

Title: From the Modern Epic to the Modern Romance of Success: Fedor Sologub's *A Legend in Creation*

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Published shortly after *The Petty Demon* – one of the defining texts of Russian Symbolism and one the most popular novels of the time – Fedor Sologub's next novel, *A Legend in Creation*, was met with scorching and univocal criticism. It was criticized for its odd and seemingly frivolous mixing of realism and fantasy, its distortion of the dramatic events of the revolution of 1905, suffusing eroticism, narrative and symbolic incoherence, and, last but not least, the all-too-evident narcissism of the author. After the critical storm abated, the work was quickly forgotten and today, despite generating a modest body of scholarship over the years, is still rarely mentioned in studies of Russian modernism.

In my paper I propose to reexamine the novel in the context of drastic changes that took place in the Russian literary field around the time of the novel's publication in 1908 and in particular with reference to its author's sudden rise to fame and his ambiguous status as a respected and well-paid modernist writer. In my analysis of *A Legend in Creation*, I will show how the form of this work evolved from a modern (perhaps even modernist) epic of national and spiritual rebirth to a success story, akin to such popular romances as Anastasia Verbitskaia's *Keys to Happiness*.

In showing how Fedor Sologub, a decadent par excellence, tried to come to terms with his own commercial and social success by means of his opus magnum, I hope to reignite scholarly interest in *A Legend in Creation* as a unique and very revealing document of Russian modernist culture. Also, by using this novel as an example, I want to show how important studying the social and financial aspects of the literary field is for our understanding of modernist literature.