

**NININS 2020****International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****AUTHOR'S TALE OF REMIZOV AND TOLSTOY AS AN  
EXPRESSION OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

Varvara A. Golovko (a), Natalya V. Svitenko (b)\*, Larisa B. Martynenko (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Kuban State University, 149, Stavropolskaya str., Krasnodar, 350040, Russia

(b) Kuban State University, 149, Stavropolskaya str., Krasnodar, 350040, Russia, svitenko@list.ru

(c) Kuban State University, 149, Stavropolskaya str., Krasnodar, 350040, Russia)

**Abstract**

The article considers the reflection of national identity in the poetics of fairy-tale cycles of Remizov ("Posolon", "Towards the Sea-Ocean") and Tolstoy ("The Little Mermaid's Tales"). It analyzes the formation of folklorism of the writers, the development of their ideas about folk culture. Emphasis is placed on the writers' interest in Russian pagan myth and its transformations in the writers' work, in particular, the synthesis of pagan and Christian ideas of Remizov and an author's version of Tolstoy's solar myth. The national specifics of constructing the author's mythological picture of the world are revealed, it is shown how the mythological landscape created by the writers becomes a field of embodiment of a national idea. The role of numerous references to ancient Russian culture in the works of both writers is examined. Attention is also paid to the peculiarities of the biographies of Remizov and Tolstoy, which influenced the formation of their poetics, in particular, the proximity of both writers to the circle of symbolists, who set themselves the task of reconstructing the original folk picture of the world. The material and practical basis of the study were the works of researchers on Remizov's pieces of writing (Rozanov, Galchenko, Danilova) and Tolstoy's ones (Ivanov, Samodelova). As a result of the study, it is concluded that the ideas of searching for national identity became the basis of the poetic system of the fabulous prose of Remizov and Tolstoy, defining their architectonics, imagery, and ideological pathos.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Author's tale, folklore, mythological landscape, national identity, pagan myth

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

The beginning of the twentieth century in Russia was marked by an increasing interest in the national origins of Russian culture. A number of movements appeared that aimed at returning to the original purity of the folk worldview. In the mainstream of the search for the idea of national revival, there were many trends, from political to literary ones. Most clearly aesthetic importance of studying the origins of the national spirit was realized by the symbolists, who set themselves the task of restoring the original folk culture. These moods are characteristic of such authors as Balmont and Gorodetsky. Based on the discoveries of Russian folklorists, who believed that folk culture can be restored from artifacts left in traditions and rituals, symbolists created author's versions of the reconstruction of the ancient Russian myth (Rozanov, 2009). The results of their searches were taken into account by Remizov and Tolstoy, but their approach to the solution of this problem differed from their contemporaries – the goal of the writers was wider than conducting experiments with reconstruction as a final purpose. The task of Remizov and Tolstoy was to create a universal picture of the world by means of an author's fairy tale, based on a complex synthesis of folklore ideas and author's innovations. The creative searches of both authors had much in common – the most striking feature of the similarity of their poetics was an interest in the folk worldview, the proximity to which was determined by the biographies of both writers. From a game with the idea of restoring the original mythological picture of the world, the writers moved on to the super task – preserving the national spirit during the years of great historical upheavals and cultural shifts that threatened to destroy the uniqueness of Russian civilization. This motif has largely determined the poetics of the fabulous cycles of the writers – “Posolon” and “Towards the Sea-Ocean” by Remizov and “The Little Mermaid's Tales” by Tolstoy.

## 2. Problem Statement

The author's tale of Remizov and Tolstoy is largely based on the creative processing of elements of the folklore substrate, in which the values of the Russian people are reflected. The mythological cycles of both writers are based on the rich material of folk art – fairy tales, byvalschinas (urban legends), bailichkas (stories of Russian folklore about an allegedly true event involving a meeting with spirits), legends. Remizov and Tolstoy perceive folk art not only directly, but also through the prism of the discoveries of Russian folklorism. Also, in the texts of the writers there is a number of references to the works of ancient Russian literature. These elements are organically combined with implicitly present references to the writers' historical and cultural setting. These features make it possible to say that Remizov and Tolstoy create some kind of intertext, which is characterized by the diachronic combination of elements from different time layers of Russian culture. We believe that this peculiarity of the texts under consideration is connected with the authors' task of expressing national self-consciousness in its entirety, from antiquity to the writers' own epoch.

### **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the article is the specifics of the reflection of national identity in the fabulous prose of Remizov and Tolstoy. In accordance with the subject of the research, we pose the following questions:

- 3.1 How is national identity expressed in the fairy tales of Remizov and Tolstoy?
- 3.2 What are the similarities and differences of the authors' approaches to the disclosure of the theme of national identity in the mythological prose of Remizov and Tolstoy?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this work is to consider the poetics of the author's tale of Tolstoy and Remizov as a reflection of national identity. In accordance with this goal, it is necessary to highlight a number of tasks. To understand the poetics of the writers, it is important to identify certain constants of their worldview, determine the common grounds of their aesthetic principles, and trace the polemic relations between the poetics of both authors. It is also important to identify the features of the structure and semantics of the figurative system of the fairy-tale cycles under consideration, to reveal the numerous cultural references characteristic of the mythological prose of Tolstoy and Remizov. It is necessary to include the mythological prose of Remizov and Tolstoy into the broad cultural and historical context of the early twentieth century.

### **5. Research Methods**

The fundamental method of this study is the comparative method. A comparison of the iconic texts of the mythological prose of Tolstoy and Remizov reveals the characteristic patterns of the development of fabulous prose of the epoch of Russian modernism. Comparative analysis allows us to identify similarities and differences in the poetics of the writers, to determine the specifics of the influence of Remizov's poetics on Tolstoy's poetics, to identify the points of continuity of Tolstoy in relation to Remizov, as well as to identify the main collisions of the ideological polemic of the writers that is implicitly embedded in their texts. A comparison of the characteristic features of the fabulous prose of the writers allows us to determine the various vectors of the solution of the national idea in Russian literature of the twentieth century.

Another method of research was the cultural-historical method, which allows us to consider the role of the influence of the general cultural and historical context on the formation of the mythological poetics of the writers. The correlation of the prose of Remizov and Tolstoy with modern mass literature, as well as the indirect connection of the features of its creation with a number of extra-literary factors, allows us to reveal the interconnection of the poetics of the mythological prose of the authors with the trends of the era.

The biographical method is also widely used – the biographical context allows us to expand the scope of the study by addressing the details of the writers' life path. The analysis of the peculiarities of the biographies of Remizov and Tolstoy allows us to determine how individual characteristics of the prose writers were related to the immediate circumstances of their lives or the general spirit of the time. The

consideration of the authors' biography is especially important if we take into account the concept of life creation which is characteristic of symbolists. This concept was variously reflected in the texts of Remizov and Tolstoy.

The combination of these methods allows us to create a general picture of the development of the aesthetics of the fairy tales of Remizov and Tolstoy in the light of its connection with the development of the ideas of national identity.

## **6. Findings**

We concluded that the poetics of the fairy tales of Remizov and Tolstoy is based not only on the processing of folklore substrate and the transformed principles of the author's fairy tale of the 19th century, but also on the artistically refracted ideas of the search for national identity, characteristic of the Silver Age. The common cultural and biographical context determined the similarity of the writers' creative searches. The most important role in the formation of the national identity of the writers was played by the particularities of the biographies of both authors. In the case of Remizov, we see an evolution from revolutionary ideals to a peculiar soil poetics (*pochvennichestvo*). Remizov began as a revolutionary close to the Socialist Revolutionary Party. In the Vologda exile, he got acquainted with the mythology of the Zyryans, which later became the basis of the famous "Zyryan myth" of the writer (Rozanov, 2012). Remizov's interest in regional folklore aroused a craving for the search for a common mythological picture of the world for the northern peoples. The northern myth for Remizov has become a universal example of mythological consciousness as such. From this moment, Remizov became interested in the origins of Russian mythology, he carefully studies the iconic works of Russian folklorists of the 19th century – Buslaev, Potebnya, Veselovsky as well as a number of lesser-known researchers, including the works of Lytkin, Maximov and Sakharov. Basing on the discoveries of the scholars, Remizov creates his own mythology, combining authentic folk heroes with characters created by the author in one space. An important detail of Remizov's biography was his participation in the work of the journal "Zolotoye Runo", which was founded by a famous philanthropist Ryabushinsky, which brought together writers of a national orientation. It is significant that in the "farewell" article, the editorial staff of the journal noted that "The name of Alexei Remizov, who resurrects a folk myth in his art, is closely connected with "Zolotoye Runo" (Rozanov, 2009). Remizov's life path naturally led him to create a complex mythological system, where folklore elements enter into a complex relationship with the author's legend about himself – quite in the spirit of the symbolists' concept of life creation.

Tolstoy's life path was somewhat different. From his childhood, Tolstoy came into contact with the folk environment, was well acquainted with Russian folklore. Later on, Tolstoy became a prominent folklorist (Samodelova, 2017). Like Remizov, he thoroughly studies the works of Russian researchers of the folk art known to him. Acquaintance with Remizov gave Tolstoy a lot – perhaps it determined his desire to capture his understanding of the national character in the series "The Little Mermaid's Tales". Tolstoy also turned to a fairy tale as an expression of the spirit of the people later, when he worked on publishing a collection of Russian fairy tales (Samodelova, 2011a; Samodelova, 2011b). It is necessary to note that, unlike Remizov, Tolstoy did not focus the reader on the autobiographical motives of his fairy-tale texts, implicitly polemicizing with the idea of life creating.

The first iconic mythological text of Remizov was the cycle “Posolon”. The national theme is widely represented in the cycle. The influence of folklore determines the architectonics of the text – the calendar principle of forming the work is based on the ideas of the Russian peasants about the solar cycle (Buevich, 2012); (Danilova, 2008); (Solonskaya, 2012); (Zhilyakov, 2006). The folklore genres of the game, ritual, and fairy tales determined the poetics of the cycle (Rozanov, 2009). The system of images of “Posolon” has many intersections with the peculiarities of the folk worldview – a vivid example is the image of an angel created in the national tradition (Martynenko & Sosnina, 2017). Also in the book there are reminiscences from the “The Tale of Igor's Campaign” (Rozanov, 2016). In general, the entire cycle is an expression of the spirit of Russia, which was noted by the first critics of the work (Rozanov, 2009). “Posolon” is traditionally considered in line with the pagan myth, but Christian motives that are inextricably linked with the Russian theme are also significant in it (Rozanov, 2011). In the cycle “Towards the Sea-Ocean”, the national theme is further developed. The text of the cycle is filled with references to the Russian culture of all eras – from the folklore texts and monuments of ancient Russian literature to the works of the writers of the 19th century. Rozanov noted that a number of images of the “Towards the Sea-Ocean” cycle resonates with the motives of “The Tale of Igor's Campaign”, highlighting the chapters “Belun”, “Nezhit” and “Cruel Beasts” (Rozanov, 2016). In the chapter “Lethavica” Remizov shows the image of Viy, referring to the work of the same name by Gogol. Viy is shown here as a character losing his former power. Remizov's uneasiness was reflected, warning of the beginning crisis of Russian identity through the image of the dying representative of the folklore world. The national theme acquires a tragic connotation in the Remizov's cycle – the apocalyptic motifs of the chapter “Rozhanitsa” dedicated to the sad fate of the Russian land are foreshadowed by the famous “Cries”. This chapter clearly shows such a feature of Remizov's poetics as the combination of Christian and pagan motifs, which is also considered by Remizov as a native Russian trait (Galchenko, 2005). “Towards the Sea-Ocean” is created as an encyclopedia of grassroots folk demonology – its many representatives are the face of the outgoing Rus'. At the same time, Remizov does not leave hope for the return of the strength of the Russian people. In this regard, the passage “Curl” (“Zavitushka”) is characteristic, adjacent to the cycles “Posolon” and “Towards the Sea-Ocean”. The national subtext plays a large role in the atmosphere of the story – the environment in which the protagonist Kotofey Kotofeyich (one of the author's many hypostases) finds himself is an allegory of Russian reality contemporary to Remizov. At first, a dwelling in the story seems poor, but it is transformed by the hostess's tales. The parable nature of the passage conveys Remizov's main idea – “the future of Russia is in addressing national sources and traditions, the future of Russian culture is in drawing closer to the creativity of the people” (Rozanov, 2009, p. 122).

We see a different kind of expression of the national identity in Tolstoy's works. In the series “The Little Mermaid's Tales”, the writer relies heavily on the achievements of his teacher, but uses them in his own individual manner. Like Remizov, Tolstoy creates a kind of encyclopedia of folk demonology. The structure of “The Little Mermaid's Tales” is also based on the solar cycle. The basis of the narrative fabric of the cycle is a variety of folklore genres – fairy tales, byvalschinas, bailichkas, legends. So, in the chapter “The Wanderer and the Serpent” we can recognize a well-known old Russian legend about a serpent-fighter Fedor Tyrone. Tolstoy transforms the usual folklore stories accomplishing the author's

tasks (Samodelova, 2003). Like his teacher, Tolstoy relies on the Russian pagan myth (Ivanov, 2000), but unlike Remizov, he does not try to give him explicit Christian features. Christian motives are not alien to Tolstoy's works, but they remain veiled. "The Little Mermaid's Tales" is a predominantly solar text unlike Remizov, whose solar motives are extremely ambivalent (the writer evolved from the "Posolon Myth" to apocalyptic poetics. Thus, in the chapter "Mara-Marena" the sun turns out to be powerless three times before the deity of death, and the solar god in the chapter "Rozhanitsa" is shown to be a transcendental creature, worldly), Tolstoy in most cases makes the sun the force of immanent good, the driving force of the universe. At the culmination of "Mara-Marena" the lyrical hero exclaims: "Why do they swear by the Earth and the Sun! Put this sultry oath into nothing. There will be no oath of self-interest" (Remizov, 2000, p. 154). At the same time, the poetics of "The Little Mermaid's Tales" is based precisely on the categories of the Earth and the Sun (Ivanov, 2000). If Remizov saw ambivalent features in the people's principles, then Tolstoy challenged this point of view. In this regard, the polemic correlation of the novelette "The Black Rooster" in "Posolon" and the chapter "The Wanderer and the Serpent" in "The Little Mermaid's Tales" is characteristic. If, in Remizov's short story, the black rooster is associated with the power of evil, then Tolstoy's rooster, into which the wanderer turns, is a clear power of good, like a similar image in the chapter "Kikimora". In Remizov's short story, girls who sacrifice the rooster become involuntary bearers of evil – this is how Remizov shows sharp contradictions in the folk worldview. True to humanism, Tolstoy tries not to show evil as belonging to the world of the folk; Remizov's pathos of moral relativity and doubts about the correctness of the folk's worldview are alien to Tolstoy. So, Tolstoy completely dehumanizes the appearance of the Witcher, the character of the fairy tale of the same name, giving it zoomorphic features. Tolstoy asserts the inviolability of the opposition of the top and the bottom, which lies at the basis of the folk worldview (Ivanov, 2000) and thereby shows the immutability of the moral principles of the Russian people.

When considering the national poetics of Remizov and Tolstoy, it is necessary to take into account the cultural and historical context. Remizov and Tolstoy created their mythological works in the period between the First Russian Revolution of 1905–1907 and the First World War. This time is characterized by both the motives of decadence and the search for structural principles opposing the decay. Influenced by the ideas of national revival, Remizov and Tolstoy argue with the contemporary mass literary fairy tale, which was often characterized by vulgarization of mythological characters, chaotic eclecticism, disharmonious combination of Western European and Slavic mythological characters, and obsessive sentimentality (Ovchinnikova, 2003). Remizov and Tolstoy return the Russian author's fairy tale not only folk tones, but also a certain conservative moral pathos, while introducing the irony to the fairy tale. It can also be noted that the tales of Remizov and Tolstoy become an indirect form of journalistic expression – in addition to the aforementioned Remizov parable "Curl", we can recall Tolstoy's fairy tale "Alyona", the political subtext of which was disclosed by Samodelova. (Samodelova, 2019).

## 7. Conclusion

Summing up the results of our study, we can say that the expression of national identity has become the central theme of the mythological prose of Remizov and Tolstoy. Their author's fairy tales reflected the mood of the search for national identity, characteristic of Russian culture of the early

twentieth century. In their experiments with the construction of a mythological landscape the writers relied on national codes embedded in Russian culture. So, when creating the “Posolon”, Remizov relies on folk games, rituals and fairy tales, while writing “Towards the Sea-Ocean” the writer also refers to the works of ancient Russian literature, in particular, to “The Tale of Igor's Campaign”. Tolstoy followed a similar path – in the series “The Little Mermaid's Tales” the writer forms a picture of the world based on fairy tales, byvalschinas, bailichkas, legends, organically intertwining their motives with author's innovations. The architectonics and the figurative system of the tales of both writers is based on transformations of folklore sources. Here Remizov and Tolstoy were like-minded, which did not exclude their ideological polemics. An important difference between the writers was an understanding of the essence of the national spirit – when Remizov focused on the ambivalence of the folk worldview, Tolstoy preferred an optimistic vision of the Russian roots. The difference in the artistic worldview determined the poetics of the cycles of both writers – the author of “Towards the Sea-Ocean” is characterized by a clear apocalyptic pathos and foreboding of the future suffering of the motherland, the creator of “The Little Mermaid's Tales” – by faith in the eternal return of the sun and the resurrecting power of love. The prophetic intonation of Remizov's prose required such a poetic means as the combination of Christian and pagan elements into a single whole. Christian motifs are also present in Tolstoy's prose, but they are usually veiled, since the writer prefers pagan myth as a unifying artistic image. Despite these differences, both writers remained in the same field of ideas – they proved the possibility of constructing an author's tale as an artistic expression of the national idea. They fulfilled the task of creating a universal picture of the world that many creators of the Silver Age faced, finding a solid foundation for it – the national idea expressed in the form of a fairytale allegory. Remizov and Tolstoy returned the folk tale to the author's fairy tale, supplementing it with a complex system of interconnected references to the world's culture. The intertextual poetics of the author's tales of Remizov and Tolstoy was focused on bridging the gap between the different eras of Russian history and social forces alienated from each other. This mission was consistent with the main idea of the writers – gaining a holistic national identity in the years of tragic trials.

## References

- Buevich, O. V. (2012). The segmentation of the plot as a technique in the book of A. M. Remizov “Posolon”. *Bull. of Perm Univer.*, 2(18), 131–138.
- Danilova, I. F. (2008). *Literary Tale by A. M. Remizov (1900–1920s)* [Doct. Dissertation thesis].
- Galchenko, O. S. (2005). *Literary tale in the early works of A. M. Remizov* [Cand. Dissertation thesis].
- Ivanov, N. N. (2000). *Ancient Slavic pagan myth in the art world of M. Gorky, A. N. Tolstoy, M. Prishvin* [Doctoral dissertation].
- Martynenko, L. B., & Sosnina, E. V. (2017). Folk-poetic image of the image of an angel in the tales of A. M. Remizov. *Legacy of the ages*, 4, 62–69.
- Ovchinnikova, L. V. (2003). *Russian literary tale of the twentieth century. History, classification, poetics. Manual* (2nd ed.). Nauka.
- Remizov, A. M. (2000). *Collected Works in 10 volumes. Vol. 2, Dokuka i Balagur'e*. Moscow: Russ. kniga.
- Rozanov, Y. V. (2009). *Folklorism of A. M. Remizov: sources, genesis, poetics* [Doct. Dissertation]. Velikij Novgorod.
- Rozanov, Y. V. (2011). The Christian layer in A. M. Remizov's “Posolon”. *Probl. of histor. poetics*, 9, 302–315.

- Rozanov, Y. V. (2012). Zyryansk mythology in the poetic retelling of Alexei Remizov. *Bull. of Cherepovets State Univer.*, 2(2), 127–130.
- Rozanov, Y. V. (2016). Aleksey Remizov and “The Tale of Igor's Campaign”. *Bull. of Cherepovets State Univer.*, 6, 104–109.
- Samodelova, E. A. (2003). *Textological changes in mythological characters and fairy tales in the cycle “The Little Mermaid's Tales” by A. N. Tolstoy*. Samara, pp. 24–43.
- Samodelova, E. A. (2011a). Background to the publications of Russian folk tales by A. N. Tolstoy in 1938–1939. *Bull. of Vyatsk state human. Univer.*, 2(1), 102–110.
- Samodelova, E. A. (2011b). The initial history of the creation of “Russian folk tales in the treatment of A. N. Tolstoy” (1937–1938 – po arhivnym istochnikam). *Vest. Vyatskogo gosudarstv. Guman. Univers. Ser. Filolog. i iskusstvoved. [News. Vятka states. Human. Univers. Ser. Philologist. and art critic]*, 2(2), 94–101.
- Samodelova, E. A. (2017). A. N. Tolstoy – folklorist. *Aleksej Tolstoj: Dialogi so vremenem [Alexey Tolstoy: Dialogues with Time]* (vol. 2, pp. 216–233). Litarary museum.
- Samodelova, E. A. (2019). Old Russian, folklore and family reminiscences in the tale of A. N. Tolstoy “Alena” from the period of the Civil War. *Literatura Drevnej Rusi. Mater. of the 10th all-Russ. Conf. “Village literature and its traditions in modern literature”, dedicated to the memory of the professor N. I. Prokofiev* (pp. 428–445). MPGU.
- Solonskaya, M. M. (2012). The symbolism of the circle in the collections of fairy tales by A. M. Remizov “Posolon” and “Towards the Sea-Ocean”. *Yaroslavl pedagog. Bull.*, 3(1), 195–197.
- Zhilyakov, A. S. (2006). Poetics of the sun in the collection of fairy tales by A. M. Remizov “Posolon”. *Siber. Philology. J.*, 4, 42–46.