

The "Foolishness for Christ" and Its Character Images in Remizov's Creation

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ABSTRACT

Saint foolishness means the foolishness for Christ. In Russian folk culture, the people of foolishness for Christ are the people of gods, and they are sacred Orthodox people. In Russian literature, a series of foolishness for Christ images have been created in both the saints' biographical literature and secular literature. Especially in secular literature, the images of foolishness for Christ are more diversified. One type is the writer's description of the true existence of the foolishness for Christ in history, while the other is the fictional character image created by the author based on his own understanding of the phenomenon of foolishness for Christ. Writer Remizov, as a modernist writer, is considered to be the representative of the foolishness for Christ, and he has created a series of artistic images of the foolishness for Christ. In a series of works such as the novels "Sisters of the Cross", "The Pond" and the memoir essay "Seeing the World with Slightly Modified Eyes" and other works, he has created foolishness for Christ style characters. These people of foolishness for Christ all embody the characteristics of "rootlessness", "prophecy" and "non-this-world nature". As the cultural carrier of the world outlook and values of Russian civil society, "foolishness for Christ" plays an important role in the development of Russian society.

Keywords: Remizov, Creation, Foolishness for Christ, Image of foolishness for Christ.

1. INTRODUCTION

Foolishness for Christ, in Russian, it is *юродство Христа ради* (stupidity for Christ). The word *юродивый* is interpreted in the V.I.Dal dictionary as: "Naturally mad and foolish people; in folk culture, people of foolishness for Christ are people of gods. Their unconscious behavior has profound meanings are considered to be prophets; There is also the term foolishness for Christ in the church, which means stupidity, loss of reason, arrogance, etc." [1]⁶⁶⁹. It is also explained in the "Great Russian-Chinese Dictionary" as: "dementia, stupid, mad; (used as a noun) idiot, fool, transposed as a person with no real life ability; (used as a noun) crazy monk (often regarded as a prophet)". [2]²⁷⁰³ In these two dictionaries, the word "*юродивый*" is explained first from the etymology of the word, and then the word is described from the perspective of folk culture and church meaning.

Regarding the development of the relationship between the "foolishness for Christ" style

characters and the Christian church, Chinese scholar Wang Zhigeng explained it in his book "The Dimension of Foolishness for Christ: A Cultural Interpretation of Russian Literary Canon" (2013) as "the phenomenon of sage and folly originated from Folk madness". [3]⁴ The interpretation of this by the Christian Church is more from "an act of asceticism within the framework of Christian doctrine (подвижничество). Because madness at least conforms to two aspects of the Christian world's norms: self-deprecation and abandonment of the secularity. These two points are also the two necessary conditions for salvation. Therefore, the folk madness becomes 'madness for Christ (юродство Христа ради) — foolishness for Christ under the interpretation of the church. In this way, the foolishness for Christ was initially recognized and understood as a religious phenomenon. However, with the development of society, the foolishness for Christ gradually became a cultural phenomenon and was recognized. For example, in Likhachev's "Laughs of Ancient Rus" (Смех в

Древней Руси, 1984), Н. Nikolsky's "History of the Russian Church" (История русской церкви, 1985) and other works, the unique phenomenon of foolishness for Christ in Russian culture is mentioned. In China, Professor Wang Zhigeng's "The Dimension of Stupidity: A Cultural Interpretation of the Classics of Russian Literature" (2013) treats foolishness for Christ as a kind of overall Russian culture, examines the structural relationship between the foolishness for Christ culture and the Russian literary classics, and makes a new interpretation of Russian literature from this perspective. Here will not repeat.

Although from the perspective of modern medicine, madness or ignorance is a kind of mental illness, in the past, this phenomenon was not regarded as evil, and even aroused the affection of the folks. It is no wonder that there is a very lovable artistic image "Ivan the Fool" in Russian folk literature. In their view, insanity is also an irrational state leading to the divinity of God. Therefore, in literary works, whether it is saint biographical literature or secular literature, a series of images of sage and fool have been created. Especially in secular literature, the images of foolishness for Christ are more diversified. One type is the writer's description of the true existence of the foolishness for Christ in history, while the other is the fictional character image created by the author based on his own understanding of the phenomenon of foolishness for Christ. In the history of Russian literature, from Pushkin, the father of Russian literature, to contemporary writers, there are many figures of foolishness for Christ: Nikkorka in "Boris Godonov", Duke Myshkin in Dostoevsky's "Idiot", Mikk in Zagoskin's "Yuri Miloslavsky or the Russians in 1612" (1829), Grisha in Tolstoy's "Childhood", etc. These characters have the characteristics of foolishness for Christ. Similar characters also appeared in A. K. Tolstoy's "Duke Sherebryan", Leskov's "Sheramur", A.H. Ostrovsky's "Tyrant Dmitry and Vasily Shuysky" (1866), Dostoyevsky's "The Demons" and "Brother Karamazov" and so on.

2. REPRESENTATIVE OF "FOOLISHNESS FOR CHRIST" — REMIZOV

At the same time, in Russian literature, there is also a modern writer who not only is considered to be the representative of the foolishness for Christ, but also created a series of artistic images of the foolishness for Christ. This person is Remizov.

Regarding the relationship between Remizov and foolishness for Christ, people can understand it from two aspects. First, the artist himself always emphasizes, and even deliberately exaggerates his physical and physical defects. He has always thought of himself as an ugly person: short, hunchback, smashed nose, natural short-sightedness, etc., this series of natural physical characteristics make him one of the foolishness for Christ. In this regard, when Remizov recalled his life, he repeatedly emphasized these characteristics: "I always feel that I am not like anyone else. But this seems not to be God's favor, but to experience a sense of humiliation all the time. At the beginning of life, I felt like I was branded with 'Cain's Mark'" [4]³⁷, "I'm like a bad person who broke into the world. I seem to have lived a non-human life throughout my life, and I feel a sense of exile throughout my life." [4]⁹⁰ "I do feel that I am an ugly monster with Cain's mark, it's no wonder that throughout my life I always hear others yelling at me, 'Go away!'" [4]⁹⁶ The author calls himself "Уродина" (ugly monster). In fact, it not only refers to his ugly appearance, but also emphasizes the inner fit with "Юродивый" (foolishness for Christ), because these two words have a common root "юрод". And Remizov's body well embodies the typical characteristics of the traditional "foolishness for Christ": "lonely, helpless, humiliated, and homeless". [5]¹²⁹⁻¹³¹ These words are also keywords that Remizov often used when thinking about his own destiny. Remizov wrote in his autobiography in 1923: "I was named Alexei, the name of a pilgrim during the Roman period. This almost destined me to experience a kind of precariousness from my youth. The days of uncertainty and no settlement are all destined." [6]³¹² There is also a fragment in Remizov's life experience. On September 8, 1902, Remizov's debut work "The Married Girl Crying Wedding Song" was published in the Moscow newspaper "The Courier". When the work was published, the author used the pen name "H. Moldovanov" (Молдаванов). The author himself explained the origin of this pen name in his memoir essays as follows: "Schuglev likes to recall Voronezh, and often talks about a Ronin he met in Voronezh. This Ronin looks different from ordinary people and looks ugly, just like it is the legendary holy fool. People often insult him and defile him. He doesn't seem to have a name, and somehow some drunk villains often call him 'Moldavanov'. I thought at the time that there is no better pseudonym than "Moldavanov". Schuglev also agreed very much, so I got my pen name." [7]⁴⁵² In addition, another

characteristic of the traditional "foolishness for Christ" is voluntary suffering, which is specifically manifested as enduring hardship in life, insults from others, scolding, slander, and so on. And Remizov has been with this all his life. He was subjected to various slanders and insults, such as calling him a "liar", some people exposed his plagiarized "literary scandal", some people call him "crude and despicable", "the clown in literature", "reactionary", "scumbag", "scum of the Soviet Union" and so on. [4]⁹⁰ When Remizov faced all this, he never thought of explaining it in the past. Instead, he regarded all this as an arrangement of God, and sometimes even expressed a morbid sense of satisfaction about it. He has mentioned this point many times in his text: "When someone abuses me, I never defend, not only I am not defenseless, but also often deliberately get closer to it... I patiently accept everyone's abuse and exposure. Sometimes I even hope that all this will come more violently!" [4]⁹⁰ "I enjoy it when others reveal my faults or mistakes. What I experience in my heart is a desire to be degraded, because only when others insult me, I will feel at ease, and when others praise me, I always feel uncomfortable." [4]⁹³ On another point, Remizov compared himself with the foolishness for Christ in the book "Seeing the World with Slightly Modified Eyes", and his focus is more on his sense of suffering: "Can I forget the smooth stone stove? (Note to the author of this article: This refers to what happened when the writer fell from a chest of drawers when he was a child and then fell on a stone stove and broke his cheeks, ears, and eyes.) There are also the altars in the Nikolai Church by the Navelkaya River, and the shackles worn by the ascetic monks in the Basilica of the Ascension of Vasily. No matter how I look at them, I always feel that these shackles are for me. So, I wore shackles and handcuffs and drove in this world in the long life that followed." [7]⁹ In addition, Remizov also explained from another aspect that he has the same root and the same origin with foolishness for Christ: "These holy fools belong to our Russia. Because of them, the entire Moscow and the entire land will not be deserted. Only the colorful flowers will bloom on the Red Square in Moscow and the Cathedral of Vasily will stand tall here." [8]²²¹ Remizov also often evokes people's memories of Moscow's people of foolishness for Christ in his works, such as Maxim Vasily John. Similarly, Remizov kindly called "Moscow is the cradle of his own growth" [8]²²⁴, which also implies that he shares the same root with the foolishness for Christ in Moscow. The "foolishness for Christ" characteristic of Remitov's body is not only on the

surface, but also in the subjective impression of contemporary critics and memoir writers. The writer's contemporaries created a lot of myths around whether Remizov himself was foolishness for Christ, so Remizov's "image of foolishness for Christ" once survived in the memoirs and biographies of his contemporaries. The famous cultural critic Stepon wrote in his memoirs when he recalled his acquaintance with Remizov: "If you take off his suit and shirt, Remizov is a penance of foolishness for Christ under the wall of the monastery." [9]²⁹⁸ In response, Gippius retorted: "Does this mean Alexei Mikhail? This is the smartest and most rigorous person. He seems to be able to see through everyone. If he is said to be a 'Holy Stupid', he must be crazy." [10]⁶⁵ Regarding the relationship between Remizov himself and the holy fools, the literary critic A. Sinyavsky made a good explanation in his book "A Remizov's Literary Mask". He believes that both the "foolishness for Christ" side of Remizov's life, or the phenomenon of foolishness for Christ that he deliberately portrays the autobiographical protagonist in his works, have gradually become an indispensable part of the writer's life, and even have built his own mythological system in his creation and life.

The religious philosopher И.А. Ilyin made the following judgment on Remizov's "foolishness for Christ": "He (referring to Remizov — the author's note) is a demented wizard in Russian literature. He is the foolishness for Christ born for the comfort of the soul and for the revival of the myth." At the same time, as far as the artistic objects created by the writer are concerned, the writer deliberately creates various images of foolishness for Christ, and Ilyin also distinguishes foolishness for Christ into religious and literary ones. In his view, Remizov is a holy stupid on the boundaries of Russian culture. He denied the traditional literary form and rationality, when all this became an obstacle to literary creation. Remizov played the role of a sage in art, and joked with people seriously: "The essence of this foolishness for Christ is to liberate the mind from the requirements of clarity and reason, and from the daily supervision of reason, from the necessary methods of feeling and judgment, and from traditional literary forms, themes and styles..." [11]¹⁰³

3. CHARACTERS WITH THE STYLE OF "FOOLISHNESS FOR CHRIST" IN THE TEXT

In addition, Remizov has created a series of images of foolishness for Christ in many texts, such as the boiler worker in "The Pond", Napoleon in "Watches", and the little fool Mattelona in "The Indefatigable Tambourine" (Неуёмный бубен), the female protagonist Akumovna in "Sisters of the Cross", Parfini in "Ivan the Terrible" and Prokopi in the autobiographical essay "Music Teacher" and so on. The protagonist chef Akumovna (Акумовна) in "Sisters of the Cross" does not appear in her first name and surname throughout the story, but only refers to her in the form of her father's name, which shows the natural relationship between her and her parents directly inherited. In addition to the father's name "Akumovna", what she got from her father was his father's blessing to her before his death, "rolling around like a stone in the world" [12]¹²⁴⁻¹²⁶. And this dying blessing, in essence, is complementary to her paternity that she inherited directly from her father's blood. The root of "Акумовна" is "Акум", which makes it easy for readers to read the metaphorical meaning of this patriarchal name: "suffering" (мука), so it can be seen that the image of Akumovna is the incarnation of suffering Russia. Akumovna was portrayed by the writer as an image exactly like the foolishness for Christ who wandered on the land of Russia in the past. She is not only the same as the foolishness for Christ in appearance, life, way of thinking, and inner consciousness, but also has supernatural powers like a prophet.

In the novel, it is mentioned many times that her life creed was "Don't blame anyone!", and the entire Burkov compound respectfully called her "the pious." Akumovna looked silly when she saw people or laughed. She never looked at others directly, but often tilted her head and squinted. She had never been angry with anyone, and her personality was extremely docile. Therefore, the entire compound liked her very much. One of the characteristics of Akumovna's "foolishness for Christ" is that she likes to stay with children. As long as she had money, she often lent money to others without having to repay it. This just reflects Akumovna's abandonment and self-abuse of material and mundane affairs as the foolishness for Christ. At the same time, she was very reverent and prayed for a long time. "Akumovna knelt in the kitchen and prayed before three magic lamps that

never extinguished. She was praying for her wife, wife's brother, and her son." [12]⁵⁴

Therefore, Akumovna is a devout Christian. She is like a mysterious foolishness for Christ who perceives the truth of God, with supreme wisdom that is completely different from the sound reason of mortals. Akumovna's words and deeds have the characteristics of foolishness for Christ. She is short in stature and has dark skin. Her face is black like a beetle, and she moves very vigorously, often walking like flying, but it seems that she is stomping on the spot. In the text, the writer pointed out many times that Akumovna tilted her head and smirked or stomped her feet like a "crazy monk". Akumovna saw Verushka being abused by adults in the Bulkov compound. She wanted to protect the little girl, but she didn't know what she could do to make the little girl no longer degenerate, so she thought of "to be naked" to see the emperor and seek refuge. According to the teachings of Christ, the lunatics in the church should voluntarily give up all the worldly things, uphold an ascetic attitude, eat and drink modestly, and even need to be naked to show their humility and restraint.

Akumovna's childhood experience is typically holy and foolish. She was abandoned by her family in her early years, Instead, she entered the boundless universe and began a life of wandering and wandering, just like the curse that Akumovna received before her father's death, like a stone rolling around in the this world. She lacked family affection. She lost her family. She wandered all her life to the Bulkov compound in Petersburg, thus becoming not only an exile in the secular traditions, but also a voluntary exile in spirit. Judging from Akumovna's life experience, the truth is in line with the rootlessness of this foolishness for Christ culture. She lost her family, wandered and lived in no fixed place. Abandoned by her family, she naturally stayed away from secular ethics and lived in a state of transcending secular ethics by relying solely on faith in God throughout her life. So she became such a kind of person: "They have no family affection and do not know how to accept family affection; they have no family, nor can they enter family life, and they wander throughout their lives; they are not only exiles in secular traditions, but also voluntary exiles in spirit. Therefore, only cutting off the roots of the world is the ultimate way of salvation." [3]⁷⁶ For Akumovna as the foolishness for Christ, this kind of wandering is a state representation of her spiritual existence. On the one hand, wandering is the same as retreat, but they refuse to obey the order of the world. They do

not belong to any administrative area. However, from another perspective, she has been involved in the worldly life, showing the world the process of asceticism with wandering behavior.

The pious Akumovna, judging from her ID, is a 32-year-old unmarried woman, but she herself has repeatedly insisted that she is exactly 50 years old. In the short story "My Dear" by contemporary writer Ye Rochenkova, there is also such foolishness for Christ. The protagonist Lenka also has a misunderstanding of his own age, "she said to some people that she was five years old, to others that she was seven years old, and to others she told them that she was a thousand years old." [13]¹⁹³ The fallacy of their own age recognition is very consistent with the dispelling function of the Russian foolishness for Christ culture. This dispelling is a denial of the single vector continuity of time, which means that the foolishness for Christ got rid of the shackles of objective time to some extent in order to obtain true spiritual freedom. As the cultural historian Kolesov said: "foolishness for Christ transcends the logical relationship that must be observed between thought and things. For him, reality is absolute, and thought is also a thing. He is at the breaking point between secular things and existence, heaven and earth, thought and things, and he is outside of time and space. Space does not exist, because how can a point be called space? Time also does not exist, because the eternity of the truth that has been penetrated has made it free of people's imaginary time limits. At the point where Dasein intersects with the past and the future, everything exists here — time is Dasein, reality, and real; foolishness for Christ was able to prophesy because he was at a point that no one else could see, but only his eyes could reach." [3]¹¹⁹ In addition, the most prominent aspect of Akumovna's image as a foolishness for Christ in the novel is her identity as a prophet. She was very keen on divination and interpretation of dreams, and was very effective, just like a prophet. Akumovna "will use willow branches and candles on carriages to fortunetelling, and in winter according to the ice flowers on the window glass. But her card divination was the most accurate." [12]³¹

At the same time, in "Music Teacher" Remizov described the characteristics of the foolishness for Christ very delicately, "Many years later, I can recall that autumn, when we lived in the place where a 'foolishness for Christ was active, some people said that he is a 'saint', but everyone preferred to call him a 'plaster'. He often helps people in distress, but he behaves strangely and

badly. He often walks with a cane, like a blind man, even though his eyes are good. People often talk about this in front of him without shying away from it. His eyes seem to be able to see through people, making people afraid and respectful of him. But he is very kind to the children, so the puppies and the children are not afraid of him... Once a group of our children came back from school and met him by the church. I recognized him instantly, because I had never seen people around me like him. We stopped, expecting him to say something cheerful, there is always something in him that can arouse our curiosity, prompting us to come closer to see him. Take a closer look, he is not like anyone in our lives, not like the workers in the factory, not like the businessmen or teachers. He looks neither young nor old, but he seems very young and very old. Surprisingly, there was light on his face, and the broken pot hung in front of his chest aroused people's infinite pity. Just as he caught up with us, he tripped, and I suddenly felt that he was looking at me. There was a vague and faint feeling, as if he sipped at me twice, and then yelled and left. I was stunned by myself, my whole body was shaking, and I couldn't figure out what was going on for a while." [14]¹⁹⁷⁻¹⁹⁸

Fedya in "Seeing the World with Slightly Modified Eyes" has the typical characteristics and signs of foolishness for Christ. The writer noticed that there was a certain Dostoevsky look on Fedya's face. He was covered with various small iron pots that looked like medals. His clothes were ragged, and his mouth was always yelling rhythmically: "Courbas", which is like the fool Anton in "The Career of the Altamonov Family" (1924-1925) (Дело Артамановых) in Gorky's works, who was always shouting "Куютыр-кайямас ". He always chats with crows, and lives in a deserted shack at night. No one knows where he comes from. The people around him just call him the Fejakastor Glazed Gold (Кастрюлькин) of foolishness for Christ. He lives on the charity of others, and likes children and puppies.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, the "foolishness for Christ" in Remizov's text not only possesses traditional characteristics, but also gives this image some new characteristics. In short, it can be concluded that the sacred stupidity as an image or a phenomenon is deeply hidden in Remizov's daily life and literary activities. Analyzing these will help people understand the writer's life and literary creation,

especially the autobiographical images in the works. The "rootlessness", "prophecy", and "non-worldliness" in these images of sacred fools help readers understand the cultural manifestations of the world outlook and values of Russian civil society. At the same time, the phenomenon of "foolishness for Christ" plays an important role in the development of Russian society.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Juan Zhang.

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