

Title: Tolstoy and Folklore: The Case of *The Forged Coupon*

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Abstract:

Tolstoy's later novella *The Forged Coupon* is commonly read as vividly illustrating the writer's ethical ideas of universal brotherhood and nonresistance to evil. The paper places the novella in a very different context, namely, that of oral art, or folklore and views *The Forged Coupon* as a literary reenactment of an archaic cumulative plot. Juxtaposing cumulative folktales and *The Forged Coupon*, I show how the novella's adherence to the generic bounds of its principally amoral oral traditional source enables a narrative conflict that is incommensurate with the parameters of the ethical; accordingly, *The Forged Coupon* resists a moralistic or pedagogical reading.