



An example of Remizov's ornamental script *skoropis'*.

Greta N. Slobin

Remizov's "Experimental Laboratory": Short Fiction Narrative

Alexei Remizov received early recognition as an important and original writer. Until his emigration from the Soviet Union in 1921, he was actively involved in the literary life of St. Petersburg and influenced such younger writers as Zamyatin, Prishvin, Shishkov, and others. Yet, despite this, he has not received proper critical attention until recently, remaining one of the least understood masters of modern Russian prose.¹ The undeniable newness and difficulty of his style account for both his role in Russia and, later, in emigration. The literary historian Svyatopolk Mirsky was one of the early admirers of Remizov. He commented on the complexity of the writer whom he considered a master-craftsman: "To get hold of the essence of Remizov's personality, or to realize the unifying principle of his work is the most difficult and baffling of tasks, so elusive and many-sided is he."² More recently, the prominent contemporary writer and critic Andrei Sinyavsky spoke of the "rediscovery" of two difficult and elusive writers, Remizov and Nabokov, by Russian readers both in the Soviet Union and abroad.³

Remizov was born in the old merchant neighborhood of Moscow in 1877, growing up in an atmosphere permeated by traditional Russian culture and Orthodox ritual. He began writing after his arrest in a student demonstration in 1896, which was followed by six years of exile

in Northern Russia. After wanderings in Southern Russia, he was allowed to settle in Petersburg in 1905. Much of Remizov's early fiction is bound to his prison experience. He describes his literary beginnings in the early unpublished *Autobiography of 1913*:

I myself had never thought of writing. I became involved in Nietzsche and Maeterlinck and began writing and translating them. And only in prison . . . in the Moscow regional prison fortress did I begin my own writing. I wanted to describe the feelings a man experiences in prison! I had before my eyes not the *Notes from the House of Death* (Dostoevsky's prison memoirs—G.S.), but the *Serres Chaudes* of Maeterlinck.⁴

Remizov is referring here to his tale "In Captivity" (1896-1903), which will be considered later in this study. The mention of Dostoevsky in the above statement is not accidental. The influence of the great writer appears in most of Remizov's early fiction. But it is clear that Remizov insists on having his own voice, which will reflect his particular experience as it is affected by the Symbolist outlook of his time.

This paper will examine some of Remizov's short fictional narratives, written between 1896-1909, and published by Shipovnik (St. Petersburg, 1910-12), in the first edition of his eight-volume *Works*. The relative structural simplicity of the traditional literary genres of the short stories and tales facilitates the singling out of the dominant features of Remizov's style. The results of this analysis may be used in the study of the structurally more complex novels and provide an understanding of Remizov in the formative decade of his writing, which coincided with the most active period in the evolution of modern Russian prose.

Although Remizov's writing style was formed in exile, he was not working in a cultural or literary vacuum. Outside the centers of cultural activity, such as Moscow and Petersburg, a lively discussion of literature, art, and philosophy was taking place in the North of Russia.⁵ Penza was called the Athens of the North. Contacts with the center of the country were well established and the latest books and journals were available. Remizov was well aware of the mainstream of literary activity in Russia and in Europe. He was involved in translating Przybyszewski, the Polish symbolist fashionable at the time, and reading Nietzsche and Maeterlinck.⁶

By the time Remizov was able to settle in Petersburg, he was a well-known literary figure. Despite his continual sense of being a literary maverick, and of being "alone always and in everything," some statements of his contemporaries show the opposite.⁷ For example, M. Gofman, a contemporary writer and critic, claimed in retrospect that: ". . . by 1906-1907 Remizov was a hero of Russian youth . . . a major Russian writer."⁸ And E. Anichkov wrote: "He had experienced everything . . . read everything . . . and returned to Petersburg as an already formed writer, poet, and master of stylization of the latest order."⁹

Indeed, from the very beginning, Remizov wrote in a startling variety of genres, ranging from short fiction, novels, and dreams, to stylizations of Old Russian literature and Russian and Northern folklore. In Remizov's works, the narrative and stylistic elements of various genres lose their original allegiance. They acquire different functions within a modified genre system. In a study of Remizov's stylizations of Old Russian legends, Horst Lampl found that the dominant Church Slavic elements are interspersed with those from folklore and spoken Russian.¹⁰ They tend to heighten the lyrical expressiveness of the text and contribute to its "literariness." Lampl also suggests that the mixing of styles functions to present the "Differenzqualität" of the text vis-à-vis the anticipated norm of realism. The present analysis will demonstrate how the disparate stylistic and lexical elements function in Remizov's short fiction.

The short narratives under consideration here can be divided into four main types: (1) tales and stories of prison and exile; (2) symbolist or visionary tales; (3) gothic or fantastic stories; and (4) stories about children. A preliminary reading shows that most of these works are dominated by subjective narration. They contain varying amounts of stylizations of folklore and oral speech. The first and last types contain descriptions of characters and concrete places, thus balancing realist depiction and subjective narration. The second and third types have minimal reference to reality, concerned as they are with symbolic or fantastic occurrences. Russian folk beliefs about the supernatural are central in the gothic stories, which are written in a mixture of folk and colloquial idiom. Dreams, which Remizov raised to the status of a literary genre, figure in all the tales but are especially prominent in the gothic and symbolist tales. In addition, it must be noted that Remizov presents a particular difficulty from the bibliographical point of view. Most of his stories have appeared repeatedly in various publications, often under different titles and in altered form.¹¹ This important aspect of his work is beyond the scope of this paper, although it must be a part of future Remizov scholarship.

In his article titled "A Prisoner of Fate: Remizov's Shorter Fiction," Alex Shane noted the connection of the early stories to Remizov's biography.¹² Shane provides a useful distinction of two basic categories in Remizov's writing: "the derivative" (based on already existing literary monuments such as folktales, apocrypha, and legends) and the "non-derivative" (fiction, memoirs, and dreams). However, it is important to stress that the boundary between these categories is fluid, each containing some elements of the other. Not only in Remizov's stylizations of legends (*Limonar'*, 1907) and Märchen (*Posolon'*, 1907), but also in his fiction, the use of disparate styles within a single framework remains the central principle of his poetic practice.

One of the earliest of Remizov's tales of imprisonment and exile is "In Captivity," which he mentions in his *Autobiography* quoted above.

Written over a period of six years, it spans the whole length of Remizov's exile. It is composed of separate short episodes and narratives, many of which were published separately at different times.¹³ This work is particularly interesting as it shows the development of Remizov's manner during these years. Despite its subject matter, the tale is subjective and lyrical, and bears affinity with Maeterlinck. Other passages, especially the prose poem at the end, titled "Northern Flowers, are reminiscent of Przybyszewski. The structure of the tale as a whole is characterized by segmentation: loosely strung episodes are presented in chronological order, from the narrator's imprisonment in Moscow to the prisoners' transport to the North of Russia, and the North itself. The actual time span seems irrelevant.

The composition of the tale is clear-cut. It is divided into three main parts, which are subdivided into short sections. The first and the third parts are composed of twelve sections each, while the middle one has six. The structural symmetry is underscored by a frame composition. The two frame parts depict the inner state of the narrator, first in prison and then in the North. The middle part describes the prisoners' transport during which the narrator, now never alone, meets his fellow prisoners and reports their tales. The first and the third part present a study in contrast: the inner state of the prisoner is lightened temporarily at the end, when he finds himself surrounded by nature and open spaces. Each part has a title: "In the Secret Prison," "Following the Transport," "In the Kingdom of the Midnight Sun." The episodes in the second half of the third part have subtitles. The third part is a cycle of prose poems, rather than a fiction narrative, as are the other two.

The details of prison life in the first part of the tale provide but a background for the reflections, reveries, dreams, and moods of the narrator. The subjective voice prevails over objective observation. For example, one evening when everything is quiet in the prison corridor, some noise is heard from a neighboring cell: "Someone coughed./Someone cried./'Who is crying there?'/It is the wind. My guard the wind." (vol. 2, p. 155).¹⁴ The prisoner's sense of oppression is shown through the use of a metaphor: "The beast awoke. There is no light, no space for him. The walls are pressing down, his heart is stifled." A concrete detail becomes a symbol, as when the passing sound of shackles conveys the cruel laughter of fate: "And the shackles rang down the hallway, laughing," and the sound of the guards' boots is "like my prison days." A song heard or remembered leads to a Symbolist meditation on the "power of Song," on the mysteries of the many lives contained in it. Just as each detail becomes a symbol of the narrator's condition, so the thoughts of prison life stand for the misery of life in the whole world and in all times: "And I did not know how and with what to justify all that has taken place and would come to pass on earth." This mood of oppression is complemented by obsessive thoughts, which are depicted in one-line paragraphs repeated throughout

each episode of the first part.

During these early years Remizov was enamored of Przybyszewski, as well as of Maeterlinck.¹⁵ His prose poems of this period emulate the exaggerated, trope-laden language and the pantheistic imagery of the Polish Symbolist. Particularly marked by this influence is the last prose poem of the final cycle of "In Captivity," titled "Northern Flowers." The poem depicts the primeval nature of the Siberian forest in a pantheistic evocation. The landscape, anthropomorphized, becomes symbolic of the mysterious predatory forces of death and putrefaction:

Tsepkii plaun koliuchimi lapami lozhitsia na temnozelenuiu, pyshnuiu grud' lishaev.

*Surovyi veresk besstrastnyi, kak starik, stoit v izgolov'e.
Sokhnet olenii mokh, grustno vzdыхaia, kogda vsia v izumrudakh polzet zelenitsa.*

Zapakh preli i gnili, kak pautina, pokryvaet cherty iadovitye, polnye smerti.

The prehensile club-moss with its thorny predatory paws lies on the dark-green breast of the lichen.

The stern heather dispassionate like an old man, stands at the head of the bed.

The deer-moss languishes, sighing sadly, as the yew tree climbs, all in emeralds.

The smell of rot and decay, like a spiderweb, covers the poisonous features, filled with death.

The heaviness of the long, drawn-out lines reflects the impression of the forest as a symbol of death. The yew tree is an image associated with mourning. The passage is marked by a repeated use of epithets, compound adjectives and similes. The grammatical composition and the regular rhythmic pattern of the lines, marked by the prevalence of sibilants in the sound pattern, contribute to the sense of oppression. The mood recalls the beginning of the tale, thus closing the frame.

The poem represents what was a temporary infatuation of Remizov with the Polish Symbolist. A prominent critic of the time, Dmitry Filosofov, noted this in his review of Remizov's book of short stories and dreams: "There are a lot of good and, most importantly, well-written things here. Here is the true Russian language from which many of our contemporary fashionable writers would like to separate us. Sometime in the past Remizov was under the influence of Przybyszewski. That unkempt, wild writer, overflowing with false depth, damaged more than one Russian talent. But Remizov, thank God, forgot Przybyszewski."¹⁶ The fact of the matter was that Remizov was capable both of writing in the style of Przybyszewski and in the "true Russian language" at the same time. Some prose poems in the last part of "In Captivity" present a complete contrast to the final one, quoted above. They are written in the light and playful style of Remizov's Märchen. In the prose poem titled "Ivan Kupal" (a midsummer holiday), there is a tableau of children

running in the fields picking wild flowers in the heat of summer, when the sky and river are still. Diminutive adjectives provide an exact description of the physical features of each child in a tone of tenderness and endearment. Each child is drawn in one bold stroke, with the visual images reinforced by the language and by parallel construction: ". . . the thin dark Manka, in a blue dress with a bunch of clover, the short Nastya, tousled, in a red blouse with a bunch of dandelions, the snub-nosed Alenushka, in a purple blouse with a bunch of faded violets . . ." (p. 197). One need only compare the adjectives used here (tonen'kaia, chernomazaia, vzlokhnachennaia, kurnosen'kaia), to those in the "Northern Flowers," to understand the contrast of styles. This stylistic contrast provides some of the dynamic in the narrative as a whole, and reflects the momentary gayness and the desperate oppression of the narrator's moods.

The short stories depict the inner state of an exile and prisoner. They resemble the first part of "In Captivity." The theme of "life-as-a-prison" runs through the stories as they proceed from a concrete state of affairs in a character's life, to a general contemplation of guilt and freedom. Nature remains important as it is separated from the human and social realm. It often represents freedom, as in the story "The Government Guesthouse" ("Kazennaia dacha"), written in 1903: "There, in freedom, it is already so nice—everything is in bloom, the earth is plowed, the river full—it is so lovely, that it could not be better" (vol. 3, p. 94). This idealized version of nature is more common in Remizov than a predatory, ominous one. Children are close to nature and its good forces, as is apparent in the prose poem "Ivan Kupal" and other stories about children. Man is poised between nature and society. He remains powerless in his quest for the meaning of life.

This position of man deprives him of certainty. He no longer knows whether he is guilty or not. The hero of the "Silver Spoons" ("Serebriannye lozhki"), Pevtsov, is imprisoned on false charges. He is also suspected of being an informer, consequently no one trusts him. Finally, he is accused by an old woman of stealing her silver. Despite the triviality of the last accusation, Pevtsov is most disturbed by it. He cannot solve the dilemma of being accused and innocent at the same time: "And unable to find any guilt, he made up a guilt for himself, scraping it from petty things, from nothing, and he put around his neck an enormous stone, a guilt that man cannot forgive" (vol. 3, p. 62). Pevtsov and others in such a predicament are modern men unable to turn to God. Yet their condition is affected by Christian ethics: "To think or to act is one and the same" ("Podumat' i sdelat'—odna tsena").

The absence of God and the arbitrariness of human laws disturb the hero of the story titled "The Government Guesthouse." Ptashkin, an inmate at this country house of detention with its ironic name, becomes indifferent to the news of his freedom: "Ptashkin was collecting his books without hurrying, as if it was all the same whether he remained here in

captivity, or out there in freedom walking in the prison-like day." In Remizov's early stories of captivity, the characters' inner rage and frustration at their predicament overshadow considerations of plot and character.

To conclude this survey of the narratives of prison and exile, let us look at a later story in this group, titled "Emaliol" (1909). Its episodic structure is reminiscent of "In Captivity," but it is much more intricate. The function of the narrator is shared between a third-person narrator and the central character, Khlebnikov. The two voices are often identical. Khlebnikov's role is that of linking and motivating a succession of episodic narratives. This type of narrative composition resembles that of Remizov's short novels of this period. The narrator in "Emaliol" has a privileged position. He is marked from other prisoners, being the only political one among criminals. Instead of a stringing together of disparate parts as in "In Captivity," the events and the interpolated narratives of "Emaliol" pass through the central consciousness of Khlebnikov. He receives and processes a multitude of impressions: "Various events passed before his eyes, and various tales were being repeated in his ears."

Khlebnikov differs from the earlier characters presented in a state of passive rage at their predicament. The hero of "Emaliol" is imprisoned on false charges, but he accepts his sentence as a chance for a spiritual quest: ". . . now he would sort everything out and tell himself how to live in the future" (vol. 3, p. 101). Khlebnikov is described as being apolitical, educated (he always carries a book), and nearsighted. He is obviously an intellectual. This and his nearsightedness are used as a metaphor for his inability to accept what he does see: "The whole trouble lies in his eyes. Since he is nearsighted and wears no glasses in prison (they were confiscated by the prison warden—G.S.), he is nearsighted in all sorts of ways and, therefore, he cannot see all the mechanics and cannot understand that all is the way it must be" (p. 128). "Emaliol" ends, as it began, with a statement of quest. The hero remains unable to accept the existence of "untruth and unfairness in the world." These words appear in italics and they acquire a special meaning both through this and repetition, devices common in all of Remizov's writing.

"Emaliol" accommodates a wide range of characters, styles, and ideas within the relatively limited scope of the short story. This is accomplished in several ways. The function of the central character is one of them. The structural advantage of this central focus allows for a variety of genres to be introduced into the tale (dreams, bawdy tales, tales of crime, a folktale, a narrative of a pilgrimage and of a saint's life, and an Old Believer's tale), without an overload of information. The interpolated narratives are illustrative of the hero's central quest, as they are in Remizov's novels.¹⁷ Each narrative is told by Khlebnikov's fellow-prisoners in the style characteristic of its genre. The colloquial prevails, except in the pilgrimage

narrative which is told in archaic diction, and in the Life of Makarius, rendered mostly in Church Slavonic. These are contrasted by a bawdy folktale¹⁸ and by a story of a gay prostitute from Petersburg. Her name is "Amurchik" and she "cheers everyone up."

The interpolated narratives themselves fulfill several functions. They provide stylistic contrasts, being tales of disparate contents and genres. Presented in quick succession, they create an impression of simultaneity, of being in a motley gathering. The exotic, lively, colorful elements of the stories contrast also with the details of the prisoners' daily life, with its concerns for obtaining food, hot water for tea, and some comforts. This daily life is not described, it is conveyed through well-placed retorts in colloquial Russian, capturing the intonation of the moment. The fragments of dialogue and retorts, as well as the bawdy folktale and the prostitute's story, provide comic relief in an otherwise serious work. Comic relief was absent in the earlier tales of this group. The structural and stylistic features of "Emaliol" are representative of Remizov's mature writing.

In many ways "Emaliol" remains a modernist prison tale in which a concrete situation serves as a pretext for a more general consideration of the human condition: "Everyone suffered life as a punishment: but why they had to suffer and what the punishment was for, for this there was no answer save one: this was fate, God's will, and was not to be fathomed by the human mind" (vol. 3, p. 119). However, Remizov moves closer here than in the earlier stories to the Russian tradition of prison literature of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of Death* and of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* (the figure of the Old Believer). Remizov's conclusion in "Emaliol" is close to Dostoevsky: "From all that was told one thing appeared clear: human nature is not very likely to be measured by a yardstick, nor placed in cages, nor can it be condemned by a court alone" (p. 124). This echo is significant, as it reflects the widening of the ethical-spiritual concerns in Remizov's fiction. It also points to another central principle in Remizov's writing: the use of a *literary subtext*, explicit or implicit, to expand the implications of what is usually a concise text. The text, whether it is a tale like "Emaliol," or a short novel, gains a greater narrative and literary scope. Such a text incorporates not only its printed form, but its associations with other texts, oral or written.

The use of concrete situations as symbols of the human condition also serves the purpose of widening the implications of the text. By the same token, a word may acquire multiple meanings by being repeated with varying intonation. Intonation can also be conveyed by typographical means of italics, indentation, or capital letters. The title of the story "Emaliol" (from "emal" — "enamel"), is given different meanings by the different characters who use it. It may be a symbol of the meaninglessness of the prisoners' life: "From prison to prison, from transport to transport—

here is life that is not life, but *emaliol*" (p. 120). The mysterious word also symbolizes the absence of an immediate answer for the "unfortunate." Khlebnikov understands this and so does another prisoner who stands apart from the crowd. He is a mysterious young prince who remains silent. People are drawn to him and demand answers and miracles from him, but he only smiles mysteriously. When he yields neither, they murder him brutally. The prince is a Christ-like figure, as elusive as "emaliol" is a word. The connection between this mystical figure and the hero, Khlebnikov, is very suggestive. Undoubtedly, it adds weight to the central "quest" theme of the tale where many possible answers are suggested, but no ultimate answer is given. The prince and Khlebnikov share this knowledge, but the mob cannot accept it. In "Emaliol" Remizov raises the "infernal" questions with an awareness of their spiritual and literary traditions, but with the skepticism of a modernist.

As Remizov continues to develop during this first decade, he sees his task as that of creating a modern Russian prose style. This is evident not only from his writing, but also from his correspondence. Especially interesting are his letters to Bryusov, the doyen of the older Symbolists, whom Bely called the "organizer of literature." Remizov admired Bryusov, asked him for advice, and offered occasional opinions on literary matters. In 1906 Remizov wrote how he loved a story of Bryusov published in *The Golden Fleece*, adding: "Prose is so rare here now, and it is not read properly, people just skim the pages with their eyes."²⁰ This implies that good prose must be read carefully, with attention to detail, like a poem. It should also be read aloud. In 1908 Remizov responds with enthusiasm to Bryusov's masterpiece *The Fiery Angel*: "*The Fiery Angel* will shake up all Russian writers and I am sure that it will be pilfered for sundry stories and tales."²¹ He adds a personal note of significance: "I am learning to write stories which comes to me with difficulty."

Although Remizov may be suspected of some false modesty here, his writing to Bryusov in this vein is not accidental. Bryusov was methodical and brilliant in his efforts to establish a tradition of modern Russian poetry at the turn of the century and of prose a few years later. His collection of stories, *The Earth's Axis*, published in 1907, presents a compendium of various examples of the genre drawn from European literature. In the introduction to his volume Bryusov referred to it as his "writer's experimental laboratory." It was undoubtedly important for Remizov as he worked toward creating his own.

In the visionary tales Remizov considers themes similar to those in the stories of prison and exile. The visionary stories are more uniform in style which is prevalently literary, rather than folk or colloquial. In such tales as "The Clock" (1903), "The Fortress" (1906), and the story "The Court Jeweler" (1906), action is static. The dynamics of the works are not in the plot, but in the interplay of their symbolic parts. "The Clock" tells of the

downfall of a family. Description of characters and situations is scanty. Allusions, symbols, and images recurring throughout the tale evoke the atmosphere of an impending disaster. Oppressive misery is seen as part of the existential condition: "... people do not know what will be tomorrow, what was yesterday, where they will be, where they were, who brought them, who put them, and who appointed them onto this unfathomable life—without a path" (vol. 2, p. 86).

"The Fortress" is an excellent example of a plotless story. It is composed of separate narrative planes, each of which represents a thematic motif: the crass and the evil; the idealistic; the philistine/oppressive. "The Court Jeweler" is a fantastic visionary Märchen, reminiscent of E. T. A. Hoffmann. The old jeweler of this story "had lived a hundred years and had buried the ages in his heart." He has a grandly disparaging view of humanity: "They themselves do not know what they want." His knowledge of precious stones opens the secrets of the human soul, which is as deep as the stones. The old hunchback sees not crimes but rather "some one crime which nestled into all ages and in all ends of human life" (vol. 3, p. 45). He has an apocalyptic vision on the eve of the "promised day of freedom." It echoes much of contemporary poetry and Remizov's other works in its picture of plunder and destruction: "Peaceful streets, growing inebriated, fell into a rage and in this rage women and children were maimed and tortured" (p. 47). The old man laughs at the crowds who believe in the advent of a "free day." He sees a bloody sunrise over the city. This is one of Remizov's most pessimistic and prophetic works. It may refer to the Bloody Sunday of 1905, and it foretells his later negative response to the promise of the Revolution. The old jeweler, a hunchback magician covered with an old shawl, is in part a self-portrait of the author himself, whose precious stones were words. Such glimpses of the author (see also the near-sighted Khlebnikov in "Emaliol") are common in his art work as well.

Remizov's gothic tales, written between 1905-1908, present a great contrast to those discussed above. The verbal element dominates in these stories of grotesque, fantastic, and supernatural occurrences. Although they address the constant themes of guilt, suffering, innocence, pity, and evil, they do so with a powerful concatenation of demonic and irrational elements. Demons, witches, vampires, and spells rule over the lives of the helpless protagonists. The titles of many of these stories point to their content: "The Little Devil" ("Chortik"), "The Sacrifice" ("Zhertva"), "The Cusser" (Chertykhanets). They are close to the early stories of Gogol and to the German Romantics, Tieck and Hoffmann, whom Remizov had loved since childhood. Elements from Russian folklore are central in these stories. Besides the Remizovian "blind chance," there are the magic spells and "woe-misfortune" of folktales. The prime-movers of the plot are fortune-telling, omens, prophecy, curses, and foreboding.

A different aspect of the narrator's persona becomes apparent here.

He is manipulative and playful. Alex Shane points out that it would be a mistake to consider Remizov a mystic, because the *skaz* narrator in these stories intrudes between the story itself and the reader.²² For example, in "The Cusser" the narrator "blushes" at the way people talk about the weird hero who cannot stop mentioning the devil at every step. Elsewhere, the storyteller comments on a haunted house and its reputation in the district: "A lot of curious and, of course, terrible things were told about the house" (vol. 4, p. 161). The "of course" betrays the narrator's playful, manipulative position.

The authorial manipulation of the *skaz* narrative is implicit in the way in which oral speech and intonation are used.²³ The skillful rendering of oral intonation is one of Remizov's important contributions to the literary language. One example of the function of intonation is in the openings of these stories which are marked by the light and inviting tone of a good storyteller. The bantering voice contrasts sharply with the "horror" of the events that follow. "The Little Devil," which tied for the first prize in the *Golden Fleece* competition in 1906, begins as follows:

Dom Divilinykh y reki. Staryi, seryi, luplennyi.
Vsiakaia sobaka znaet.

The Divilins' house is by the river. It's old, grey, beat up.
Every dog knows it.

The three short elliptical sentences, with verbs omitted in the first two, can be read as one long phrase with an equal number of stresses per segment. The grammatical structure and rhythm of the phrase create a colloquial intonation and a tone of immediacy and familiarity.

Another story, "Zanofa," opens in a similar manner:

Khorosho na Batyve—veseloe selo.
Vsego vdovol': i lesu krugom, i reka pod bokom.
V reke ryba,—ne vylovish', v lesy zver',—chego khochesh', vse est'.
Oдно—zhutko.

It's nice in Batyve—a happy village.
Everything is bountiful: forest all around, a river close by.
There's fish aplenty in the river, all the animals you'd want in the forest—anything you wish, it's all there.
There's just one thing, though—it's scary. (vol. 1, p. 189)

This linear arrangement of lines, which was used in a later edition of the story published in the collection *Zga* (Prague, 1925) shows the rhythm and intonation of the passage as it should be read aloud. This is conveyed through parallel phrases broken into equal short segments with hyphens and commas. Note the ungrammatical construction in line two, where the first clause governs only part of the second, which appears in the

appropriate genitive ("lesu krugom"), while the other is in the nominative. Ignoring the grammatical agreement of clauses ("anacoluthon") is common in spoken language. The cheerful tone of this introduction is contrasted by the startling last phrase, which prepares the reader for the story proper.

In another story, "The Sacrifice," the action takes place on an estate with the ironic Old Russian name of "Blagodatnoe" (meaning both "gracegiving" and "bountiful"). The narrator goes so far as to assure the reader that the name is not a joke, that although the place is not heavenly, it is bountiful:

Dom polnaia chasha, lad i poriadok. Ei Bogu, pchele na zavist'!

**The house is a cup full to the brim, all harmony and order.
It'd make the bees envious, by God. (vol. 1, p. 169)**

This phrase is composed of folk sayings typical of those used for describing a well-to-do house. However, the story itself is about the terrible devastation of a house brought on by a possessed, bloodthirsty father.

In the stories of the fantastic, *verbal rhythm* and *narrative pace* are very important in sustaining dramatic tension. Most stories have a frame composition and repeated motifs. The frame may be purely verbal, as in "Zanofa" (as well as in the prison tale "Emaliol"). "Zanofa" begins and ends with tautological expressions verging on *zaum* (transrational language), which are based on sound association. Such tautological expressions are a *topos* of Old Russian tales, as the *Igor Tale*, for example. The following passages in "Zanofa" (which is the story of the mysterious murder of a town idiot, thought to be a witch), are reminiscent of typical battle expressions in Old Russian tales:

**Beginning: Gomit gom, shumit molva . . . gremit slava . . .
Ending: Stonom ston stoial, pesnia, i gam, i topot.**

**The din is dinning, the fame resounding, the glory thundering.
The groans were groaning, song, and noise, and stamping.**

(vol. 1, p. 190)

The use of an onomatopoeic epic formula here is ironic, not only in its application to a witch story, but also in the opposition "slava/ston" (glory/groan) which creates the frame. This opposition parodies the expected "slava/chest'" (glory/honor), typical of the Old Russian epics.

From the above examples it is clear that language plays a dominant role in these stories. It creates a narrative frame which usually presents a contrast with the story proper. This structural principle is reinforced through the mixture of genres and styles. The formulas and tropes from Old Russian literature appear next to colloquial expressions and folk

sayings. The mood of a story is manipulated through language, which creates lightness or tension. The narrator becomes the agent of this manipulation as he intervenes between the text and the reader. The reader is made constantly aware of the text as a literary artifact, as in the stylized legends.²⁴ Frame composition contributes to this as well. In addition, all the expressive possibilities of language are employed, including rhythm, graphic layout, punctuation, and auditory devices. Remizov made an important contribution in this area of prose explored by the Symbolist poets somewhat earlier.

Another important aspect of Remizov's verbal art is his recreation of the "naive" language of children, whose specific lexicon, intonation, and interests dominate his Märchen, *Posolon'*. The sources of verbal art there are children's folklore, games, and ritual. This language is used in Remizov's stories about children such as "Princess Mymra," "Baby Elephant," and others. Since these stories received considerable attention in Rystencko's monograph, mention will be made here of only one example of structuring in "Baby Elephant." The last part of the story employs graphic layout in order to set off two paragraphs, each composed of six one-liners. Each line reflects a change in the child's mood, which ranges from his melancholy reflections on being bed-ridden to the gleeful expectations of his first day out. Here Remizov employs the essentially poetic device of linear arrangement, which carries the function of narrative progression in the story.

In conclusion, it can be seen that Remizov's short fiction narratives defy the boundaries and the expectations of the genre. Their structure, their narrative and stylistic possibilities are enriched through a simultaneous tapping of a variety of sources: literary and non-literary, old and contemporary, prosaic and poetic. Remizov, always in search of new forms through the old, creates his own "writer's experimental laboratory." Each group of narratives favors one source of verbal art more than another, depending on its artistic purpose. Together, they present a cluster of literary, cultural, and spiritual values of pre-Revolutionary Russia, which also inform Remizov's novels of this period. During the first decade of his career he made an important contribution to modern Russian prose, aware as he was of its needs and resources.

NOTES

1. An important contemporary monograph on Remizov appeared after the publication of his *Works* by Shipovnik: A. V. Rystencko, *Zametki o sochineniiakh Alekseia Remizova* (Odessa, 1913). Remizov figured prominently in a book on contemporary writers by A. Zakrzhevskii, *Podpol'e. Psikhologicheskie paralleli* (St. Petersburg, 1911). A more recent monograph on Remizov is: K. Geib, *Stilstudien A. M. Remizov* (Munich, 1970).

2. *History of Russian Literature* (London, 1968), p. 478.

3. Olga Carlisle, "A Voice from the Third Emigration: Interview with Sinyavsky," *The New York Times Book Review* (October 30, 1977), p. 15.
 4. *Arkhiv Remizova*. RO GPB 634/1/10.
 5. S. S. Grechiskin, "Arkhiv Remizova," *Ezhegodnik rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo doma*, 1975 (Leningrad, 1977).
 6. Remizov's translation of Przybyszewski's "Snow" and some details of his attitude toward the poet can be found in *Pis'ma A. M. Remizova i V. Ia. Briusova k O. Madelungu*, Series of the Slavic Institute of the University of Copenhagen (Copenhagen, 1976), pp. 8, 14.
 7. Natalia Kodrianskaia, *Aleksei Remizov* (Paris, 1957).
 8. M. Gofman, "Sozdatel' ritmicheskoi prozy," *Posev*, n. 25 (June 1975).
 9. E. Anichkov, "Stat'ia o tvorchestve Remizova," (n.d.), *Arkhiv Remizova*. RO-GPB 414/15/4.
 10. Horst Lampl, "Altrussisch-kirchenslawische Stilisierung bei Remizov und Zamjatin," *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch*, Band 21 (Wien, 1975), pp. 131-45.
 11. See the recent publication of Hélène Sinany, *Bibliographie des oeuvres de Alexis Remizov*. Institut d'Etudes Slaves (Paris, 1978).
 12. Alex Shane, "A Prisoner of Fate: Remizov's Shorter Fiction," *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 4 (Fall 1972), pp. 303-18.
 13. The publication history of the episodes is registered in Sinany's bibliography.
 14. The translations of texts quoted in this paper are mine—G.S.
 15. See above, note 6.
 16. D. Filosofov, *Staroe i novoe: sbornik statei po voprosam literatury i iskusstva* (Moscow, 1912), pp. 22-23.
 17. This and other aspects of structure of Remizov's early novels are treated in: Greta N. Slobin, *A. M. Remizov and the Rise of Russian Modernism*. Ph. D. dissertation (Yale, 1978).
 18. Rystencko notes that this story of a "blind bride" is close to its source, published in N. E. Onchukov, *Severnye skazki* (St. Petersburg, 1909), n. 210, p. 489, under the title "The Blind Bride."
 19. For a linguistic analysis of some of Remizov's later stories, see: A. Kodjak, *The Language of A. Remizov*. Ph. D. dissertation (U. of Penn., 1963). Kodjak traces the use of lexical items in Remizov, comparing them with dictionary definitions. He notes that: "... one distorted word represents whole dialogues" (p. 56). "Emaliol" has a similar function here.
 20. "Letters to V. Ia. Briusov, Nov. 17 and 25, 1906," *Arkhiv Remizova*. RO GBL 386/100/15.
 21. *Ibid.*, letter of December 4, 1908.
 22. Alex Shane, p. 313.
 23. M. Bakhtin in *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (Moscow, 1972), makes a point of the necessary distinction between straight *skaz* (a narrative rendered in a manner distinct from the standard literary language), and *parodic* or *stylized skaz*, which is important in understanding the author's intent.
- B. Eikhenbaum refers to a new tradition of *skaz stylization* stemming from Leskov in "Leskov i sovremennaia proza," *Literatura: Teoria. Kritika. Polemika* (Leningrad, 1927): "From Remizov to Zamyatin the *skaz* forms have passed to a generation of younger fiction writers and they are often interlaced with declamatory and poetic ornamentation, as in Pilnyak or Vsevolod Ivanov. This *ornamental skaz*, which by now has little in common with oral narrative, has become a common narrative form . . . It preserves traces of its folklore base and of *skaz* intonation . . ."
- On *skaz* as a problem associated with "author" speech and function, see I. R. Titunik, "Mikhail Zoshchenko and the Problem of Skaz," *California Slavic Studies*, vol. 6 (1971).
24. Horst Lampl, p. 131.