

FOLKLORE COMICISM IN THE PROSE OF TATYANA TOLSTOY

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14203175>

Abstract: The article analyzes the techniques of folk satire used in the stories of Tatyana Tolstaya to characterize images. Hyperbolization, travesty, depiction of the living as nonliving, popular in folk humor culture, are fruitfully used in many stories of Tatyana Tolstaya in order to reveal the crisis of the modern world, spiritual degradation.

Key words: comedy; folk humor; intertext; hyperbole.

Tatyana Tolstaya often uses the comic in those aspects that were characteristic of the original folk humor. One of such principles of folklore satire is that the comic is opposed to the tragic and the sublime. "Comic is not in the physical nature of man, nor in his spiritual nature, but in such a relationship between them, in which physical nature reveals the shortcomings of spiritual nature," emphasized V. Ya. Propp [1]. In the story "Night," the comic is perceived as tragic and sublime, because it is connected with the consciousness of a sick man, Alexei Petrovich, comprehending the crisis-ridden world around him. Alexei Petrovich, for example, is sure that he can become a writer: "Why not? He will want to and he will. He will take a piece of paper, a pencil and will be a writer" [2]. The funny thing in this episode is due to the moron's confidence in his genius. The hero is contrasted with Ivan the Fool from satirical Russian fairy tales, who is confident in the correctness of his absurd actions (he puts hats on tree stumps so that they don't freeze). Tatyana Tolstaya said: "I am an observer by nature. You look and think: "God, what a wonderful theater of the absurd, a theater of stupidity, a theater of fools... Why do we all, adults, play these funny games?" [3]. The story "They Sat on the Golden Porch" is told by a child, so it is filled with playful laughter. The neighbor Uncle Pasha is both King Solomon and the enchanted prince, he opens the door to Aladdin's cave, and Veronica Vikentyevna is a greedy queen. Through the comic, the writer expresses the main idea: life is a priceless gift. Tolstaya does not teach her heroes how to live, does not suggest a way out, but strives to show the value of any human life. "They leave this life," says the writer, "often without receiving something important, and, leaving, they are perplexed like children: the holiday is over, and where are the gifts? But life was a gift, and they themselves were a gift" [2, p. 148]. The real life of Simonov from the story "The Okkervil River" is depicted by the author comically: a noose for the soul, a vulgar and hateful life are all around. And the soul is "caught with a knife and fork." Just like the soul of the poet Grisha from the story "The Poet and the Muse." The struggle of two demons in Simeonov's soul, presented by Tatyana Tolstaya in the story "The Okkervil River," is filled with comedy. Life is depicted as two polar principles, which forces the hero to act. When Simeonov learns the address of the singer Vera Vasilievna, something unusual happens to him: "Simeonov listened to the arguing voices of two struggling demons: one insisted on throwing the old woman out of his head, locking the doors tighter, occasionally opening them for Tamara, living

as he had lived before, loving in moderation, languishing in moderation, while the other demon – a mad youth with a consciousness clouded by the translation of bad books – demanded to go, to run, to find Vera Vasilievna” [2, p. 338].

The humor in the story "The Poet and the Muse" is based on the materialization of the spiritual: suffocating smoke pours out of the poems, which makes the wife cough, and immortality is replaced by the poet's skeleton, handed over to a medical institute. The hero of the story interprets and brings to life the famous lines from Pushkin's "Monument" in a very original way: he sells his skeleton for 60 rubles to the Academy of Sciences, hoping that in this way "it will outlive its ashes and escape decay, that it will not, as he feared, lie in the damp earth, but will stand among people in a clean, warm hall, laced and numbered, and the students - a cheerful crowd - will pat him on the shoulder, flick him on the forehead and treat him to a cigarette" [2, p. 267]. Tatyana Tolstaya masterfully uses the technique of comic substitution, used in folk satire, to show the lack of spirituality, the absence of love in the heart of the main character of the story "Dear Shura". Alexandra Ernestovna played all her life: "A simple piece on a tea xylophone: lid, lid, spoon, lid, rag ... The way back along the dark corridor with two teapots in hand is long. Twenty-three neighbors behind white doors listen: will she drip her filthy tea on our clean floor? She didn't drip, don't worry" [2, p. 48]. An established life, mechanical satisfaction of physical needs - that's what is most important for dear Shura. The author-narrator sees in her apartment a long corridor with a bandit's light in the kitchen, she is rummaging "in the dark coffin of the sideboard." "Laughter contains destructive and creative principles at the same time. Laughter disrupts the connections and meanings that exist in life. Laughter shows the meaninglessness and absurdity of the relationships that exist in the social world, the relationships that make sense of existing phenomena, the conventions of human behavior and the life of society. Laughter "stupefies," "reveals," "exposes," "bares," as D.S. Likhachev very accurately noted [4]. Ridiculing the "ease of being" of the former beauty and then old woman Alexandra Ernestovna, Tatyana Tolstaya asserts that the world of broken relationships and logically unjustified correlations must be restored on a high spiritual basis. In the stories "The Circle" and "The Moon Came Out of the Fog," comic folk techniques are also used to show the worthlessness of the lives lived by the heroes. Vasily Mikhailovich and Natasha, having lived to old age, realized that "the ground was frozen, the road was narrow and rocky, and ahead there was only one sign: exit" [2, p. 55]. And for Natasha, old age "laid out its usual tools." The author's humor is dark but truthful, as the characters feel the futility of their lives. The characters who live only with material dreams (Vasily Mikhailovich (The Circle), Rimma (Fire and Dust)), the author immerses in the "junk" that speculators sell, so that they can see that it is dust and decay that does not make life happy. People always laugh at the greedy, who collect only earthly riches. And in this regard, Alexei Petrovich is much wiser than other characters, although he also feels sorry for the box that he glued together. Yu. Borev emphasized: "Exaggeration and sharpening in satire are a manifestation of a more general pattern: a tendentious deformation of life material, which helps to reveal the most essential vice of phenomena worthy of satirical ridicule" [5]. In the story "The Moon Came Out of the Fog," such exaggeration and sharpening occurs in a girl who believes every word of the folklore text, and the moon, which forces her to drive, and lullaby about a top that "grabs you by the side and drags you into the woods": "In the evenings – gray wolves with red eyes, neatly placed between

the tables, waiting in vain for their sinister wolfish chance – no one will lie down on the edge of the bed, or in the cradle” [2, p. 129]. Natasha was exaggeratedly afraid of the desire to be loved, these natural desires seemed shameful to her: “Konovalov was clean, and Natasha was dirty, and she slammed all the shutters, walled up all the loopholes, stood like a deaf black tower, and Konovalov’s blue flashes went out on its cold surface” [2, p. 135]. Here the girl is likened to a lifeless, scary house that cannot be entered under any circumstances. This comparison evokes bitter laughter. In Russian folk poetry, the bride was compared to a “hut under the roof,” i.e. under a wedding headdress. Let’s compare: The new hut under the roof is beautiful, Ulyanushka under the headband is beautiful! The brothers come in – they look into the eyes! The sisters come in – they look into the eyes! [6, p. 145].

In Russian folklore, a girl is open to love, she is the basis of a "new hut", a new family. And Tolstaya's heroine is a walled-up hut. Thus, what unites folk laughter and Tatyana Tolstaya's comedy is that they are both aimed at the one laughing at himself, at his failures. Laughing, the hero portrays himself as a loser, a fool. In both hidden and open forms, this "fooling around" contains criticism of the existing world, and existing social relations are exposed.

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