

# TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF RUSSIAN MODERNISM: IVANOV, REMIZOV, XLEBNIKOV

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## *Introduction*

The purpose of this paper is to place Aleksej Remizov in a broader literary context by drawing some comparisons between his literary practice and ideas about literature and those of Vjačeslav Ivanov and Velimir Xlebnikov—authors who were akin to him in certain ways, but who followed their own path in the main thrust of their creative achievement. I shall concentrate on two features of his craft which are particularly prominent in his early collections, *Posolon'* and *Limonar'*: the use of folklore and myth, and the presence of annotations (endnotes). Both of these features are discussed in a 1909 open letter by Remizov (see below): their presence in this document helps legitimize my attempt at typology. The result will be to underscore the differences that underlie what from a distance appears to be a rather similar landscape of modernist interest in Slavic folklore and myth and of concern with language, and to clarify the uniqueness of Remizov's literary achievement.

## *Biographical Background*

The relationships between the three authors are indissoluble from the structure of St. Petersburg literary life, with its partisan yet fluid circles, journals, and publishing houses.

Both Remizov and Xlebnikov were guests in Ivanov's *bašnja*. A settled inhabitant of the capital, Remizov attended far more regularly and over a far longer period of time than did Xlebnikov. However, although it was Ivanov who made possible the book publication of *Limonar'*, Oľga Deschartes suggests that Remizov and Ivanov were not close. Thus, she comments on Ivanov's poem "Moskva," which appears in *Cor Ardens* with a dedication to Remizov: "No posvjaščenie èto nečajanno vydaet ešče i drugoe: v protivopoložnost' obyčnym dlja V. I. posvjaščenijam v nem net ničego ličnogo. Oba—urožency Moskvy, oba ljubjat i ponimajut dušu ètogo goroda—i tol'ko. Otnošenija V. I. i Remizova byli xorošimi, no poverxnostnymi, prijatel'skimi." (Ivanov 1974: 723).<sup>1</sup>

Details of Xlebnikov's relationship with Ivanov are as sketchy as the rest of his biography.<sup>2</sup> He began to correspond with Ivanov in 1908, when he sent the Symbolist master a selection of his short neologistic poems. Fol-

lowing his arrival in St. Petersburg in May 1909, Xlebnikov began to frequent the "Tower"; for a few months (October–December) he was a member of the "Akademija stixa" which met first at Ivanov's and then in the editorial offices of the newly-formed *Apollon*. Early in 1910, however, Xlebnikov began to drift away from the "Academy," most members of which did not share his orientation towards peripheral folklore genres, and joined the ranks of what was to become Russian Cubo-Futurism (Xlebnikov 1940: 418–420).

In spite of his entry into Hylaea, Xlebnikov continued his friendly relations with Ivanov. Thus, an unfinished article, "Fragmenty o familijax" (1912), cited by N. Xardžiev, includes favorable comments on Ivanov's play "Tantal."<sup>3</sup> Significantly, Ivanov's name does not appear among those of writers Xlebnikov condemns in his polemical prose or in his joint pieces with other Futurists.<sup>4</sup> And one of Xlebnikov's late notebooks contains jottings concerning his encounters with Ivanov in 1921 and linking the two poets through one of Xlebnikov's historical calculations.<sup>5</sup>

Remizov has left one commonly cited record of his contact with Xlebnikov. It is found in *Kukxa*, as part of Remizov's account of how he used to be visited by beginning writers. A list which includes Gumilev (pre-Abyssinia) and A. N. Tolstoj, also contains Vasilij Kamenskij and ends with Xlebnikov, "s kotorym slova razbirali." (Remizov 1923 [1978]: 58). The two shared a fascination with unusual items from the vast lexicon of Russian; decades later, Remizov reiterated this common ground in a letter to Vladimir: "Nas soedinjalo slovo kak i s Andreem Belym" (Markov 1982: 431). On Xlebnikov's side, there was also appreciation of Remizov's orientation towards things Russian—an attitude which reflected Xlebnikov's own Slavophile and even extreme Russian nationalist views in the years before the war (Baran 1985: 70–71, 87).<sup>6</sup>

There is clear evidence that Xlebnikov's attitudes towards Remizov underwent considerable changes. In a 10 January 1909 letter to Kamenskij, he inquires "Čto govorit Remizov o moej 'Snežimočke'? Esli budete, Vasilij Vasiľevič, to ne polenites', sprositi" (Xlebnikov 1940: 355). Why the concern with Remizov's opinion of this work? Presumably, because Remizov was one of the few people in the Petersburg literary world from whom Xlebnikov could expect sympathy. "Snežimočka" combines three elements which are prominent in Remizov's own writings in *Posolon'* and *Limonar'*: a reworking of a folk plot (i. e. "Sneguročka") and an infusion of other folk motifs; heavy uses of both dialect borrowings and neologisms; and an emphasis on Russianness.

Several months later, an 8 August letter to Kamenskij dwells at length on the charge against Remizov that had appeared in the press in June of that

year: that he had plagiarized some folk texts.<sup>7</sup> Xlebnikov is indignant at the accusation: "Znaja, čto obvinjat' sozdatelja 'Posoloni' v vorovstve—značit soveršat' čto-to nerazumnoe, neubeditel'noe na zlostnoj podkladke, ja otnes-sja k ètomu s otvraščeniem i prezreniem" (Xlebnikov 1940: 358). He links his proposed activities on behalf of Remizov ("...komu ja darju družbu" [Xlebnikov 1940: 359])—challenging the accusers to a duel—with a theme common to a number of his pre-war works, that of the Ukrainian "gajdamaki."<sup>8</sup>

The young poet becomes less charitable towards Remizov some years later. In the first of his dialogues, "Učitel' i učenik" (publ. 1912), where he outlines his ideas on time and language, Xlebnikov also takes up the question of the state of Russian literature. By then, he had become one of the Hylaeans, self-defined as the bearers of a new aesthetic and a new poetics. Xlebnikov uses tables—the classic tool of ideology claiming to be science—to underscore the chasm that, he claims, separates contemporary literature from the true spirit of the Russian people. Remizov, termed an "insect" [see fn. 9] in one table is grouped with Andreev, Arcybašev, Baľmont, Brjusov, Bunin, Kuprin, Merežkovskij, Ostrovskij, Sologub (referred to as a "grave-digger"), Ščedrin, and Aleksej Tolstoj. The productions of this motley group of 19th century Realists, Symbolists, and those in between is counterposed to the "popular word" (narodnoe slovo) or "popular song" (narodnaja pesn'). The former find life to be horrible; condemn all groups in the population except writers; preach death; curse the past, the present and the future; condemn war and deeds of valor; and make the measure of things that is *not*-Russian or is found in the latest book. By comparison, creations of the people praise the beauty and virtues of life; condemn writers; glorify battle and war; and take Russia for their yardstick.

Why was Remizov included here? Perhaps because, like Ostrovskij, he did not restrict his art to celebrating and reworking the sphere of popular culture. By the time Xlebnikov's dialogue was written, Remizov had become a prose writer who continued in part the line of Realist fiction, and who focussed on the underside of society—a world which Xlebnikov himself was rather familiar with in his own life, but which he, gripped by wider visions, chose not to focus on until the years of war and revolution.

#### *The Use of Notes*

In his famous overview of modern poetry, "O sovremennom lirizme" (1909), Innokentij Annenskij takes his fellow classicist-poet Ivanov to task for the obscurity of the mythological material he uses in his poems. He follows up with this suggestion:

Отчего бы поэту, в самом деле, не давать к своим высокоценным пьесам комментария, как делал в свое время, например, Леопарди? И разве они уж так завидны, этот полусознательный восторг и робкие похвалы из среды лиц, не успевших заглянуть в Брокгауз-Эфрона, и пожимания плечами со стороны других, вовсе и не намеренных «ради каких-нибудь стишков» туда заглядывать?

(Annenskij 1979: 332)

Annenskij's criticism points to a salient feature of not only Ivanov's art but of modern poetry in general: its tendency to draw on diverse mythological and anthropological materials to construct the myths that are so often the poets' response to the world around them. His suggestion to Ivanov to use footnotes to clarify myth—which, he feels, must not be esoteric (“Mif—èto ditja solnca, èto pestyj mjačik detej, igrajuščix na lugu. I mne do goreči obidno, pri čtenii pësy, za nedostupnost' tak zamančivo pljašuščix predomnoju xoreev i za tajnopis' ix sledov na arene, vpitavšej stol'ko blagorodnogo pota” [Annenskij 1979: 333])—is one often followed by modern poets (e. g. Eliot), though in different, frequently subtle ways: at times to elucidate the source, at times to lead the reader towards a particular interpretation of the work itself.

Ivanov himself remained restrained in his use of annotations. His footnotes are few in number, and generally emphasize the interpretation that may be placed on a particular passage in a poem; occasionally there will be a reference to some work of classical philology. For the overwhelming majority of readers, the notes are not adequate to the complexity of the text to which they are attached—Ivanov deliberately forces the reader to solve the many semantic puzzles found in his works, and to reach the deeper levels of meaning hidden within them.

A different situation prevails in the work of Remizov, particularly in the period of the “Šipovnik” edition of his “Collected Works.” If we look at the different editions of the *Posolon'* and *Limonar'* collections, and compare them with the separate publications of the anthologized texts, we see a steady evolution towards increased use of annotations.<sup>10</sup>

In the case of the component parts of *Posolon'*, the vast majority of the texts appeared without any notes at all upon first publication in various periodicals. Occasionally, as in the case of “Gusi-Lebedi,” “Zadušnicy,” or “Letavica” (orig. title “Noč' u Vija”), the initial publication included a few annotations of difficult lexical items.

The initial book publication of the *Posolon'* cycle was free of any endnotes. It was only in the second, expanded edition of the collection that Remizov equipped the stories with an elaborate scholarly apparatus. The

endnotes not only contained the lexical annotations found in initial publications of a few works, but expanded the coverage of unusual lexical items to many more tales, and, more broadly, provided information on the sources on which Remizov drew in creating his texts, and on the mythological theory that underlies Remizov's reworking of the source material.

In the case of *Limonar'*, the initial publications of the reworked apocrypha tend to supply needed notes, including some information on sources. The 1907 edition of *Limonar'*, which contains six texts, already possesses a set of endnotes of varying degree of detail, with the commentaries to “O bezumii Irodiadinom” being the most extensive by far. These make their way into a similar section in the 1912 “Collected Works” expanded edition, which contains new fictional material. The set of endnotes in the 1912 edition is also richer in interpretive and source commentary.

To take one example of how Remizov's annotations grow, the initial publication of the story “Car' Diokletian” contains two lexical glosses, on the expressions “zrjaščij pjatok” and “byť sveršenu,” the same items found in the second edition (Remizov 1912: 201). However, the commentary in the second edition also includes this information: “Ja pol'zoval'sja dlja Diokletiana duxovnym stixom. P. A. Bezsonov, *Kaliki perexožie*. M. 1861. Vyp. 3. No. 136” (Remizov 1912: 201). The sentence is quite typical for the endnotes in the collection.

The increased annotation of texts appears to be directly related to the previously mentioned accusation of June 1909, where Remizov was accused of plagiarizing some folklore texts in his own fictions. Remizov parried the charge, repeated widely in the press, in a 6 September 1909 letter to the editor of *Russkie Vedomosti*. In this document, Remizov first outlines his views on his own task as a writer who works with folklore and myth, and then discusses the reasons why he includes extensive annotations in his collections:

В целях же разъяснения вынужден сказать несколько слов и о том особом значении, которое придаю примечаниям, снабжая ими отдельные мои произведения и мои книги. Надо заметить, что в русской изящной литературе, при допущении самого широкого пользования текстами народного творчества, существует традиция, не обязывающая делать ссылки на источники и указывать материалы, послужившие основанием для произведения.

(Remizov 1909)

Here Remizov cites examples ranging from Gogol' and his *Taras Buľba* to Leskov's apocrypha-based legends and tales, and to popular folk tales of Avenarius.<sup>11</sup> He emphasizes that such is the tradition prevailing in Russian

literature, and that only historians of literature point out to us the sources used by particular writers. He then turns to his own goals in breaking with that tradition:

Ставя своей задачей воссоздание нашего народного мифа, выполнить которую в состоянии лишь коллективное преемственное творчество не одного, а ряда поколений, я, кладя мой, может-быть, один единственный камень для создания будущего большого произведения, которое даст целое царство народного мифа, считаю моим долгом, не держась традиции нашей литературы, вводить примечания и раскрывать в них ход моей работы. Может-быть, равный или те, кто сильнее и одареннее меня, пытая и пользуясь моими указаниями, уже с меньшей тратой сил принесут и не один, а десять камней и положат их выше моего и ближе к венцу. Только так, коллективным преемственным творчеством создастся произведение, как создались мировые великие храмы, мировые великие картины, как написались бессмертная «Божественная комедия» и «Фауст».

Указанием на прием и материал работы, — что достижимо до некоторой степени примечаниями в изящной литературе, а среди художников — раскрытием дверей в мастерские и посвящением, — может открыться выход к плодотворной значительной работе из одичалого и мучительно-одинокого творчества, пробавляющегося без истории, как попало, своими средствами из себя, а попросту из ничего, и в результате — впустую.

(Remizov 1909)

Remizov's emphasis on creating an art with a memory, with a past accessible to others, fits in with what Olga Hughes, in the introduction to a reprint of *Rossija v pis'menax*, has called one of the themes of mature Remizov—memory, realizable in various ways (Remizov 1922 [1982]: 5). The above passage shows clearly that this concern is present in Remizov's thought about art at a rather early stage.<sup>12</sup>

Although it is potentially dangerous to take Remizov at his word, if we do so we must conclude that he is consciously breaking with tradition for ideological/aesthetic reasons. He is doing what Gogol and Leskov *should* have done but did not, and returning to the medieval practice of collective creation.<sup>13</sup> In a sense, he is modifying the hierarchy of values in the fictional text. Where, in Shari Benstock's words, "authority in fictional texts rests . . . on the implied presence of the author—as creator certainly and sometimes as speaker" (Benstock 1983: 207), Remizov's annotated works break down the division between fictional and critical writings, coming close to the mode of functioning of the latter. "The supposition is always that the present critical endeavor extends a pattern of thought that was begun in the past, that was applied to the immediate context through cita-

tion, and that will be continued in the future, when presumably the present text will itself be a citation in someone else's critical analysis" (Benstock 1983: 206). This characterization of a critical work is quite close to Remizov's own vision of the place of his own folklore- and myth-based writings in a larger pattern of Russian literary development.

There could not be a greater contrast between Remizov's insistence on transmission of memory and textual genealogy and Xlebnikov's—more broadly, the Futurists'—theory and practice. The purposeful anti-biographism of the Cubo-Futurists (Pomorska 1968: 83-86) was combined with a programmatic rejection of traditions of the past: writers who cultivated the accidental; who fulminated against the yoke of past culture; who proclaimed "pročitav—razorvi!", had little use for the carefully crafted note.

In Xlebnikov's works annotations are truly few and far between. The poem "Suè," which describes the martyrdom of the Aztec monarch Montezuma, is accompanied by two brief notes which give the meaning of the two principal neologisms utilized in the text: *Sua* (the sun) and *Suè* (sons of the sun—the Spaniards) (SP III : 9). Similarly, in the poem "Tcincucan," both the title and a proper name are glossed: "Tcincucan—mesto kolibri. Ali Èmètè—imja kn. Tarakanovoj" (SP V: 41). Ironically, the notes are not really needed because both words are defined within the poem itself. In the story "Ka" (1915), the initial word in the passage, "Xudožnik pisal pir trupov, pir mesti. Mertvecy veličavo i važno eli ovošči, ozarennye podobnym luču mesjaca bešenstvom skorbi" is footnoted "Filonov" (SP IV: 51) (his painting "Pir korolej" is described here).

Yet it certainly cannot be said that Xlebnikov's works don't require annotations. A proper edition of Xlebnikov, whether in Russian or in translation, calls for an extensive editorial commentary. Even if we limit what might be viewed as needless pedantry, a basic set of notes is required to allow the reader to penetrate into many of the texts. An example of what might be needed is provided by Stepanov for the 1921 poem "More," where he includes 19 dialectisms and items of sea terminology to help clarify the work's "difficult" semantics.<sup>14</sup>

There is but one example where Xlebnikov provides a more elaborate commentary to one of his works. It is found at the end of the *poëma* "I i È," set in the Stone Age and largely consisting of dialogues between the hero and heroine. A "Postscript" offers a quasi-ethnographic explanation of the protagonists' strikingly monosyllabic names; a summary of the action within which the speeches in the body of the poem are situated; and a suggested interpretation. Even here, however, Xlebnikov does not provide a single source for his ideas or the story.

This example, close to some degree to Ivanov's and Remizov's type of annotations, is the exception which proves the rule.

#### *Thinking About Myth and Folklore*

As Charlotte Rosenthal has noted (1985), the *Russkie Vedomosti* letter contains the most explicit statement by Remizov himself on his use of folklore in literature, and it also contains his views on myth and the writer. The ideas he expressed suggest that Ivanov's views on the role of myth in literature struck a highly responsive chord within the younger writer.

In the letter, Remizov differentiates between two tasks which he has set himself. One is to reconstruct popular myth, the survivals of which are found in various areas of folklore (rituals, games, carols [*koljadki*], superstitions, omens, proverbs, riddles, charms and apocrypha). The other is to give an artistic rendering of a single folklore text.

In his quest for myth through folklore, i. e., in an attempt to penetrate into the past, Remizov claims to proceed in a systematic, scholarly way:

В первом случае, — при воссоздании народного мифа, когда материалом может стать потерявшее всякий смысл, но все еще обращающееся в народе, просто-напросто, какое-нибудь одно имя — «Кострома», «Калечина-Малечина», «Спорыш», «Мара-Марена», «Летавица» или какой-нибудь обычай в роде «Девятой пятницы», «Троецпыленицы» — все сводится к разнообразному сопоставлению известных, связанных с данным именем или обычаем фактов и к сравнительному изучению сходных у других народов, чтобы в конце-концов проникнуть от бессмысленного и загадочного в имени или обычая к его душе и жизни, которую и требуется изобразить.

(Remizov 1909).

Rosenthal suggests that Remizov's views ultimately derive from Sir Edward Tylor's "survival theory," which sees traces of ancient myths in the language and folklore spheres. But the British anthropologist's location of myth in man's primitive, animist stage; his view of myth as a kind of "primitive science"; and his teaching that myth is lost as man evolves, account for only a part of Remizov's ideas. More significant for Remizov than the views of the "anthropological school" (Tylor, Lang, etc.) was the comparative-historical tradition which goes back to the Romantics, which found its most influential Western proponent in Max Müller, and which numbered among its Russian adherents Afanas'ev, Buslaev, and Potebnja—on all of whom, as Remizov makes clear, he relied heavily in creating his folklore-based fictions.

Although Ivanov's role as Remizov's mentor in the science of mythology is unclear (Rosenthal 1979: 19), there is no doubt that Remizov found attractive Ivanov's coherent theory of the significance of myth for modern

literature. It was this intellectual construct which distinguished the master of the "Tower" from most of his contemporaries: his essays on art and literature, a kind of commentary on his poetic collections, attracted a great deal of attention.

Ivanov's ideas are presented, among others, in his 1907 essay "O veselom remesle i umnom veselii." Here, Ivanov propounds the ideal of the artist-craftsman, as he was still in the Middle Ages. Such an artist is linked in spiritual harmony with his audience; he does not suffer from a disease that dates from the time of the Renaissance—individualism, isolation from the people who are to be receivers of his art, and loss of the spontaneous gaiety (*veselie*) that accompanies art of the "collective" epoch, from the "genial'ničanie" of the individualistic period. (Ivanov 1979: 63). Applying this conception to Russia, Ivanov notes the split between Russian artists, who wrongly are forced to condemn and preach, and Russia's true national culture, defined as "spiritual joy" (*umnoe veselie narodnoe*) (Ivanov 1979: 69).

He goes on to note the significance of Western culture—in broadest terms, Hellenic (*ellinstvo*)—in Russia. Although this culture has had a profound impact ("xotja i naložila na varvarov vse svoi formy /slavjanstvu peredala daže formy slovesnye/, xotja i vyžgla vse svoi tavra na škure lesnyx kentavrov") (Ivanov 1979: 70), it has not ultimately overcome the elemental culture (creativity) within the Slavs: the "kingdom of form" has civilized the "kingdom of contents" (Apollo has partly softened Dionysus), but has not extinguished the latter's regenerative powers. Today, the attraction of Hellenic culture is greater than ever, but it takes Russia away from its societal and popular tasks (Ivanov 1979: 71): the Decadent movement is one of its manifestations. This movement can justly point to certain artistic accomplishments: in the areas of form, of language, and particularly in having detached poetry from "literature" (i.e. the tradition of Russian prose) and in having brought it back to the neighboring realms of other arts—that is, into a situation where a return to primitive syncretism in the arts is possible.

The Decadent movement, in its evolution into Symbolism, transcended its individualist limitations. Through the use of symbols, a path was opened into the national, popular soul, into myth:

Как первые ростки весенних трав, из символов брызнули зачатки мифа, первины мифотворчества. Художник вдруг вспомнил, что был некогда «мифотворцем» (μυθολογός), — и робко понес свою ожившую новыми прозрениями, исполненную голосами и трепетами неведомой раньше таинственной жизни, орошенную росами новых-старых верований и ясновидений, новую-старую душу навстречу душе народной.

(Ivanov 1979: 75-76)

Ivanov ends the essay with the section "Mečty o narode-xudožnike." The title is appropriate, for these are indeed his dreams for the future:

Искусство идет навстречу народной душе. Из символа рождается миф. Символ — древнее достояние народа. Старый миф естественно оказывается родичем нового мифа . . .

Какою хочет стать поэзия? Вселенскою, младенческою, мифотворческою. Ее путь к всечеловечности вселенской — народность; к истине и простоте младенческой — мудрость змеиная; к таинственному служению творчества религиозного — великая свобода внутреннего человека, любовь, держащая в жизни и в духе, чуткое ухо к биению мирового сердца . . .

Мы возлагаем надежды на стихийно-творческую силу народной варварской души и молим хранящие силы лишь об охране отпечатков вечного на временном и человеческом, — на прошлом, пусть запятнанном кровью, но памяти милом и святом, как могилы темных предков.

(Ivanov 1979: 76-77)

The essay closes with the vision of rekindled contact between artist and people, and of a collective art (*sobornoe iskusstvo*) that will manifest a true mythopoesis. "Tогда xudožnik okažetsja v pervye tol'ko xudožnikom, remeslennikom veselogo remesla,—ispolnitel' tvorčeskix zakazov obščiny,—rukoju i ustami znajuščej svoju krasotu tolpy, veščim mediumom naroda-xudožnika." (Ivanov 1979: 77).

The brief comments on myth in Remizov's letter are not obviously linked, or even necessarily similar to this summary. However, the previously discussed part of the letter where Remizov presents his reasons for the use of annotations to his texts contains motifs quite close to Ivanov. The emphasis on collective creation, on overcoming the painful isolation in which artists find themselves, on creating in the future a major example of myth—all this echoes Ivanov's ideas on the new popular mythopoesis.

Xlebnikov's ideas on folklore and myth are not terribly systematic: unlike Ivanov or Remizov, he was not an adherent of any one approach to myth, and his writing does not reflect the direct impact of philological scholarship (Baran 1985a: 13-14).<sup>15</sup> However, like Remizov, Xlebnikov was influenced by Ivanov. His debt to the Symbolist theoretician is usually referred to in general terms in the critical literature, yet a comparison between Ivanov's ideas and essays and Xlebnikov's early programmatic works produces evidence of more tangible connections between the two in the realm of myth and mythological thought.

In a letter sent by the fledgling poet to Ivanov along with a selection of his works we find this passage: "Čitaja èti stixi, ja pomnil o 'vseslavjanskom jazyke,' pobegi kotorogo dolžny prorasti tolšči sovremennogo, russkogo.

Vot počemu imenno vaše mnenie o ètix stixax mne dorogo i važno . . ." (Xlebnikov 1940: 354). Here, as N. Stepanov notes (1975: 13), Xlebnikov alludes to Ivanov's "O veselom remesle i umnom veselii." The relevant passage is found in the section "Mečty o narode-xudožnike": "Čerez tolšču sovremennoj reči, jazyk poèzii—naš jazyk—dolžen prorasti i uže prorastaet iz podpočevnyx kornej narodnogo slova, čtoby zagudet' golosistym lesom vseslavjanskogo slova" (Ivanov 1979: 76).

A closer look at Ivanov's article reveals further possible points of contact. In particular, there is the discussion of the enormous attraction of Hellenic culture—the unified Mediterranean culture—for the barbarians, including the Slavs. Twice in the article Ivanov refers to the story of the Scythian Anacharsis—the king whose attraction for things Hellene outweighed his loyalty to his native traditions, and who, as Herodotus tells us, was killed by his own people for blaspheming against the gods. This plot is one with which Xlebnikov was unquestionably familiar, and he reworked a closely related one, that of the Scythian Scyles (Dovatur et al. 1978: 317-318), in the brief *Lesedrama* "Asparux" (Baran 1978). As the title suggests, a Bulgarian motif (the name Asparux belongs to the legendary Bulgarian king) is used to disguise the classical source, but the ideological element—the opposition between native Slav vs. allure of the West—is quite clear. The reference to the Herodotus source in the Ivanov essay reinforces a reading of the Xlebnikov play as a cultural allegory with contemporary implications.

Ivanov's writings also shed light on Xlebnikov's important 1908 article, "Kurgan Svjatogora." This document is probably the most elaborate presentation by Xlebnikov of his views on a mythologized Great Time—a vision of a sacred zone of the past, of a spiritual order which has suffered progressive decay since then, as may be seen by the condition of present-day Russian society and culture. Borrowing the *bylina* motif of Svjatogor's death and of the transfer of some of his strength to Ilja Muromec, Xlebnikov suggests that the Russians, shaped in the likeness of the vanished hero, are obliged to assume his role but have been prevented from so doing by the West. Writers have not expressed the people's spirit: even Puškin succumbed to foreign influence.

The plot vehicle used by Xlebnikov may be different, but the notion of a split between the artistic elite and the people is already familiar. The connection with Ivanov is further reinforced by the suggestion that language can effect an amelioration of this condition of divergence from the ideals of the past. However, Xlebnikov's vision of this process is far more active than Ivanov's, who envisaged the language of poetry making its way from subterranean roots to a full-voiced Common Slavic verbal forest. Formerly,

Xlebnikov claims, language did not dare to step beyond certain bounds, but now poets crave "poznaniya ot 'dreva mnimyx čisel'" (Xlebnikov 1940: 321). Experiments with derivation (*slovotvorčestvo*), the verbal equivalent of a mathematician's work with imaginary numbers or non-Euclidean geometries, are legitimized by the inherent properties of Russian. Should writers submit to their native language, should they reorient Russian literature towards its true roots, a mystical union might occur between the people and the land they inhabit—and a glimpse of Russia's national archetype might be achieved.

The center of Xlebnikov's attention is the sphere of language rather than the psyche, yet the analysis of the problem of contemporary culture—its divergence from its roots—is quite similar to Ivanov's. The cure proposed is not *mifotvorčestvo* but rather *slovotvorčestvo*. Was Xlebnikov's use of the latter term influenced by the model of the key term in Ivanov's theoretical writings? That this might be the case, and that Xlebnikov took seriously possible links between verbal experimentation and myth is shown in a number of his experimental poems, including those he sent Ivanov. These texts have few obvious links to extratextual mythological traditions, but they *feel* like myth:

И я свирел в свою свирель.  
И мир хотел в свою хотелъ.  
Мне послушные свивались звезды в плавный кружеток.  
Я свирел в свою свирель, выполняя мира рок.

(Xlebnikov 1940: 95)

#### *Working with Myth: Remizov and Xlebnikov*

In assessing the causes of the differences in Remizov's and Xlebnikov's handling of annotations to their works, I pointed to the overall aesthetic of Futurism as a movement. There is also a more fundamental reason: Remizov's and Xlebnikov's divergent views of their roles as verbal artists. This difference in how they see themselves also affects how the two work with myth and folklore.

Remizov sometimes simply arranges what he borrows from ethnographic sources; sometimes he amplifies what is already present in them;<sup>16</sup> at other times, he intricately interweaves various strands of folklore, apparently faithful to the sources from which they are borrowed. An example of this last type of technique is "O bezumii Irodiadinom," where by fixing the execution of John the Baptist to the *zimnie svjatki*, by furthering the common confusion of two popular St. John's feasts, he is able to achieve an overlaying of pagan and Christian motifs into a characteristic example of

"dvoeverie." As has been shown already, he looks to outside sources to legitimize his approach—i.e., since they reflect the true spiritual life of the Russian people, in the social reality itself.

Xlebnikov's ideas about the relationship of artist and audience may derive from the same source as Remizov's (i.e. Ivanov), but, over the years, he takes an increasingly independent stance with respect to the world he describes. At various times, particularly during the pre-war heyday of Hylaea, he sees himself as one of a band of heroic activists, the *budetljane*. Later, he more and more depicts himself as isolated and alone: literally, a prophet scorned by the crowd, a teacher of higher truths (about time, space, numbers, etc.).

Two somewhat contradictory factors are at work in Xlebnikov's poetic system. One is his tendency towards precision of sight. Although his life style is diametrically opposed to that of the scholar, and although he eschews giving the reader guidance as to sources, a great deal of the time Xlebnikov is uncannily precise about what he describes. When one tries to trace one of his images or motifs, the operative assumption may be that it is whole, that it will match exactly some source or other. Like a primitive myth-maker, he is precise in his naming, forcing the modern reader who would understand him to share in his knowledge of taxonomies of the animal or plant kingdoms.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, Xlebnikov repeatedly goes beyond his sources, beyond tradition. Whether projecting himself as a war-like *budetljanin* in the cross-temporal and cross-cultural "Deti Vydry," or, late in life, as Zangezi—a Zarathustra-like figure whose analogues are to be found in Hindu traditions—Xlebnikov imposes his own myth upon the world. He is not content to take the world as he finds it: not when, for example, it is one where the *priobretateli* oppress the *izobretateli*, where the old send the young to die in war, and where D'Anthès murders Puškin. The myths he creates in response to a world he often finds unacceptable, myths of historical recurrence and retribution, of the salvific power of language, need no genealogy at the margins of the text.

The difference in how Remizov and Xlebnikov handle myth and folklore may be shown by comparing their treatment of the same image. There are a number of cases in the writings of the two modernist verbal masters where we find coincidences of themes and/or borrowings;<sup>18</sup> the ground for the present comparison is provided by the image of a *kamennaja baba*, one of the ancient monuments that dot the steppes of Russia.

One of the stories in "K morju-okeanu" bears the title "Kamennaja baba." In the story, the two protagonists, Alalej and Lejla, look at the

stone figure and hear an etiological legend:

Я баба не простая, я Каменная Баба, — провешалась Баба, — много веков стою я в вольной степи. А прежде у Бога не было солнца на небе, одна была тьма, и все мы в потемках жили. От камня свет добывали, жгли лучинку. Бог и выпустил из-за пазухи солнце. Дались тут все диву, смотрят, ума не приложат. А пуще мы, бабы! Пovyносили мы решета, давай набирать свет в решета, внести в ямы. Ямы-то наши земляные без окон стояли. Подыдем решето к солнцу, наберем полным-полно света, через край льется, а только что в яму — и нет ничего. А Божье солнце все выше и выше, уже припекать стало. Притомились мы, бабы, сильно, хоть света и не добыли. А солнце так и жжет, хоть полезай в воду. Тут и вышло такое — начали мы плевать на солнце. И превратились вдруг в камни.

(Remizov 1911: 215-16)

Remizov's note to the tale, found for the first time in the book publication, points to Afanas'ev as his source. Indeed, the section on giants in *Poètičeskie vozrenija slavjan na prirodu* contains a brief note that links the statues of the south of Russia with legends of giants turned to stone: ". . . devica nesla vedra s vodoju i okamenela—namek na te kružki, iz kotoryx oblačnye devy l'jut na zemlju doždi. Podobnye predstavlenija svjazyvajutsja na juge Rossii s kamennymi babami" (Afanas'ev 1868: 677).

In Remizov's tale, the "stone woman" is a witness to the deepest past; the product of divine punishment for sin, she warns the two travellers against misconduct. The imaginative product of myth, she fully participates in the world of the marvelous brought into being by the author.

The motif of the *kamennaja baba* is a fairly frequent one in Xlebnikov. It is used in different ways. Here, we shall consider two cases. In the first, in the Civil War narrative poem "Noč v okoπε," a trio of stone statues are witnesses to the battles between the Reds and the Whites, and to the broader suffering of the fratricidal conflict:

Чтоб путник знал об старожиле,  
Три девы степи сторожили,  
Как жрицы радостной пустыни  
Но руки каменной богини,  
Держали ног суровый камень,  
Они зернистыми руками  
К ногам суровым опускались  
И плоско мертвыми глазами,  
Былых таинственных свиданий,  
Смотрели каменные бабы.  
Смотрело  
Каменное тело  
На человеческое дело.

(SP I: 182)

In this passage, the statues function as symbols of the flow of history, and are not linked to any overt folkloric or mythological associations.

In another poem of the Civil War period, "Kamennaja baba," Xlebnikov takes a different tack. In the poem, the lyrical "I" initially wonders at the statues in the steppe: "Oni surovyy i žestoki,/ Ix busy—grubaja rez'ba/ I skazok kamnja o vostoке/ Ne ponimajut jastreba." (SP III: 32). He expresses a kind of mock sympathy for one of them: "Zdes' stojat' osuždena/ Kak pristanišče kozjavok,/ Bez grebnja i bez bulavok" (SP III: 34). But he ends with a bold, transforming image, in which a butterfly transfers reason and life to the stone statue—an act that is rather transparently allegorical and is explicitly linked with the Revolution. The poem ends with a magnificent cosmic dance that obliterates the common characteristics of matter:

Камень кумирный, вставай и играй  
Игор игроу и грома,—  
Раньше слепец, сторож овец,  
Смело смотри большим мотыльком,  
Видающий Млечным Путем.  
Ведь пели пули в глыб лоб, без злобы, чтобы  
Сбросил оковы гроб мотыльковый, падал в гробы гроб.  
Гоп! Гоп! в небо прыгай гроб!  
Камень шагай, звезды кружи гопаком.  
В небо смотри мотыльком.  
Помни пока эти веселые звезды, пламя блистающих звезд,  
На голубом сапоге гопака  
Шляпкою блещущий гвоздь.  
Более радуг в цвета!  
Бурного лёта лета!  
Дева степей уж не та!

(SP III: 34-35).

There is myth at work here, but it is one that is wholly a product of the poet's imagination. Both textual authority and the reality of the extratextual object are set aside in the bold mythologem of the dancing, liberated statue.

### Conclusion

Despite specific links between the poetic systems of Ivanov, Remizov, and Xlebnikov, their handling of similar tasks reveals substantial typological differences. In broad terms, the opposition shapes around Ivanov and Remizov on one side (with divergences between them) and Xlebnikov on the other; in other words, between a Symbolism defined sufficiently broadly to embrace Remizov, and Futurism, linked to Symbolism at the outset but soon enough its vocal opponent. The discussion suggests that the notion of poetic schools in fin-de-siècle Russian literary history has considerable



validity, and should not be replaced by the attractive, yet by far too equalizing concept of modernism.

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#### NOTES

1. Deschartes' assessment of Ivanov's emotional attitude towards Remizov needs to be viewed cautiously. Charlotte Rosenthal has kindly noted to me that, in a letter of 8 August 1906 to Georgij Čulkov, Remizov mentions that he is at Ivanov's almost daily (Otdel Rukopisej GBL, fond 371, karton No. 4, ed. xr. 46) (private communication).

2. Deschartes initially promised to discuss this in the third volume of the Ivanov *Sobranie Sočinenij* (Ivanov 1974: 737). Her comments now appear to be scheduled for one of the later volumes.

3. «Вихрь силы вещи Иванова повествует о темном бессильном порыве, гордо отказывающе<мся> от неправого счастья ради правого несчастья. Так как право есть корень счастья в будущем, то эта вещь повествует о русском несчастье, отказывающемся от счастья Европы или завешенн<ого> занав<есом> настоящего счастья внуков. Подчеркивает, что эти вещи суть верхушки творчества именованных твор<цов> безличную народную единицу» (Xlebnikov 1940: 425).

4. By comparison Sologub, whose works Xlebnikov apparently knew quite well, and whose *Nav'i čary* he intended at one point to take as a model for a major text of his own (Xlebnikov 1940: 354-355), becomes transformed into the uncomplimentary "F. Gubosal" in a draft of Kručenyx and Xlebnikov manifesto for *Rykajuščij Parnas* (SP V: 249).

5. Central'nyj Gosudarstvennyj Arxiv Literatury i Iskusstva, fond 527 (Xlebnikov), op. 1, ed. 92, 1. 14, 28ob, 48ob.

6. This aspect of Xlebnikov's ideological makeup is noted in another Xlebnikov letter to Markov: "Planetčik, 'xotel orussit' ves' zemnoj šar" (Markov 1982: 438). On Xlebnikov's political views before World War I, see Baran (1985b: 70-71, 87).

7. The accusations against Remizov appeared for the first time in the article "Pisatel' ili spisyvateľ?", *Birževye vedomosti*, No. 11160, 16 June 1909.

8. This is not merely quixotic or appropriately bizarre: there is the potential of a more serious undercurrent, linked with Xlebnikov's nationalism and possible contact with the Black Hundred movement. Cf. in the letter: «Мы должны выступить защитниками чести русского писателя, этого храма, взятого на откуп — как гайдамаки, — с оружием в руках и кровию . . . Пусть Ал<ексей> Мих<айлович> помнит, что каждый из друзей гордо встанет у барьера защищать его честь и честь вообще русского писателя, как гайдамак вставал за право родины» (Xlebnikov 1940: 359). Similar sentiments, explicitly associated with the Black Hundreds, appear in the story "Velik-den" and in "Snežimočka."

9. Alex Shane suggests that this allusion is likely biographically based (private communication). Insects also play a visible role in a number of Remizov's works.

10. The comparison of the texts in *Posolon'* and *Limonar'* with their initial publications was made possible by Alex Shane, who generously made available to me his rich Remizov materials.

11. A similar reference to the Russian literary tradition of not indicating the sources of folkloric borrowings is found in Prišvin's defense of Remizov against the plagiarism charge: "Po literaturnoj tradicii, načinaja ot Puškina, narodnaja poezija ispol'zuetsja u nas bez ssylok na istočniki" (Prišvin 1909).

12. What is also striking here is the similarity in method. Both the *Posolon'* and *Limonar'* collections and *Rossija v pis'menax* underscore the importance of genealogy. Whether it is a myth reconstructed by the poet, or a medieval text rescued from obscurity and placed before a modern reader, Remizov is concerned with some kind of verisimilitude, with authority for the "message." In the later collection, where the author is present as an intermediary, one who confesses to his "pristrastie k staroj bumage i bukvam, neponjatnym dlja nunešnego glaza" (Remizov 1922 [1982]: 11), this is done directly in the text. In the earlier works, that function is assigned to the mechanism of the notes.

Two examples from *Rossija v pis'menax*, where, in Remizov's words, "zatejal po obryvyškam, po nikomu nenužnym zapisjam i polustertym nadpisjam, iz meločej, iz ničego predstavit' našu Rossiju" (Remizov 1922 [1982]: 14):

(a) In "Policija. Bezalaberno": «В белой обложке лежит на моем столе толстое дело Ветлужского Полицейского Управления. 'Дело о записках, прибитых в ночь с 8 на 9 августа к квартирам в городе Ветлуге'». (Remizov 1922 [1982]: 36);

(b) In "Sunduk. Elisavetinskoe": «В новолодожском Загвоздь в прохожей комнате старого Философского дома долгие годы стоял расписной сундук.

Про сундук знали одно, что хранится в нем дедовское добро, покойного еще Никиты Егоровича Философова, двоюродного пра-прадеда нашего Дмитрия Владимировича Философова, — какая-то ветошь, которая никому не нужна.

Сам Никита Егорович помер в 1779 году, сын его Иларион Никитич в конце 30-х, а внук — Алексей Иларионович в 1874-м.» (Remizov 1922 [1982]: 51).

Remizov's emphasis on annotations in the early collections may also derive from the kind of material he is using: it is essentially oral, kept in the memory of the people, rather than set down on paper, however fugitive, as in the *written* tradition.

13. Prišvin also points to the analogy between Remizov's annotations and the medieval textual tradition: "Pišet on eti ssylki, poľzujas' zavetom srednevekovyx xudožnikov: ne znať v sebe masterstva, oblegčať drugim trudnyj put'" (Prišvin 1909).

14. The explanatory function of annotations is sometimes handled by Xlebnikov within the text itself, either through metalinguistic formulations, as in the poem "Vidite, persy, vot ja idu . . ." or by including a kind of lexicon within the work. Thus, in *Zangezi*, the poetic oration in Level VIII delivered by Xlebnikov's poetic-prophetic alter ego, which makes heavy use of the so-called *zvezdnyj jazyk*, one of Xlebnikov's poetic idioms, is followed by the crowd's reading of a leaflet that contains the meanings of the units of the "language of the stars" (SP III: 332-33).

15. My comments are largely restricted to questions of myth. For a detailed discussion of the problem of folklore in Xlebnikov's works, see Baran (1985c).

16. Cf. Prišvin's remarks (1909): "Možno dvumja sposobami sdelať xudož. pereskaz proizvedenij narodnoj poezii: 1) razvitiem podrobnostej (amplifikacija), 2) pribavleniem k tekstu." Remizov (1909) also uses the term "amplifikacija."

17. Remizov shares this precision of sight: "Izbegať obščix opredelenij: esli govoritsja o derev'jax, nado oboznačit: bereza, sosna. Ne nado obščix opredelenij, kak 'toska,' 'zavist', a nado pokazat'. Nikakix 'devušek' i 'molodyx ljudej.'" (Kodrjanskaja 1959: 129).

18. Some examples of these coincidences in the ethnographic materials (drawn from Alex Shane's Remizov collection):

a) One of Remizov's later stories, "Mavka. Neizdannaja karpatskaja skazka" (*Novosele*, No. 6, Oct.-Nov. 1943, 3-5), deals with a horrifying supernatural figure, part woman-part monster, of Ukrainian folklore. The figure of the *mava* is frequent in Xlebnikov; in the period of World War and Civil War it assumes apocalyptic dimensions.

b) Both writers make use of a ritual common in Russia, the *poxorony mux*, that takes place on 1 September (O.S.). The ritual, as Remizov indicates in his annotation to the brief story

"Pogrebenie muxi, bloxi i komara," was used to rid peasant houses of insects: "složilos' pover'e, budto v domax, gde ix voditsja mnogo, stoit tol'ko zakopat' po 1 sentjabrja po odnomu 'zverju' i vse oni vyvedutsja." (Remizov 1910: 253). In Remizov's story, the narrator, without explaining the underlying motivation (this task is carried out by the annotation), carefully describes how he performs the ritual. The minor episode is filled with details of how each insect is caught; once placed in their vegetable coffin, they are carried by the narrator and thrown into the river. The text which creates the atmosphere of a solemn ritualistic burial, suitable for the burial of a human: "I brosil ja korobku v reku,—poplyla korobka: muxa, bloxa i komar, i plyla po reke v more—okean. Ono primet ix, ono ne mozet ne prinjat' zasnuvšix zverej, i soxranit tam na svoej grudi, čtoby vesnoj vernut'" (Remizov 1910: 200). Xlebnikov uses the ritual as a minor detail in his calendar-based poem "Rus', zelenaja v mesjace Aj!". Discussing village life in September, he notes: "A večerom žužit vereteno/ Devy s voplem pritivornym,/ Xoronjat boga mux,/ Zapekši s malinoj v pirog" (SP III: 114). On Xlebnikov's poem, see Baran (1985c).

c) Finally, in Remizov's "Na krasnom pole," a lamentation on the state of Revolution-torn Russia, we find interpolated twice, within a solemn text, the lines "Io, ia, colk! Io, ia, io, colk! Io, ia, io, colk!/ Pac, pac, pac, pac, pac, pac, pac, pac" (Remizov 1917: 73, 78). This is the famous song of the *rusalki* that Xlebnikov uses in his earlier folkloric pastiche "Noč v Galicii," which he borrowed from I. Saxarov's *Skazanija ruskogo naroda o semejnoj žizni svoix predkov*. In Remizov, the "transsense" song serves as a counterpoint to the lamentation, an intrusion of the primitive, pagan, wild element into the tragic modernity.

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