, “The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm” and “The Little Humpbacked Horse” he provide books about diesels and radio (Chukovskij, 1968, p. 115). Soviet educators claimed that it was necessary “to replace unrealistic, fantastic folktales with plain, truthful stories derived from real life and nature.” They pointed to an example set by a boy who, after hearing the poetic fairy-tale “The Magic Swan Geese” read to him by his mother, exposed her as a liar: “Nonsense, mother. Ovens cannot talk, apple trees cannot talk, and rivers cannot talk. The girl could not have taken cover in the river, she just drowned” (Ekskursii po gorodu so shkol'nikami 1 stupeni, 1926, p. 9). Following the Russian Revolution, Ded Moroz was prohibited until 1937 for being part of a religious cult. “Children are deceived into believing that presents are from Ded Moroz. Christmas tree is the point where children's religion emerges. Furthermore, dominant exploitative classes use the 'nice' tree and the 'kind hearted' Father Frost to turn the working population into humble and submissive servants of capital” (Materialy k antireligioznoj propagande, 1927).

Our current mass culture is more ingenious. Father Christmas may stay, but has to change and undergo a technological transformation in keeping with the times.

Santa has been around since the late 19th century and until recently has quite happily done without any scientific explanations, content with the use of magic. But today's people are desperate to provide the good old man with sophisticated technologies beyond the reach of humanity.

POST-LOGICAL THINKING

One may object that there is nothing wrong with seeking the truth and hating lies. People do not want to be fooled and therefore regard fairy-tales as a deception or a dream at best. Yes, they prefer to achieve this dream by purely scientific means. But what's wrong with that? Can the mere fact of traditional positivist hostility toward all things magical (from religious mythology to children's tales) be an argument against this stand?

Certainly not! In fact, if religious myths and fairy-tales made any claim for truth, we could rightly accuse them of lying. But the thing is that magic and underlying myths have nothing to do with truth or falsehood in scientific sense. It can be easily shown that magic is based on a specific worldview which does precede scientific knowledge, but is fundamentally different from the latter and is not to be judged by its standards.

In order to make sure of that, it will be recalled that there are two types of magic: “Homoeopathic magic is founded on the association of ideas by similarity ... assuming that things which resemble each other are the same: contagious magic ... assuming that



things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact” (Frazer, 1922, p. 12). It can readily be seen that both types of magic rely on the same principle of equating apparently unlike things and transferring properties (wholly or partly) from one object to another: “For example, when an Ojebway Indian desires to work evil on any one, he makes a little wooden image of his enemy and runs a needle into its head or heart (...) believing that (...) his foe will the same instant be seized with a sharp pain in the corresponding part of his body; but if he intends to kill the person outright, he burns or buries the puppet” (Frazer, 1922, p. 13).

Apparently the same principle underlies the myths that support magical practice: before proceeding to exactly understand an unknown object, any savage first tries to reason by analogy, i.e. to compare the unknown object to something familiar. For example, they attempt to explain an earthquake as “a dance of the Earth”, by analogy with their own bodies that shudder as they dance. Or they attribute the outward resemblance between the Sun and the Moon to the fact that the celestial objects are siblings, by analogy with family relationships of living organisms. Thus, the principle of transfers and analogies, which involves equating apparently unlike things, is the basis for any magical practice as well as any mythical theory – and therefore, for any children's fairy-tale as it combines both. That means that the very attempt to take fairy-tales literally is absurd. The language of a fairy-tale is, in Roland Barthes's words, “not expected to represent reality, but to signify it” (Barthes & Lavers, 1972).

Employing a convincing method to confirm our reasoning, we challenge any not-so-busy positivist to try to interpret literally (in line with the above scientific explanations of Santa's activities) the Lithuanian folk tale of Neringa, a kind-hearted girl who grew taller as she did good works. She grew and grew so quickly that soon she became a giantess. One day during a storm she put sinking ships into her apron and thus saved them from wreckage. Now how can the positivist explain this story using equations of relativistic mechanics? Even if science can explain the phenomenon of Neringa's growing, it can hardly relate the effect to the number of her good acts. It is even more difficult to explain how Neringa managed, without shrinking in height, to enter homes of ordinary people and not break ceilings with her head.

It is obvious that the author of the tale did not even think about such things. He was not concerned about all the inconsistencies, as he treated the giant size of the girl metaphorically rather than literally, i.e. understood it as a symbol of her big kind heart and the glory gained by good deeds. It is therefore clear that the two Greek terms for “word”-“mythos” (story) and “logos” (study)- actually mean two widely different types of language use, and these should not be confused, unless we want to destroy our cultural heritage by ludicrous interpretations:

1) The term “mythos” refers to figurative poetic language use, or the principle of analogy which implies comparing and likening, in whole or in part, apparently different things. This type of language use is basically not intended for literal interpretation.

2) The term “logos” refers to direct scientific language use, or the principle of identity which requires that we understand every word exactly in the sense it was initially meant and take each thing as it is.



One may object that figurative thinking is not possible without the direct one. This is, of course, true as with no direct meaning there would be no indirect meaning and no substitution of one thing for another based on correspondence or similarity. That's why mythical thinking is related to and intertwined with logical one in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish the two uses.

Luckily, or unluckily, even if science had the intention to fully get rid of the mythical way of thinking, it would not work out as the two types of thinking are interdependent. Not only cannot figurative thinking exist without the literal one, but also literal thinking cannot exist – and even does not emerge – without the figurative one. Not just because science itself also sometimes resorts to analogies when illustrating its theoretical points, but also because any abstract concept is created by comparing unlike things.

The fact is that any abstract concept, for example the concept of the number “three” per se, cannot possibly be conceptualized in a way other than by means of conventional signs (“3”, “III”, ...) or specific objects (counted by three). Whatever the case, what we perceive is not the concept itself, but rather a tangible sign which is conventionally understood to stand for the concept, *as if the sign actually were identical to the concept it signifies*. Therefore, the principle of the equation of apparently unequal things (in our case, a concept and a conventional sign) underpins not only mythical thinking, but also any form of thinking in general. As Leibniz puts it, we “never know, discover, or prove any truth without using words or other signs (...). Indeed, if characters were lacking, we would never distinctly know or reason about anything” (Leibniz, 1989, pp. 270–271). Science is unthinkable without signs/symbols, without abstract conceptualization.

A possible objection may be that the process has nothing to do with mythical things. Can we really compare a scientist who, in a deliberately conventional manner, identifies the sign and the concept it stands for – and an Indian who likens his foe to a wooden puppet? Certainly, any scientist is clear about the difference between the sign and the signified. Admittedly, an Indian also has a clue as to the difference between the doll representing a foe and the foe as the real person. However, the two approaches to understanding the differences are not the same:

1) The “logos” approach means a direct and exact language use which avoids identifying unlike things. Specifically, it requires a clear differentiation between direct and figurative language use whenever the latter is employed.

2) The “mythos” approach, on the other hand, is based on the principle of linking apparently unlike things, including the two types of language use, to the extent of totally eliminating any difference between them.

But it does not mean that one can draw a distinction between scientific and mythical thinking only within the scope of the former, i.e. *scientific* one, – and only provided that this scientific thinking, according to its own principle, develops a criterion which determines when words and images are to be interpreted literally and when metaphorically, because a different interpretation would lead to a logical or factual inconsistency.

People today are often surprisingly indifferent to inconsistencies and readily believe any nonsense, even when logic and facts do not support it (Levine, 2018). That's the point



where the most outrageous discovery is made: In truth, the modern longing for literal understanding of Father Christmas's activities is not an evidence of the growing rationality, but rather quite the contrary – a symptom of a decline in logical reasoning, i.e. the worst heritage of religious/magical thinking. It is not to say that human thinking in our post-modern, post-secular and post-truth society becomes religious, but it would be appropriate to describe it as *post-logical*.

CONCLUSION

Father Christmas as one of the few representations of the magical in today's world has a hard time surviving in this technology-driven society. Postcards, adverts, films and games are pushing him to use cutting-edge technology. The character has been coaxed into admiring human capabilities and changing his outdated ways for quite a while. However, what we see now is a new trend to regard Santa's magical powers as a result of uber-complex technologies that are not yet known to people. Not only is the trend evident in films of the last decade, but it is also described in writings of acclaimed scholars (even if jokingly). We make an assumption that the emergence of need to deprive even Father Christmas of magic can be accounted for by a simplification of thinking and a departure from symbolic/figurative interpretation. Further research comparing the understanding of Santa Claus and other characters by the children of the past and the present could examine the shrinking trends of magical beliefs more clearly.

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СВЕДЕНИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ / THE AUTHORS

Дарья Быльева, bylieva_ds@spbstu.ru
ORCID 0000-0002-7956-4647

Daria Bylieva, bylieva_ds@spbstu.ru
ORCID 0000-0002-7956-4647

Антон Заморев, azamorev49@gmail.com
ORCID 0000-0002-3925-488X

Anton Zamorev, azamorev49@gmail.com
ORCID 0000-0002-3925-488X

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