



**СУПР  
ИРИК  
МАТАШОВСКИЙ**

**the world's anthology of**

**RUSSIAN**

**КУТУЗОВСКИЙ  
БУРИЯТ  
САМЯТ  
ПАСТЕРНАК  
МИТРОХИД  
ИХЛИБНИКОВ**

**КРУЧЕННИК**

—область—

1st ANTHOLOGY IN ENGLISH

\*\*\* MANIFESTOES \*\*\* PROSE

\*\*\* POETRY \*\*\* THEATER

\*\*\* THEORY \*\*\* CRITICISM

\*\*\* ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

Futurism was the most important and widespread Modernist movement in European culture. Artists as varied as Picasso, Boccioni, Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Mayakovsky have been associated with Futurism. —The Russians were certainly among the most raucous artists of Futurism, and they were a vital force in Russian culture from 1909 through the 1920s.

The early scandalous tours of Mayakovsky and Burlyuk shocked Russian art-lovers. The Futurists' painted faces, yellow smocks, button-holes filled with vegetables, and ritually smashed pianos sound more like a modern rock group than serious writers. But the poets revolutionized Russian verse, and at least two names become famous all over the world—Boris Pasternak and Vladimir Mayakovsky. And Russian Futurist-Constructivist art (including Kandinsky, Malevich & others) is now among the century's most expensive art.

THIS ANTHOLOGY contains key works by all of the leading writers of the movement, including Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, Guro, Burlyuk, Pasternak, Kruchenykh & others, beginning with the most important manifesto, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste."

The anthology also includes critical and programmatical state-











**GURO  
BRIK  
MAYAKOVSKY**

the ardis anthology of

# **RUSSIAN FUTURISM**

**BURLYUK  
ZAMYATIN  
PASTERNAK  
MEYERHOLD  
KHEBNIKOV  
KRUCHENYKH**

edited by

**ELLENEA PROFFER  
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## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

So much has been written about Futurism in the arts that it would be superfluous as well as presumptuous to attempt even an outline in one essay. Moreover, the reader of English is particularly fortunate, because he has access to Vladimir Markov's *Russian Futurism: A History* (Berkeley, 1968), one of the best histories of Russian literature. This book, and the critical essays below, provide many suggestions for further reading.

For purposes of this anthology we have interpreted "Futurism" very broadly; and while it can be argued that Zamyatin and "Smithy" poets, for example, do not belong under the rubric "Futurism," those who argue this will understand quite well why these writers *have* been included. Chronologically the anthology ranges from 1909 through the 1920s. No effort has been made to include all of the Futurist writers, or even all of the most famous works. We have concentrated on the main figures, and certainly a number of the works would be regarded by most specialists as key ones—the manifesto "A Slap in the Face...," Khlebnikov's "Incantation by Laughter," Mayakovsky's "Man," etc. But the styles and genres presented are extremely diverse, ranging from the delicate miniatures of Elena Guro and the metaphorical miracles of the early Pasternak to the more familiar boom of Mayakovsky's voice. —There are samples of poetry, fiction, film, drama, theory, and criticism. While the focus is clearly on literature, no look at Futurism and Constructivism is complete without some attention to art, so among the original critical articles here are studies of Russian painting. Much of the illustrative material in this volume is extremely rare, and was first published—along with most of the selections—in various issues of *Russian Literature Triquarterly* and in V. Khlebnikov, *Snake Train: Prose & Poetry*, edited by Gary Kern (Ardis, 1976). However, Tatyana Nikolskaya's essay on Russian writers and Futurism in Georgia, a country with its own celebrated literary tradition, appears here for the first time; it offers a fascinating look at an area which has had little special study before.

We are grateful to all of the contributors to this volume, to Kjeld Jensen for assistance in identifying some of the photographs, and especially to Vasily Katanyan and Lily Brik, who assisted with the original project in a variety of ways.



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**THE ARDIS ANTHOLOGY OF  
RUSSIAN FUTURISM**



bnikov with daughter of a wine merchant, Chernyaka, 1910 or 1912

## velimir khlebnikov / PROPOSALS

- \* To breed edible creatures in the lakes which are invisible to the naked eye, so that every lake will be a pot of soup—already made, even if uncooked. Crowds of diners will swim and loll about on the banks—the food of the future.
  - \* To base the exchange of labor on an exchange of heartbeats. To calculate each form of labor by the number of heartbeats—the monetary unit of the future, according to which every living person will be equally rich. To consider the median number of beats equal to 365, 317 per 24 hours.
  - \* To calculate the international exchange of trade by this unit.
  - \* To conclude the great war with the first flight to the moon.
  - \* To create the written language of the Aryans, scientifically constructed, for everyone.
  - \* To effect an innovation in landownership by recognizing that the area of land for individual usage can be no less than the surface of the terrestrial globe.
  - \* Let sailing through the air be one leg and the gift of spark-speech be the other leg of mankind. What comes next—we'll wait and see.
  - \* To construct the art of waking up easily from dreams.
  - \* To see the dust in the capitals pile up into bundles of standing waves, according to the law of a sounding plate (the diagrams of Kundt<sup>1</sup>).
  - \* Remembering that  $n^0$  is the sign for a point,  $n^1$ —the sign for a line,  $n^2$  and  $n^3$ —the signs for area and volume, to seek the extensions of the fractional powers:  $n^{1/2}$ ,  $n^{2/3}$ ,  $n^{1/3}$ . Where are they? To understand forces as the powers of extensions, proceeding from the fact that force is the cause of the movement of a point, the movement of a point creates a line, the movement of a line creates an area, and the transfer from a point to a line and a line to an area is created by the increase of the power from zero to one and from one to two.
  - \* To introduce apes into the family of man and grant them certain rights of citizenship.
  - \* To name the numbers with the five vowels a, u, o, e, i: a-1, u-2, o-3, e-4, i-5, ia-0. Numeration based on 5.
  - \* To provide all the thoughts of the earth (there are so few of them) with their own number, like houses, and to converse and exchange thoughts by using the language of sight. To name by number the speeches of Cicero, Cato, Othello, Demosthenes and to replace imitative speeches, which no one needs, with a simple signboard and the number of the speech. This principle has been partially carried out in the codes of law.
- Languages will remain for art and will be freed from a humiliating burden.

We're tired of hearing.

\* To elect the year 1915 as the year of the new era: to signify the years by means of the numbers of the plane  $a + b\sqrt{-1}$ , in the form  $317d + e\sqrt{-1}$ , where  $e < 317$ .

\* To wear medieval armor made of the same white material which now serves for miserable collars and dickeys.

\* To establish a special desert island for eternal, unceasing warfare between desirous people of all countries, for example Iceland (a superb death).

\* To use sleep-weapons (sleep-bullets) in ordinary wars.

\* To introduce the same order and conformity in the matter of birth as now exists in the matter of killing; troops of births, a limited number of them.

\* To reforge the plague-wind of wars into a sleep-wind. Then the governments will win our admiration and deserve our respect.

\* In place of the concept of space to introduce everywhere the concept of time, for example, the war between the generations of the terrestrial globe, the war of the trenches of time.

\* It would be impossible to avoid train crashes if trains were limited in their movements only by space (the trackage). Likewise the trackage of the government requires a schedule of their movements (of various trains along one track).

\* To separate mankind into inventors and others (the rest). A detachment of prophetic eyes.

\* To delve into the art of cross breeding and bring forth new breeds for the needs of the terrestrial globe.

\* Transformation of living rights, the right to be the possessor of a room in an unspecified city with the right to change places constantly (the right to living quarters without specification of space). Flying mankind does not limit its rights of possession to a single place.

\* To build houses as iron latticeworks into which little movable glass houses could be inserted.

\* To demand that the armed unions of people with weapons in their hands contest the opinion of the futurians that the whole terrestrial globe belongs to them.

\* To establish the estates of the geagogs<sup>2</sup> and the supergovernment.

\* To awaken the desire to sing morning praises to the rising Sun in the factory whistles, both on the Seine and in Tokyo, both on the Nile and in Delhi.

\* To establish a world government for the beautification of the terrestrial globe, by working on it like a turner. To beautify Mount Blanc with the head of Hiawatha, the gray cliffs of Nicaragua with the head of Kruchenykh,<sup>3</sup> the Andes with the head of Burlyuk.<sup>4</sup> To take as the basic rule of the monument that a man's birthplace and his monument should stand



at opposite ends of the earth's axis. In the shallow English Channel, rising out of the water, there can stand a monument to Guriet El Ain, a Persian girl, who was burned at the stake. The gulls can alight on it near a steamer full of Englishmen.

In the main square of Washington there can stand a monument to the first martyrs of science—Hi and Ho, the Chinese state observers of the heavens who were punished for lack of attention. To build running and traveling monuments on the platforms of trains.

\* To establish the labor of handwriting artists, knowing that the reader is guided by the slightest quiver in the stroke. The mute voice of handwriting. Likewise to establish the estate of number artists.

\* To use the tedious eyes of trains for printing the daily news of the arts, like an arrow in pursuit.

\* To effect an innovation in land ownership by recognizing that the area of land ownership can be no less than the surface of the terrestrial globe. This way the arguments between governments will be resolved.

\* To measure the labor rights and the labor duty of people by the unit of the heartbeat. The heartbeat is the money of the future. The physician—the treasurer of the future. Hunger and health—the book of accounts. And joy and bright eyes—the receipt.

\* To establish a new system of units on these principles: the dimensions of the terrestrial globe in time, space and force are taken as the primary unit, and the series of magnitudes diminishing by 365 times—the derivative units  $a, \frac{a}{365}, \frac{a}{365^2}$ . Thus there will be no stupid seconds and minutes, but rather whole days (24 hrs.) divided into 365 parts. The "day" of the day is equal to 237 seconds, the next unit is 0.65 seconds.

The unit of the area will be 59 sq centimeters =  $\frac{K}{365^7}$  where K = the surface of the earth.

The unit of length will be  $\frac{R}{365^3} = 13$  centimeters, where R = the radius of the earth. Likewise with the weight and force. In this way many magnitudes will be expressed in numerical units.

\* To use the radio to transmit readings from the Principal University to the village schools. Any school at the foot of a green hill may receive the news of learning, and the teacher will be the ear trumpet of the attentive village. The language of lightning as the conductor of scientific truth.

\* To separate the world life of knowledge into governments for given scientific pursuits (the struggle against the government of spaces). For example, the government for the study of the question: Does a direct connection exist between people on opposite ends of the earth's axis, are their moods connected, their desires? Does a man on the Mississippi cry if a man on the Volga is happy?

Compare the waves of the incoming tide in the sea. Or the government for investigating the curvature of the earth's space.

The posing of such tasks demands the creation of a special scientific

government for a given scientific pursuit.

\* To found societies of violinists on the terrestrial globe. The proud union of vioterglobists...

\* To effect a gradual transfer of power back to the starry sky...

\* To consider the earth as a sounding plate, and the capitals as collecting the dust into bundles of standing waves. (England and Japan know this very well.)

\* Recalling the advantages of a single sea border, to turn Asia into a single spiritual island. But then, there is a second sea above it—the sky. To love the fusion of the sea borders of Asia—this is the new testament.

\* To consider the first day of the new Kalpa<sup>5</sup> December 25, 1915 (new style).

\* Let the laws of ordinary life be replaced by the equations of fate.

\* Let the Persian carpet of names, states be replaced by the ray of mankind.

\* The world is understood as a ray. You—as a construction of spaces. We—as a construction of time.

\* In the name of bringing into life the high principles of antimoney, to give the masters of trade and industry the ensign epaulets of the troops of labor, while preserving the ensign's salary of the troops of workers. The living force of industry is assigned to the peaceful troops of workers.

1914-1916

*Translated by Gary Kern*

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#### NOTES

1. August Adolph Kundt (1839-1894)—a German physicist noted for his investigations in sound and light.

2. A neologism (or misprint) whose meaning could not be determined.

3. Alexei (Alexander) Kruchenykh (1886-1969)—the most outrageous Futurist, he claimed the invention of *zaum* (trans-sense) poetry with the 1913 poem: "dyr bul shchyl/ ubeshshchur/ skum/ vy so bu/ r l ez." This poem, he said, was more Russian than all of the poetry of Pushkin. See Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History*, (1968).

4. David Burliuk (1882-1967)—Futurist artist and poet, he specialized in vulgarity and incorrect grammar. Perhaps his most famous poem is the following: "I really like the pregnant man/ So handsome by the Pushkin monument/ Decked in a double-breasted jacket/ He pokes the stucco with his finger/ He knows not if a boy or girl/ Will issue from his evil seedlet./ I really like the pregnant tower/ So many live soldiers are in it/ And also the vernal big-bellied field/ From which little green leafies stick out." (1914) See V. Markov, *Russian Futurism*.

5. Kalpa—the name for one day of Brahma, a cosmic cycle equal to 4, 320, 000, 000 earth years.

Strange is the nature of an event, it leads you unconcerned past that which claims the name of something terrible, and you, on the contrary, seek profundities and mysteries in a negligible event. I walked along the street and stopped at the sight of a crowd gathering around a dray. "What's going on?" I asked a chance passerby. "As you see," he answered with a laugh. Indeed, in the midst of sepulchral silence an old black horse struck its hoof monotonously on the pavement. The other horses attended, lowering their heads, silent, unmoving. In the clop of the hoof were heard a thought, a destiny perused and a command, and the remaining horses, drooping, paid heed. The crowd grew rapidly until the drayman came out from somewhere, jerked the horse by the reins and rode away.

But the old black horse which read fate tonelessly and its old drooping comrades stuck in my memory.

The adversities of a wandering life are redeemed by magical events. Among these I count my meeting with Nikolai. If you were ever to meet him you would probably not pay any attention to him. Only a somewhat tawny brow and chin would give him away. And the eyes, much too honestly expressing nothing, would tell you that standing before you was an indifferent and diffident hunter.

But his was a lonely will which had its own path and its own life's end.

He was not with any people. He resembled manors which stand off from the road, with a fence turned to the crossways.

He seemed quiet and simple, wary and unsociable.

His temper seemed even poor. When tipsy he became crude and insolent with his acquaintances, dunned them for money, but strangely enough he also felt a gush of tender affection for children: could it be because they were not yet people? I have observed this trait in others as well. He would gather a bunch of children around him and with all his change buy them the paltry sweets, cracknels and gingerbreads which adorn the saleswomen's bins. Perhaps he wanted to say, "Look, people, be with others as I am with them," but since this tenderness was not his trade, his silent sermon had a greater effect on me than the sermon of some teacher with tumultuous and universal fame.<sup>1</sup> His direct eyes then expressed some simple and stern thought.

But who will read the soul of a companionless gray hunter, a stern pursuer of boars and wild geese? Here I am reminded of the stern sentence pronounced on all of life by a certain deceased Tatar, who left a note at his death with the curt but noteworthy inscription: "I spit on the whole world."

To the Tatars he seemed an apostate from the faith, a traitor, and to the Russian powers—a dangerous hothead. I confess that more than once I have wanted to put my signature beneath that note, dictated by indifference and despair. But this silent demonstration of freedom from the iron laws of life and its stern truth, this hickory gathering field flowers at its base, still offers a profound sign. In these things a simple and stern thought lies hidden, preserved by his—no matter what—honest eyes.

In a certain old album, now many years old, among faded and bent-over old men with a star on their chests, among prim elderly women with a golden chain on their wrist, who are forever reading an open book, you might come upon the modest yellow portrait of a man with unremarkable features, a straight beard and a double-barreled gun across his knees. A simple part divided his hair.

Should you ask who this paled photograph is, you will receive the brief answer that it is Nikolai. But the speaker will surely avoid detailed explanations. A light cloud on his face will indicate to you that they did not regard Nikolai as a complete outsider.

I knew this hunter. In general you can regard people as different illuminations of one and the same white head with white locks. If you do, you will find an endless diversity in contemplating the brow and eyes of the different illuminations, the battle of light and shade on one and the same stone head, repeated by elders and youngsters, doers and dreamers, an endless number of times.

And he, of course, was only one of the illuminations of that white stone with eyes and locks. But could anyone not be he?

Many stories were told of his hunting exploits.

When he was asked to bring in an animal, this man marked by silence asked “how many?”—and vanished. God knows by what twists of fate he did it, but he showed up with the required animal. Wild boars knew him as a silent and fearsome enemy.

Cherni—a place where the cane grows out of the shallow sea—he had studied through and through. Who knows, were it possible to penetrate the soul of the winged world which populates the mouth of the Volga, what impression would this fearsome hunter have made in it! When they filled the desertic shore with their resounding laments, did one not hear in their wailings that the barque of Bird Death had again touched shore? Did he not seem to them a terrible creature with otherworldly power, a double-barreled gun over his shoulder and a gray peaked cap on his head?

An unmerciful, terrible godhead had appeared on these desolate shoals: the white or black flock announced the death of their comrades with long resounding cries. But then there did exist a nook of pity in his soul: he always spared the nests and the young, who knew only his departing step.

He was hidden and silent, most often uncommunicative, and only those to whom he had shown the tip of his soul could guess that he con-

demned life and knew the "contempt of the savage" for human fate in its entirety. But you will understand this state of the soul better if you say that a soul of "nature" should have condemned innovation like this, for by way of a hunter's life this soul had to travel from the world of the "perishing ones" to the world replacing it, casting a farewell eye at the snowstorm of ducks, the desolation, the world where the red geese's blood poured over the sea, travel to the land of white stone piles driven into the river bed, delicate laces of iron bridges, city-anthills—the strong but uncongenial, somber world!

He was simple, direct, even stern in a crude way. He was a good man to sit at bedside and care for sick comrades. For his tenderness toward the weak and his readiness to be their shield, he might have been envied by a medieval knight in armor, helmet and panache.

This is the way he started out on a hunt. He sat down in his boat, where the two dogs he had raised awaited him, and sailed downstream with the sail fastened to the eyelet, now towing, now rowing. It should be said that there is a treacherous wind on the Volga which flies offshore in complete silence and spins the unwary fisher who does not manage to unfurl his sail.

The boat was turned over at the place of arrival and used as a roof, the iron rods stuck into the ground, and the hunter's hours began at the campfire until it was time to leave for supper. The wise silent dogs were fed in the boat redolent with the smells of all the fauna abounding on the Volga: black cormorants and the stout leg of a boar lay here together with field ducks and bustards.

The wolves howled quietly: "That's them camping, that's them leaving."

It was his desire to die far away from people, but he strongly doubted this. He wandered among people while rejecting them. Cruel by trade, he lived among the persecuted non-people, to whom he appeared as a cruel prince who brings death, but in the duel between human and non-human he remained on the side of the latter. In the same way Melnikov, the persecutor of the heretics, nevertheless wrote *In the Mountains and Forests*.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed there is no other way to imagine him than as Bird Perun,<sup>3</sup> cruel but loyal to his subjects, who catches some kind of beauty in them.

He had people whom he could call friends, but the more his soul emerged from its "shell," the more masterfully did he destroy the equality between the two to his own advantage. He became haughty, and the friendship resembled a temporary truce between quarrelers. A rift occurred on the slightest pretext, and then he cast a glance which said "no, you are not ours," and became cold and foreign.

But to many it was clear that this man did not really belong to the human race. With his thoughtful eyes, his silent mouth, he had already served for two or three decades as the priest in the temple of Slaughter and

Death. Between the city and the desert there exist the same axes, the same difference, as between devil and demon. The mind begins when one can make the choice between bad and good. The hunter made this choice in favor of the demon, the great desolation. He firmly stated his desire not to be buried in a cemetery. Was it because he did not want a quiet cross? Was he a confirmed heathen? And what did that book tell him which only he had read and whose ashes no one will ever read?

But death did not run counter to his desires.

Once the local paper printed a notice that in the territory known to the local residents as "Horse Border," the boat and body of an unknown man were found. It added that a double-barreled gun lay alongside. Since this was the year of the Black Death, and the marmots, those pretty animals of the steppe, had increased in numbers and forced the nomads to pick up from their camps and flee in terror, and since the hunter had not been seen for a week past his time, the people who knew him sent out a search party full of anxiety and foreboding. The searchers returned to confirm that the hunter had died. From the account of fishermen they told the following story.

After the fishermen had spent a number of nights in a shelter on a desertic island, an unfamiliar black dog began to come up at nights in front of the hut and howl tonelessly. Neither stones nor shouts had any effect on it. They drove it away, suspecting what the presence of an unfamiliar black dog might mean on an uninhabited island. But invariably it returned the following night, frightful, howling, poisoning the fishermen's dreams.

Finally a kind-hearted watchman approached it. It yelped joyfully and led him to an overturned boat: close by, with gun in hand, lay a man pecked clean by the birds, his flesh remaining only in his boots. A cloud of birds circled above him. A second dog lay half-dead at his feet.

Whether he died from a fever or the plague could not be said. The waves beat monotonously against the shore.

Thus he died, realizing his strange dream—to find an end far away from people.

But nevertheless his friends placed a modest cross at the head of his grave. Thus died the wolfslayer.

1912-1913

*Translated by Gary Kern*

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#### NOTES

1. Possibly an allusion to Lev Tolstoy, who died in 1910.
2. Pavel Melnikov (1819-1893), who wrote under the pseudonym of Andrei

Pechersky, was both a provincial government official and a writer who specialized in descriptions of the life of the Old Believers.

3. Perun—one of the gods of the ancient Slavs, usually associated with wind, thunder and harvests.



Khlebnikov



*Incantation by Laughter*<sup>1</sup>

O laugh it round, you laughsters!  
O laugh it up, you laughsters!  
So they laugh with laughsters, so they laugherize delaughly.  
O laugh it up belaughably!  
O the laughingstock of laughed-upon — the laugh of belaughed laughsters  
O laugh it out roundlaughingly, the laugh of the laughed-at laughians!  
Laughertino, laugherino,  
Laughify laughicate, laugholets, laugholets,  
Laughikins, laughikins,  
O laugh it round, you laughsters!  
O laugh it up, you laughsters!

(Alternate Translation)

*Guffaw Incantation*

O guff it out, you guffsters!  
O guff it up, you guffsters!  
So they guffaw with guffaws, so they gufferize disguffly.  
O guff it up be guffably!  
O the guffation of the guffed upon — the guff of guffed-off guffsters!  
O guff it off outguffingly, the guff of guffed-at guffians!  
Guffily, guffily,  
Guffify, gufficate, guffolets, guffolets,  
Guffikins, guffikins,  
O guff it out, you guffsters!  
O guff it up, you guffsters!

*Also:*

O gig it out, you gigglers! etc.  
O chuck it out, you chucklers! etc.  
O chort it out, you chortlers! etc.

*Zaklyatie Smekhom*

*O, rassmeites', smekhachi!*  
*O, zasmeites', smekhachi!*  
*Chto smeyutsa smekhami, chto smeyanstuvuyut smeyal'no.*  
*O, zasmeites' usmeyal'no!*  
*O, rassmeshishch nadsmeyal'nykh — smekh usmeinykh smekhachei!*  
*O, issmeisya rassmeyal'no, smekh nadsmeinykh smeyachei!*  
*Smeievo, smeievo,*  
*Usmei, osmei, smeshiki, smeshiki,*  
*Smeyunchiki, smeyunchiki,*  
*O, rassmeites', smekhachi!*  
*O, zasmeites', smekhachi!*

Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!<sup>2</sup>  
Many of the black,  
Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!  
Black rebellious dogs  
Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!  
Bounded through the snow  
Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!  
To the nearby towns  
Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!  
To tear apart the dead,  
Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!  
To drag off someone's leg,  
Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!  
To drag off someone's arm,  
Ha-oo! ha-oo! ha-oo!  
In belly and in snow  
To bloody up their maws.

*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*Mnogo iz chyornykh*  
*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*Vosstavshikh sobak,*  
*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*Bezhalo po snegu*  
*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*V blizhnie sela*

*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*Mertvetsov razryvat',*  
*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*Tashchit' ch'yu-to nogu*  
*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*Tashchit' ch'yu-to ruku*  
*Gau! gau! gau!*  
*V bryukhe i snege*  
*Mordy krovavit'.*

*Perun*<sup>3</sup>

I praise  
Perun who pelts down pikes,  
Plunging like a pike himself  
From a point of emptiness,  
Like a pike of emptiness,  
He flares up with a blast of bullets,  
Exploding in a blaze of powder,  
Pounding particles of praise.

\* \* \*

Primal and primal and primal Perun.  
Primitive Perun. Perun of the pits.  
Primal by praising in primal pits.  
Plunge like a primitive pike  
Past the puberulent period of powder,  
Plumed like the rapids of prancing spray.  
Pounding your club of praise,  
Puff in the powdery blaze.

\* \* \*

Primeval boy,  
Born in the period of pits,  
Become the truth of their praise,  
Playing the sail of their songs,  
Biting the flame from the pike,  
Predator mouth of emptiness,  
Preying on flame,  
Peerless boy,  
Blazing Perun.

*Perun*

*Poyu,  
Chto palki brosaet Perun,  
Parya, tochno palka sebya,  
Iz tochki pustoty,  
Kak palka pustoty,  
Pyshet pal'boyu tekhnul',  
Chto plamenem stali polykh  
Pilok peniya porokha.*

\* \* \*

*Pervyi i pervyi i pervyi Perun.  
Peshchernyi Perun. Perun peschernyi.  
Peniem pervyi pervykh pescher.  
Pervoyu palkoi pari  
Po pushistoi pore porokha,  
Pernatym porogom plyascuchchei peny.  
Palitsej pologo peniya  
Porokhi plamenem poi.*

\* \* \*

*Pervyi paren'  
Pory peshchernykh polei  
Stan' pravdoi poyuchikh peshcher.  
Parusom pesen,  
Plammenoi palkoi pitaya  
Past' pustoty,  
Piruyushchii plamenem,  
Pravednyi paren',  
Pylkii Perun.*

**Zangezi (excerpt)<sup>4</sup>**

Explanation: In the ninth section of this work Khlebnikov improvises on the Russian root *um* (meaning "mind"), adding to it both conventional and unconventional prefixes. The translation below leaves the resulting neologisms as in the original and converts the standard Russian words into English. The intended meanings of the *um*-words are given in a list Khlebnikov attached to the work.

Quiet! Quiet! He will speak!

Zangezi: Ring the glad tidings of the mind! Sound the tocsin of reason, the big bell of the mind! All the different shades of the brain will pass before you in a review of all the kinds of reason. Now! Everyone sing after me!

I

Goum.

Oum.

Uum.

Paum.

Soum of me.

And of those I don't know

Moum.

Boum.

Laum.

Cheum.

Bom!

Bim

Bam!

II

Proum

Praum

Prium

Nium

Véum

Roum

Zaum

Vyum

Voum

Boum

Byum

Bom!

Help, bell ringers, I'm tired.

III

Doum.

Daum.

Mium.

Raum.

Khoum.

Khaum.

Bang the glad tidings of the mind!  
Here's the bell and the rope.

IV

Suum.

Izum.

Neum.

Naum.

Dvuum.

Treum.

Deum.

Bom!

Zoum.

Koum.

Soum.

Poum.

Glaum.

Raum.

Noum.

Nuum.

Vyum.

Bom! bom, bom!

It's the big booming bell of the mind.  
Diving sounds flying down from above  
at the summons of men.  
Beautiful is the tolling of the mind.  
Beautiful are its pure sounds.

Klebnikov's list (translator's remarks in parentheses):

*Vyum* - an invention. Of course, the unlove of the old leads to *vyum*. (*Vy* = out, working out, outcome, etc.)

*Noum* - a hostile mind leading to other conclusions, a mind saying *no* to the first. (The Russian word *no* = but).

*Goum* - high as those trinkets of the sky, the stars, which are invisible during the day. From fallen lords (*gosudari*) *goum* takes the dropped staff *Go*. (That is, the first two letters of *gosudari*, which Khlebnikov takes to mean "high.")

*Laum* - broad, flowing over the broadest area, knowing no confining shores, like a flooding river. (Khlebnikov has in mind the *l*-sound of *lit'* - to flow, pour; *lodka* - boat; *letat'* - to fly; etc.)

*Kaum* - calm, binding, providing foundations, books, rules and laws. (These words have *k* as the first letter of their roots: *spo-koinyi* = calm, *s-kovyvayu-shchii* = binding, *knigi* = books, *za-kony* = laws.)

*Laum* descends from the heights into crowds toward everyone. It tells the fields what is seen from the mountains.

*Cheum* - raising the cup (*chasa*) to the unknown future. Its *zori* (dawns) are *chezori*. Its *luch* (ray) is *cheluch*. Its *plamya* (flame) is *cheplamya*. Its *volya* (will) is *chevolya*. Its *gore* (woe) is *chegore*. Its *negi* (delights) are *chenegi*.

*Moum* - pernicious, destructive, devastating. It is forecast in the borders of faith.

*Veum* - the mind of apprenticeship and faithful citizenship, of a pious spirit. (Perhaps the *v* from the word *vera* - faith, trust, belief.)

*Oum* - abstract, surveying everything around itself, from the height of one thought. (*Ozirat'* = to survey, look around.)

*Izum* - a leaping out of the borders of the everyday mind. (*Iz* = out of.)

*Daum* - affirmative. (*Da* = yes.)

*Noum* - argumentative. (*No* = but.)

*Suum* - half-mind.

*Soum* - reason-coworker. (*So* = with, co-.)

*Nuum* - commanding. (*Nu!* = Well!; Get on with it!)

*Khoum* - secret, hidden reason.

*Byum* - desiring reason, made not by what is, but by what it wants. (*By* = a particle indication conditional mood.)

*Nium* - negative. (*Ni* = not, neither.)

*Proum* - Foresight. (*Pro* = through.)

*Praum* - the reason of a distant land, a mind-ancestor. (*Pra* is a Russian prefix indicating origin, ancient times, equivalent to the German prefix *Ur-*.)

*Boum* - a nail of thought driven into the board of stupidity.

*Vyum* - a fallen hoop of stupidity, knowing no boundaries, no borders, a radiant shining mind. (See above.)

*Raum* - its speeches (*rechi*) are *rarogi*.

*Zoum* - reflected mind. (Possibly from *zerkalo* = mirror.)

(Some of the above meanings derive from Khlebnikov's theories on the meanings of individual sounds. See the article "The Simple Names of the Language." Other meanings are based on common Russian prefixes and particles. Below are some Khlebnikov did not list.)

*Prium* - The prefix *pri* indicated motion toward the speaker or thinker.

*Zaum* - transmind; the preposition *za* means "beyond"; the term *zaum* was used by the Futurists for "trans-sense" poetry.

*Doum* - The prefix *do* indicates action up to a given point, or to completion.

*Neum* - unmind; *ne* = not, non-, un-, etc.

*Naum* - the preposition *na* = on, upon; the interjection *na* = take this.

*Dvuum* - bimind; *dvu-* = two, bi-.

*Treum* - trimind; *tre-* = three, tri-.

*Deum* - the particle *de* indicates supposition, mention, rumor.

*Glaum* - *Gla-* is probably taken from *glaz* (eye), or *glyadet'* (to see, stare.)

*Goodworld (excerpts)*<sup>15</sup>

And so the castles of world trade,  
Where gleam the chains of poverty,  
With spite and rapture on your face  
You will reduce to ash someday.  
He who has tired of old disputes  
And sees but torture in his stars,  
Take in your hand the thunder-dust,  
And send the palace in the sky.  
And if a cloud of deep blue smoke  
Drowns in the flaming scarlet,  
With bloodied hand, not bannered one,  
Cast down to fate the gauntlet.  
And if a bonfire hits the mark  
And whips a sail of smoke about,  
Step right into the blazing tent,  
Your hidden firearm — take it out!  
    And where grand profits spend the night,<sup>5</sup>  
    Encased in glass, at the czar's castle,  
    Explosive means are quite all right,  
    As are the schemes of clever females.  
When God himself seems like a chain,  
You rich man's slave, where is your blade?

O woman, smother with a curl  
Youth's murderer at meeting time,  
Because as a barefooted girl  
You once begged him for charity.  
Go softly, with a catlike gait,  
From tender midnight pure and clean.  
Consumptive one, give him a kiss  
Directly on his happy grin.  
And if your hand be without irons,<sup>6</sup>  
Go up to a chained dog  
And kiss its foaming mug,  
Then kiss the foe until he disappears.

You rich man's slave, hey tallyho,  
You were harassed by indigence.  
You crawled like mendicant to king  
And pressed a kiss upon his lips.  
With a high wound afflicted,  
Removing from red sky the latch,



Grab on the moustache of Aquarius  
And slap the Canes on the back!  
And may the space of Lobachevsky  
Fly from the flags of nighttime Nevsky.

Now proceed creative men  
In the place of gentlemen,<sup>7</sup>  
Congregation of the Goodworld  
With the Workworld on a pole.  
Now the uprising of Razin,  
Flying to the sky of Nevsky,  
Brings together the design  
And the space of Lobachevsky.<sup>8</sup>  
May the curves of Lobachevsky  
Adorn the city squares,  
Arching round the straining neck  
Of universal labor.<sup>9</sup>  
And the lightning will complain  
That it must hurry like a serf,  
And not a person will remain  
To sell a bag of stolen wealth.

\* \* \*

Where the Volga will say "I,"  
The Yangtze will add "love,"  
And the Mississippi — "all of,"  
Old Man Danube will add "the,"  
And the Ganges' waters — "world."  
Thus will the river idol  
Outline the lands of green.  
Forever, always, there and here!  
For all, forever, everywhere — all!  
Across the star will fly our call.  
Above the world the language of love soars,  
And into the sky the Song of Songs implores.

\* \* \*

Draw not with chalk, but draw with love  
The one that will be the design.  
And as fate flies down to your pillow,  
Wise spikes of rye it will incline.

*Washerwoman (excerpts)*<sup>16</sup>

We don't live in castles,  
Us no one caresses,  
Us, the workingmen. <sup>10</sup>  
Grew up like whelps we did.  
"Knife's mine!"  
"Take it, swine!"  
Nice knife.  
Hey human hordes!  
Knife's nice!  
Know it, you,  
In your brain  
Make a notch.  
But me, a sweet young girl,  
But me, a blackhaired girl,  
Give love.  
He, the pretty thing, long knife,  
In the master's heart is right!  
With a knife I regale you —  
I, a simple girl:  
Washerwoman-worker!  
Aee it's nice, it's nice!  
Knife.

\* \* \*

Czar! Send out a shot!  
The head awaits, Your Majesty!  
We've come out. Where are the bullets?  
We're coming. And with us all Steaming Field's maidenry,<sup>11</sup>  
The criminal world's Smolny,<sup>12</sup>  
The stockade's high society.  
But come on, cannons, thunder sternly:  
Ding! Dong!  
Or is someone there? Milyukov maybe?<sup>13</sup>  
Or Kerensky, could be?<sup>14</sup>  
Nope, no dopes today!  
Today you know who goes  
With the swarm of love  
From the rotting city,  
Whose flesh falls off today.  
The hours for catching love  
And trading eyes.

You march on.  
– You march on!  
Bullets  
Sang ballads.  
And burst in Steaming Field.

\* \* \*

Writers of the knife are we!  
Thinkers of the paunch are we!  
Scientists of black bread,  
Of sweatiness and sootiness,  
Priests of ho-ho-ho.  
We are tradeswomen of heavenly black eyes,  
Profligates of gold in autumnal leaves,  
Hoarders of yellow coins on the trees,  
Violinists of the toothache are we,  
We are in love with rheumatic cramp,  
We are in love with the common cold,  
Tradesmen of laughter,  
Choirmasters of hunger,  
Gluttons of yesteryear,  
Drunkards of yesterday,  
Lovers of the rainspout  
Savants of the crust of bread,  
Artists of sootiness,  
Accountants of jackdaws, crows,  
Nabobs of the twilight glow –  
All of us are czars today!  
Lovers of the belly,  
Prophets of the dirty drawers,  
Excavators of yesterday's dinners,  
God's children are we.

*Translated by Gary Kern*

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#### NOTES

1. *Zaklyatie smekhom* (published 1910, possibly written as early as 1906-1908). Khlebnikov's most famous poem, it works with the root *smekh* – laugh. The neologism *smekhach* (laughster) became a standard word in the Russian lexicon. A satirical journal on the 1920s was named *Smekhach*.

2. *Gau! gau! gau!* (written 1919-21, published in the *Collected Works*).

3. *Perun* (written between 1915-17, published in the *Collected Works*).

This excerpt contains lines 1-8, 61-68 and 98-106 (the final lines of the poem). Perun (stressed on the second syllable) was the chief god of the ancient eastern Slavs. He was the god of wind and thunder, believed to ride through the air in a fiery chariot and to hurl down bolts of lightning. A wooden statue of Perun was kept in Novgorod and a flame kept burning in front of it.

4. *Zangezi* (Completed January 16, 1922, published 1922). This work belongs to a genre invented by Khlebnikov, the supertale. He writes in the preface to *Zangezi*: "The supertale (*sverkhpovest'*) or transtale (*zapovest'*) is pieced together by independent fragments, each with its own god, its own faith and its own code. . . It is like a sculpture made from a chunk of vari-colored ores, the body — of white stone, the clothes and cloak — of blue stone, the eyes — of black stone. . . A story is an architecture of words. An architecture of stories is a supertale." *Zangezi* contains prose, poetry, monologue, dialogue, trans-sense language, etc. arranged into 20 sections, called "planes." The selected excerpt is plane 9.

5. Indented sections represent passages which were deleted for one edition but which Khlebnikov later wished restored.

6. The word "irons" (*zheleza*) suggests both weapons and fetters.

7. The original contains a neologism and a pun: *Eto shestvuyut tvoryane/ Zamenivshi D na T* (These are the creations marching in procession/ Having replaced D with T). The idea is that by replacing the first letter of the word *dvoryane* (gentry, nobility) with *t*, one obtains the opposite type of people *tvoryane* (a neologism based on the root *tvor*, "create, make, do"). Two lines below, *Trudomir* (the root *trud*, "work, labor"), is allied with *Ladomir*.

8. Pyotr Miturich (1887-1956), Khlebnikov's artist friend and brother-in-law, comments on the passage as follows: "Lobachevsky conceives the cosmic paths of the earth and the stars in his 'imaginary geometry.' The rebellion of Razin entails the rebellious conceptions of the mathematician — a theme to which Khlebnikov returned repeatedly, insisting that the rebellion of thought and science is inseparable from the political revolution." V. Khlebnikov, *Sobranie proizvedenii*, vol. 1, p. 316.

9. Miturich comments: "The development of technology and science will create new forms of human existence, in particular new cities of steel frames with glass rooms. Khlebnikov had already dreamed of this in 1910-11, when he described [such things] in his utopia 'The City of the Future.'" *Ibid*.

10. The word *chernorabochii* an unskilled laborer, one who does "dirty work." It is composed of the Slavic roots for "black" and "work," thus permitting Khlebnikov to present the washerwoman as blackhaired, swarthy (*chernyavaya*).

11. Steaming Field, or Burning Field (*Goryachee pole*) — the name of a dump outside of Petersburg. Here the city's poor sought food and warmth among the decomposing, steaming garbage and horse dung.

12. The Smolny Institute — seat of the Bolsheviks during and immediately after the Revolution.

13. Pavel Milyukov — Foreign Minister in the Provisional Government, he resigned in May 1917 after his pro-war policy was discredited.

14. Alexander Kerensky — Prime Minister in the Provisional Government, he fled from Russia after the Bolshevik coup.

15. See below, p. 143 for a full translation of "Ladomir."

16. *Prachka* (Nov. 1, 1921), not completed. Sections 2, 7, and 26 of 30 extant sections translated here.

## nikolai burlyuk / THE MIDNIGHT FIRE

The rumble of the carriage and the night chill lulled the traveler to sleep. The harmony of movement and tranquillity turned to music—further accompanied, just before morning, by the snorting of the horses and the driver's shouted exhortations.

Having awakened, Vasily saw between the shaft and trace horses the telegraph pole of the embarrassed coachman, and understood the reason for the noise. Sobered by this little incident and unable to sleep further, he simply let his mind fathom the last chords of the nocturnal music.

Soon the village appeared, and when they drove up to the porch, the sun was flinging its first rays on the treetops of the garden.

Quietly he entered the unlocked house. The entire household slept. In the half dark rooms warm air seemed to caress him as it wafted over a bed. Yielding to this pleasant prompting, he proceeded to his room and lay down. The last sound reaching his ears was the catlike cry of the peacocks.

When he awoke it was turning evening. Day was over, and already the edges of clouds were grown faintly pink. His brothers and sisters had gone off to the garden. He asked his mother whether anyone had come in his absence. "No one... but there is a letter..." A long, narrow envelope.. unfamiliar handwriting. He opened it and glanced inside—a dry oak leaf, and nothing more.

Whose joke could it be?

From behind the mold of clouds the sun was barely visible, like red fire. It was quiet and deserted in the garden. He met the mechanic's daughter: "What are you doing with the red gillyflower, Vasya?" He answered solemnly: "I am burning unripe hopes."

Everywhere fire blazed up. In the house—where a lamp burned blue, where an unsteady candle swayed. At the bathhouse tongues licked the wall—a furnace man stood silhouetted against their source... perhaps one of the youths.

Although it was August he slept on the terrace.

A light breeze bore scraps of fog from the sea, and souged in the trees.

He was awakened by the cold—his blanket had fallen... perhaps someone had wafted it. A quiet fog flooded the garden. His pillow and hair were damp and cold. Through the white twilight a crooked moon kept sliding through the dark spots of clouds. Water was flowing in the shower. Who could be showering so late? He shouted: "Hey, who's bathing there?" No answer. Vasily got up and, naked, went to the shower. The door was open... no clothes were on the bench. Water fell in a thick column which contained the pale figure of a young stranger. His green face was covered by jets of

water... his eyes were shut. The water raced exuberantly and spread noisily along the floor, but the stranger was motionless and silent. Suddenly, behind him—on the threshold—something rustled. Vasily turned and saw a tongue of flame. It crept cautiously onto the matting of the shower. The flame, accompanied by blue smoke, rustled and wound past Vasily... rolling toward the stream of water. On seeing the fire, the strange youth began to squirm and to cringe, but the fire had already noticed him. It crackled along the wet boards and wound itself around the sounding stream. The youth turned still greener, but the fire gnawed through his water-armor and penetrated to his body. Small white veins ran slanting across the stranger's body, while beneath them there appeared the green flesh of a leaf. The flame, like a yellow caterpillar, gnawed through the leaf; water fell heavily while Vasily watched. The caterpillar on the leaf wove itself a cocoon; the leaf began to yellow and to rotate. With a moan the water rushed out along the dark floor. The moon glanced into the tiny window beneath the roof and illuminated the spent stream. Scant threads of water began to shine beneath its turbid light, and I saw nothing more.

from *Sadok sudei*, No. 2

*Translated by Kevin O'Brien*

nikolai burlyuk / THE MUSES THAT FLED

It was twilight. Still weak after a long illness, he went unsteadily into the half dark room and stood at the window. Resting his forehead against the cold glass, he watched as the last gleams of sunset gradually faded and the trees froze.

He felt dizzy and there was a sweet taste in his mouth, like that of jam.

No sound reached him from outside, only the noise of furniture creaking in the rooms.

Suddenly he turned round; from behind the door whispering arose. He listened—nothing stirred. Of course he had imagined it—just some noise in his ears, you know, after a long illness.

He became lost in thought and sat down on the edge of a chair. The unsteady light of the stars was unable to disperse the intense darkness of the room.

What's that? The stifled laughter of a woman and the rustle of a dress near the door to the library.

Then he made out: "Quietly! He's sleeping! Take off your shoes!" The door creaked and they entered. Only their footsteps and broken breathing could be heard. A moment later all grew quiet. He stirred and gave a cough—silence. He rose, went to the door and tried it—locked. "This is pretty bad... hallucinations. I got up too early."

The next day he rose about eleven, and after breakfast went into the library. Dust lay everywhere, and his photographs of Greek and Roman monuments had begun to yellow; while he noticed with astonishment that the muses had disappeared from the photo of his favorite Ostian sarcophagus. All that was left, here and there, was a partially inscribed papyrus, buskins and a mask of tragedy; while Euterpe's flute lay shattered in pieces.

from *Sadok sudei*, No. 2

*Translated by Kevin O'Brien*





# VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY

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## *A Man*

The palm of the Minister of Peace, remitter of all  
sins, the Sun's palm is on my head.

The gown of the most pious nun, Night's robes  
are on my back.

I kiss the thousand-paged Gospel of the days of my love.

Atoning for love with ringing pain,  
in my soul  
expecting a different procession,  
I hear,  
O Earth, thy one refrain:  
"Now, thou art absolving!"

In the ark of the night  
wait I,  
the new Noah.  
In a flood of vestments  
they will soon come.  
come for me  
and chop through these mundane bonds  
with the pole-axes of the dawn.  
The dawn is coming!  
It is here.  
It has thrown off its wraps.  
Rays are everywhere!  
They scratch at me.  
Doorhinges frailly strike up a song,  
and softly the humdrum days join in  
their husks of hurly-burly.

It's the Sun again,  
calling the fiery commanders in.  
The dawn is drumming  
and there  
beyond the earthly mire  
you come meandering.  
Sun!

Will you really  
abandon the herald?

### Mayakovsky's Nativity

Let the foolish historians, prodded by their contemporaries,  
write: "A boring and uninteresting life lived the remarkable  
poet".

I know  
that sinners  
gasping in hell  
won't invoke my name.  
My curtain's not going to fall  
to priest's applause  
on Golgotha.  
So I'll sit here  
in the Summer Garden,  
and sip my morning coffee.

In the sky of my Bethlehem,  
there burned no signs.  
No erupting graves  
disturbed the curly-haired Magi's sleep.  
It was a day just like all others—  
monotonous ad nauseum —  
that day  
of my descension.  
And no one  
thought of hinting  
to a nearby tactless star:  
"Star, they say  
you're too lazy to shine for nothing!  
If it's not  
a mortal's birthday,  
then is it the devil's  
you're still celebrating?"

Judge:  
we catch in our seines  
a talking fingerling,  
and we sing and praise  
the fisherman's golden prowess.

How then  
can I not sing of myself  
when I'm throughout such a wonder-thing,  
when each of my moves —  
is a huge  
inexplicable miracle.

Go around both sides.  
On each side marvel at the five-rayed thing.  
They're called "hands".

A pair of beautiful hands!

Note

that I can move them right to left  
and left to right.

Note:

I can select the sleekest neck  
and throw my arms around it.

Throw open the jewelry box of my skull —  
the most precious mind will glitter.

Is there anything

I can't do!

If you want,

I can invent

a new animal.

There'll be a two-tailed

or three-legged critter

walking about.

Whoever has kissed me

will tell you

if there is

a juice sweeter than my spit.

There rests in it

a beautiful

red tongue.

I can sing "O ho ho."

The sound spills out high, high up.

Or "O HO HO!" —

and the falcon of the poet's will,

his voice,

lightly descends to the lower depths.

You haven't heard anything yet!

Finally,

so that I can change

winters to summer  
And water to wine,  
Under the wool of my coat  
beats  
a most unusual lump.  
If it strikes to the right,  
weddings appear there.  
If to the left it bangs down,  
mirages there tremble.  
Who else is there  
to send me out to love?  
Those who are lying down,  
drunk  
and masked by the night?

A laundry room.  
Washerwomen.  
Lots of them and wet.  
Can you get happy over soap bubbles?  
Look,  
the hundred-legged ham is fading!  
Who are they now?  
Daughters of the sky and the dawn?

A bakery.  
A baker.  
He's baked the rolls.  
What is a baker?  
Nothing spattered with flour.  
And suddenly  
among the rolls,  
the necks of violins pop up.  
He is playing.  
Everything is in love with him.

A shoe shop.  
A cobbler.  
A scoundrel and a beggar.  
You'll soon need  
patches  
for boots brought from him.  
He glanced up,  
and the boot-tops blossomed into harps.  
He's wearing a crown.

He's a prince.  
Happy and agile.

It is I  
who has raised the heart like a flag.  
Fantastic miracle of the twentieth century!

And the pilgrims rushed back from the grave of the Lord.  
Ancient Mecca has been deserted by the true believers.

### **The Life of Mayakovsky**

The lair of bankers, magnates, and doges is alarmed by  
the roar.

The armor's  
in place,  
shielding the gold.

"If the heart is everything,  
then why,  
oh why  
have I stashed you away, dear dollars?  
How dare they sing,  
who gave them the right?  
Who ordered the days to July-ify?  
Lock the sky in wires!  
Tie the earth up in streets!  
He was bragging:  
'Hands?!'  
To arms!  
Did he caress himself with summer days?  
We'll make it so hot,  
you'll be  
as prickly as a hedgehog  
all over!  
Abuse his tongue with your gossip!"

Corraled in the earthly pen,  
I drag the daily yoke.  
Astride  
my brain  
"The Law,"

And on my heart  
a chain —  
“Religion.”

Half of life has passed, now you won't break out.  
The jailer has a thousand eyes: streetlights, streetlights,  
streetlights . . .

I'm a prisoner.  
For me there is no ransom!  
The damned earth has shackled me.  
I'd bathe all in my love,  
but its ocean is hemmed in by houses!

I shout . . .  
And listen!  
The keys jingle!  
The jailer's grimace.  
He throws  
from the point of a ray  
a scrap of rotten meat.

Beneath a giggling  
“Ha-ha!”  
I drag myself along the delirium of heat.  
Chained to my feet  
thunders  
the cannonball of the globe.

Gold's got eyes  
under lock and key.  
Who'd lead a blind man?  
I'm forever  
locked up  
In a senseless tale!

Down with the burden of high fancies!  
The revolt  
of a doomed tributary of the Muses.  
Believers in peacocks  
— Brehm's invention! —  
Believers in roses  
— the contrivance of idle botanists —

Transmit my faultless depiction of the earth  
from generation to generation.

Bursting from the meridians,  
the atlas's arcs,  
foams  
and clanks the gold collar  
of franks,  
dollars,  
rubles,  
crowns,  
yen, and  
marks.

Drowning are geniuses, hens, horses, and fiddles.  
Elephants drown.  
Small things go down again.  
Into throats  
nostrils,  
and ears sink its sticky sound.  
"Save me!"  
There's no place a groan can't get in.

But in the midst of it all,  
fringed with an unruffled border,  
is a whole island of multi-colored carpet.  
Here lives  
the Sovereign of All —  
my rival,  
my invincible enemy.  
The most delicate spots are on his fine socks.  
His smart trousers' stripes are exquisite.  
The necktie,  
speckled delightfully,  
crawls from his chubby neck  
around his global belly.

They're dying around us,  
But like an auger in the sky,  
in honor  
of your Order, o shining one:  
B-r-a-vo!  
Eviva!  
Banzai!

Hurrah!  
Hoch!  
Hip-Hip!  
Vive!  
Hosanna!

They blame the might of the prophets for the thunder.  
Fools!  
He is  
reading Locke!  
He likes it.  
On his gut  
from laughter  
jingle  
and flash whole chains of trinkets.  
Struck dumb,  
we stand  
before the work of the Greek.  
We think:  
"Who would . . .  
where would . . .  
when would . . . ?  
But He ordered  
the dead Phideas to do this:  
"I want  
voluptuous broads  
made out of this marble."

Four o'clock —  
a wonderful occasion:  
"Slaves, I want to eat again!"  
And god,  
his agile cook,  
creates  
pheasant meat from clay.  
He drags himself out,  
after fondling a female lovingly.  
"Do you want  
the most precious star from the starry heap?"  
And for him  
a legion of Galileos  
rushes about the stars with their eyes in telescopes.

Revolutions are shaking the kingdom's golden calves.



the human herd is changing drivers,  
but you,  
uncrowned owner of all hearts,  
won't be touched by one revolt!

### **The Passions of Mayakovksy**

Do you hear?  
Do you hear the horses' neigh?  
Do you hear?  
Do you hear the auto's howl?  
There come  
the townspeople,  
coming to bathe in his abundance.

A flood of people.  
I plunged into it,  
the mixed-up, wishy-washy mass.  
I snatch the bridles.  
Grab people  
by coattails and skirts.

What's this?  
You?  
Even you are driven here?!  
You've become an inveterate liar!  
Like a red streetlight at a whorehouse,  
bloody  
is your bloodshot eye.

Why?  
Stop!  
I know a sweeter joy!  
Haughtily the forest of eyelashes droops.  
Stop!  
She's already gone . . .

There, towering over the heads is He.

The skull gleams,  
from head to toe  
He is hairless,  
all polished to a high gloss.  
Only

on his ring finger,  
on the last joint  
there bristled  
from under a diamond  
three  
little hairlets.

I see — she approached.  
Bent down to his hand.  
The lips near the hairlets,  
they whisper above them,  
they call one "The Tooty-Flute,"  
another, "The Cloudlet,"  
the third — the unfamiliar brilliance  
of some name  
just  
created by me.

### **The Ascension of Mayakovsky**

I myself am a poet. You teach the children: "The sun  
rises over the grass." From the love bed out from behind his  
hairlets rises the head of my beloved.

She raised the arrow with her eyes.  
Wipe off your smile!  
But the heart rushes toward a bullet,  
and the throat longs for a razor.  
My grief grows  
into incoherent raving about a demon.  
He is coming for me,  
luring me to the water,  
leads me on to the edge of a roof.  
Around me is snow.  
A light snow falls.  
It whirls around and then stops still.  
And there falls.  
It whirls around and then stops still.  
And there falls  
— again! —  
onto the ice  
a frozen emerald.  
My soul shakes.  
It's between the ice floes,

and no way it can escape!  
That's how I'll go,  
spellbound,  
along the banks of the Neva.  
I step forward —  
and again I'm in that place.  
I tear myself away —  
and again for nothing.

A house sprang up before my nose.  
The pot-bellied dawn yawned behind  
the frosted window.

There!

A cat meowed.  
the night lamp,  
burning, flickered away.  
I ring the doorbell.  
Druggist!  
Druggist!  
I suspended myself on the sticks of my legs.

Ideas grew  
and got mixed up,  
like entangled  
deer horns.  
I cry, staining,  
the floor,  
I sprawl out in supplication  
for my lost paradise.

Druggist!  
Druggist!  
Where  
shall the heart  
pine away its grief?  
In the fields of the boundless sky,  
in the delirium of Saharas,  
in the insane desert heat  
is there shelter for jealous lovers?  
There are so many secrets behind the walls of vials.  
You know the highest truths.

Druggist,  
let me  
send my soul  
painlessly  
into space.

He stretches out his hand.  
A skull.  
"Poison."  
Bone crossed on bone.

Who's it for?  
I, your fantastic guest,  
am immortal.  
The eyes are blind,  
the voice is dumb,  
and the mind has locked the door behind it,  
what the hell was there  
— still! —  
in me  
that wanted to be torn apart by that poison?

A turbid conjecture wandered through the fool.  
In the windows some bums.  
Their hair stands on end.  
As suddenly I  
easily swim over the counter.  
The ceiling itself opens up.

"He's gliding over the houses!"  
I'm gliding over the houses.

A church in the sunset.  
Its cross like a candle.  
Past it!  
The tops of a forest.  
Cawed at all around by some crowlike thing.  
Past it!

Students!  
Everything is nonsense  
that we know and study!

Physics, chemistry, astronomy — rot.  
Here I wanted  
to flit about the clouds  
and I'm flying.

I am everywhere now!  
I can be everywhere now.  
Bore into the sky, that slime of poetic ballads.  
Sing now,  
o sing,  
about a new Demon,  
in an American sports coat  
and the glimmer of yellow slippers.

### Mayakovsky in Heaven

Whoa!

I throw down on a cloud  
a load of things  
and an exhausted body.  
These places are fine where heretofore I have  
not been.

I glance about.  
Is this  
sterile harmony  
really the much vaunted heaven?

We'll see! We'll see!

It sparkled,  
flashed,  
shined,  
and  
a rustle went by —  
a cloud  
or  
some bodless ones  
were silently slipping along.

"If a beauty vows love . . ."

Here,  
in the heavenly firmament  
to hear the music of Verdi?  
There's a chink in the cloud.  
I peek in –  
angels are singing.  
The live well, these angels,  
very well.

One came away from the rest  
and politely  
dissolved the trembling stillness thus:  
"Well, Vladimir Vladimirovich,  
how do you  
like eternity?"  
And I answer also politely:  
"It's charming.  
Eternity is simply ecstasy!"

It upset me at first:  
There's not one corner  
for you,  
no tea,  
or newspapers at teatime.  
Gradually, I adjusted to the structure of the heavens.  
I go out with the others to see  
if anyone new has arrived.  
"Ah, so you're here!"  
He hugged me joyfully.  
"Hello, Vladimir Vladimirovich!"  
"Hello, Abram Vasilievich!  
Well, how did you die?  
Okay?  
Was it pleasant?"

Good jokes, huh?

It was fun.  
I began to stand at the entrance.  
And if  
acquaintances  
who had died appeared,  
I accompanied them

and showed them in the footlights of the constellations  
the highly honored props of the worlds.

The central station of all events,  
a muddle of plugs, cranks, and knobs.  
Push this  
and the worlds harden in sloth.  
Pull this  
they spin quicker and more sharply.  
"Spin," they request  
"so that the world will die out.  
What's it to them?  
Flood the fields with blood?"  
I laugh at their fervor.  
"It makes no difference to me!  
Let 'em flood them,  
to heck with it!"

The main warehouse of the all-powerful rays.  
The place to pitch burned-out stars.  
An ancient blueprint  
— no one knows whose —  
the first flop at designing a whale.

Seriously.  
Busily.  
One is repairing clouds,  
another adds heat to the sun's oven.  
Everything's in terrifying order,  
in peace,  
in place.  
Nobody is loafing.  
But then, there's no reason to.

At first they cursed me.  
"He's goofing off!"  
I'm for the heart,  
but where's the bodless-ones' hearts?!

I made them a proposition:  
"If you want,  
I'll sprawl  
my body  
on a cloud  
and contemplate everyone."

"No," they say, "it's not proper for us!"  
"How, not proper — how do you know. Then tell me  
something to do."

The bellows breathe out the wares of the ages —  
and a new  
year  
is ready.  
From here  
cascades with a rumble  
the horrible landslide of eternity.

I don't keep track of the weeks.  
We,  
who are preserved in the frames of the times,  
we don't divide love into days,  
we don't exchange names of our loved ones.

I calmed down.  
On the shoals of the rays of the moon  
I lay down,  
destroying the agitation with dreams.  
As if on a southern beach,  
only a little number,  
and carressing me throughout,  
the seas of eternity  
roll over me.

### Mayakovsky's Return

1, 2, 4, 8, 16, thousands, millions.

Arise!  
Enough!  
Eyes on the sun!  
Until what time wilt thou sprawl out there, dumb?

I mumble half-asleep:  
"What are they roaring about?  
Who dares stir up such a fuss in my heart?!"

Is it morning  
or evening?  
The whitish light of the heavens is always the same.



How many  
centuries  
have had time to take off,  
have broken into bits of days on the horizon . . .  
I imagined  
when I looked at the Milky Ways  
that it might be my gray beard fluttering before me.

Stars are falling.  
I started looking around.  
See there,  
a speeding star is streaking  
toward the earth!

Forgotten jealousies awoke in my heart,  
and my lazy brain  
drew up a fantasy.  
— Now  
there must be  
something new  
on the earth.  
Fragrant springs hanging over the villages.  
Each city must be lit up electrically.  
A family of red-cheeked, happy people singing . . .

Yearning popped up.  
Sharper and sharper.  
A cloud majestically rises,  
further another flares up,  
More and more I become aware  
of the nearness  
of some earthly shape.

I strained myself,  
I look for  
land  
between other points.

Here it is!

I eat my way in.  
I make out seas,  
mountains with eagles' screams . . .

Father is near.  
Somebody like him.  
Only a little more hard of hearing,  
with his ranger's suit  
worn a little thin  
at the elbows.

He's annoyed.  
He is also staring at the ground.  
What kind of thoughts could be clear to the old boy?  
He says softly,  
"In the Caucasus,  
it's probably spring."

That bodless herd  
bores me to death.

An apache's anger growled.

Papa,  
I'm bored!  
Bored, papa!  
Lure the stupid poets on with the sky,  
the orders of stars  
have dressed up.  
Sun!  
Why this flowing about with your robe?  
Do you think you're a Cardinal?  
Enough of this licking your rays in hibernation.  
Follow me!  
It doesn't matter that you have no footsies —  
what is there to track up?!  
You don't need galoshes in the earthly mud.

Stars!  
Enough of this  
twining a martyr's  
wreath  
for the earth!  
They turned red in the face.  
Who's that  
flashing his wings  
toward the earth?  
The dusk?

Stop it!  
We've got to get moving right now.

First, I'll jump about like a rainbow,  
then I'll curl my tail like a comet.  
Why did I ever go play among the arc?  
What terror was I hiding in its borders?

I show  
the worlds  
impossible speeds.  
The homeless spirit  
has long since  
been full of thoughts of bygone  
days.  
I see  
the hollows of the hands of the earthly hemispheres –  
cities lie in them.

The ear sifts out individual voices.

I'll be there in about a hundred strokes.

"Hello, old gal!"  
I slipped on the pavement,  
then, got up.

They are surprised at the unusual great strength  
of the traveller of the skies.

Voices:  
"Look!  
A painter must have fallen  
from the roof.  
He was sure lucky.  
That's earning your money the hard way."

And then  
the crowd again  
goes on about its business,  
its loud-mouthed day rides along.

Oh, is there  
any gullet

that could drone louder  
— louder than a city —  
in its droning.

Who'll grab the streets' straining struggle!  
Who can untangle the tunnels' underminings!  
Who'll stop them,  
as through the smoke-filled sky,  
they drill  
soot  
with their airplanes!

Along the equator  
from Chicagos  
through Tambovs,  
move the rubles.  
With necks outstretched,  
they chase each other  
ramming with their bodies  
mountains,  
seas,  
and bridges.

And that same bald  
unknown one leads them,  
that dancing master of the earthly can-can.  
Now in the form of an idea,  
now like the devil,  
then shining like a god who's vanished behind a cloud.

Softer, philosophers!  
I know —  
don't argue—  
why the source of life is given to them.  
To tear out  
and spoil  
the days like pages of a calendar.

Pity them!  
But are they sorry for me?  
They've gobbled up the streets,  
parks,  
and suburbs!  
I'm old-fashioned!

Show me!  
I'm buying a daggar.

And it's sweet to feel myself  
standing  
before my vengeance.

### **Mayakovsky to the Ages**

Where am I going,  
and why?  
I rush along  
100th Street,  
that buzzing  
human beehive.

The eyes fly by the window-like honeycombs,  
and it's terrible,  
foreign,  
and loathsome for them in July.

The city extinguishes its storefronts  
and windows.

It's exhausting and drooping.

And only  
the bloody butcher, sunset,  
is disemboweling the carcasses of the clouds.

I loaf about.  
An enchanting bridge.  
I went onto it.  
And in terrible agitation I peer from it.  
I got up, remembering.  
There was that shine then,  
And it was  
then  
called the Neva.

There was a city there.  
A senseless city,  
pulled through the haze of a smokestack forest.  
In that same city

soon  
the nights will be  
dull  
and whitish.

It's all over for July.  
The warmed-up days have de-nighted it.  
It has raved into a whisper of something passing through.  
Sometimes the cross of an ambulance is seen,  
then a shot is heard.  
It gets quiet —  
and starts again.

I know,  
that for one like me  
to become incandescent,  
not for long,  
of course,  
but nevertheless, it's wild,  
when those aren't thousands of streetlights,  
but faces.  
Where was the likeness of that tic?

And I see, above the house  
along the dangerous slope of the roof  
you are coming among the rays,  
gathering them into shocks.  
I reach out,  
but she went away like fog from under my nose.

And again I stand  
numb and rooted to the ground.  
The crowd of midnight idlers has been cleaved,  
I almost feel the smell of flesh,  
the breathing,  
the voice,  
I think — it's a ghost,  
it took hold of me and I came back to life.

She tore herself away,  
she came out of the air of bonds.  
It's not enough for her  
— alone! —  
she spread out in the procession.  
The enlivened heart heavily thumped.

I am again recognized by the earthly tortures.  
Long live  
— again! —  
my madness!

The streetlights were again located  
in the middle of the street.  
The houses were the same.  
Likewise,  
from a niche  
the sculpture  
of a horse's head.

— Pedestrian,  
is this Zhukovsky Street?

He looks at me  
as a child looks at a skeleton,  
eyes this big,  
tries to get by.

“It's been Mayakovsky Street for thousands of years:  
he shot himself here at the door of his beloved.”  
Who,  
I shot myself?  
What an exaggeration!

Heart, mint a shining joy.  
I fly  
to the window.  
It's a habit acquired in the heavens.

High.  
Deeper upward I passed  
floor after floor.  
She has curtained herself off.  
I look behind the silk —  
everything's the same,  
the same bedroom.

She's come through thousands of years and still looks young.  
You lie there,  
your hair made blue by the moon.  
Wait a minute . . .

that which  
was the moon,  
turned out to be his naked bald spot.

I found them!

Let them sleep now.  
Hand,  
squeeze the sting of the dagger!  
I sneak along,  
getting used to the darkness —  
and again!  
I start loving  
and again  
fall back back into love and pity.

Good morning!

The lights came on.  
Two eyes open wide.  
"Who are you?"  
"I'm Nikolaev, an engineer.  
This is my apartment,  
But who are you?  
Why are you standing so close to my wife?"

A strange room.  
The morning shook.  
With the corners of her lips trembling,  
a strange woman,  
stripped stark naked.

I run.

Like a shadow torn to pieces,  
large,  
and shaggy,  
I sneak along the wall,  
glazed by the moon.  
The renters run out,  
wrapping their gowns about them.  
I thunder against the slabs.  
I drove the doorman into a corner with my blows.



“From number 42,  
what’s become of her?” —  
“There’s a legend:  
she jumped  
to him  
from the window.  
They were scattered about  
one on top of the other.”

Where to now?  
Wherever the eyes look.  
To the fields?  
Let it be to the fields!  
Tra-la-la. La-la-la la-la lak!  
De de deels. de-de-de-de-de-deels!

Slip on my neck a ray like a noose!  
I’m entwined in the burning summer!  
There thunders on me  
the handcuffs  
of the millenium of my love . . .

Everything will perish.  
It will come down to nothing.  
And the one,  
who controls life,  
will quench the last ray  
over the darkness of the planet,  
the last ray  
from the last suns.  
And only  
my hurt  
is sharper —  
I stand,  
entwined in flames,  
on an inextinguishable bonfire  
of incomprehensible love.

### **The Last**

Wide open space,  
take this homeless one  
again  
to your bosom!

What heaven for me now?  
What star?  
Under me  
He has covered the world  
with a thousand churches  
and drags it along:  
"Rest in Peace!"

1916-17

*Translated by Gary Wiggins*

*The Night Search*

36 + 36 1

At the ready!  
Rifles steady.  
Get moving, shipmates—  
on the right, thirty-eight.  
Get that door open!  
—Aye-aye!  
—At the ready!  
Get in!  
—Please come in,  
you're very welcome!  
—Hold it seamen!  
—You're lying, ma,  
through your gray hairs,  
don't try and fool with the sea.  
Take off your glasses.  
Is this thirty-eight?  
—Yes! You're very welcome,  
my long-awaited guests!—  
Head a-tremble  
barely breathing.  
—Now, ma,  
what's your name?  
Lead on a bit quicker, mama!  
Venerable  
old mammy!  
Don't worry about nuthin',  
it'll all be all right.  
Any White bastards here?  
—'Ere mate! By the door.  
—That's done—now the attic.  
—You, lad, here!  
—Aye-aye!  
—Let's move, then, seamen,  
let's tweak their whiskers!  
Towards hide clever...  
They secreted their hardware,  
the armed men then made a dash,  
snatched up all the ready cash,

the Whites hadn't deceived them.  
—And you, ma, look lively,  
get a move on!  
Even gray-heads sit down  
on the point of a gun.  
And where are your men?  
Look lively, bring the cash,  
old woman, to me, the  
gray-haired old sea-dog!  
I've got a whiff—  
a keen nose, that's me—  
a sixth sense sniff:  
White bastards there are!  
There'll be a catch.

—Smell it brother?  
The White bastard scent.  
Sharp, that's me.  
Now then, my shipmate-hounds!

—Here's what there is—  
and the odd jewel.  
—How many?  
—Forty?  
—Keep us in fuel!—  
Don't just stand talking!  
Grab and loot!  
Shipmates, swoop!  
That's it!  
No milords, then!  
Grab  
as much as you can.  
We're no tsars  
to sit and day-dream.  
Shipmates, swoop, shipmates, swoop!  
Hey, sea swoop! Swoop like an eagle!  
—As she blows?  
Go on, as much as you can!  
—Old woman, play us a polka.  
—A young lady's day-dream.

Voice: Mama, hey mama!  
—Mother, hey mother!  
Answer, out with it!

So it's no White scum here, is it?  
—Tomorrow—the soviet will sit.  
I'm an old woman, brother!  
Scarlet, white,  
and blue blooded.  
What am I to make of it?  
And my hair is already white.  
I'm—a mother.

—Bang! Bang!  
A shot, smoke, fire!  
—Where're you off to, you scamp?  
Stop! Your weapon, hands up!  
—Shoot him, shipmates!  
—Stand against the wall, my lad.  
That's right! That's right!  
With his hair a lightish brown,  
and moustache of golden down.  
—To the stove, blondie, over that side,  
give us a look at your yellow white hide!  
—Your guest from the sea is truly sorry  
about the miss:  
the hand shaky,  
the bullet a wanton.  
—He's laughing, is it rashness or rudeness?  
Do we shoot him?  
—Going to blow my brains out, then?  
Comrade shipmates,  
sea-faring guests?  
Rumor has it... you are generous-hearted.  
—We're free and easy!...  
one thing the sea can be,  
one favor that can be  
bestowed by the sea!  
—Old woman, turn away.  
—We're going to blow 'is brains out, then,  
the White gentleman's?  
—My son's?  
—Shirt off, then, it'll do someone else a turn,  
starkers is good enough for the grave.  
There'll be in the grave no young ladies.  
Trousers down,  
and get a move on.  
Off with the lot! Wake up—

time enough for sleep. Soon be sleep with no waking for you!  
—Farewell, mother,  
just blow out the candle on my table.  
—Lad, take away these rags. Get ready! One! Two!  
—Farewell, fool! Thanks  
for your bullet.  
—And so!.. For the people's good.

Bang, b-bang!  
Bang!

—Thanks, but what kind:  
pigeon's egg size  
or sparrow's?  
There's a riddle for you!  
He's croaked, the beauty,  
he's kicked the bucket.  
An 'andsome varmint that—  
a good disguise, that is.  
Two more shots:  
one for the floor,  
and one for God!  
Like so! Here!  
We'll send him to the fiends of hell.  
We and the flying sea—  
breathing down our merry necks  
onto our shirts—white,  
onto our shirts—blue,  
we spot 'em—we shoot 'em!  
Bell-bottomed are my trousers,  
hardware juts from my hand,  
and it's no gray beaver  
but the deep-blue sea  
that encircles my tight neck  
and my white shirt.  
Mother of God.  
—What'll we do then, mate, lift 'im?  
Carry 'im?  
Can't leave 'im here—it's not nice.  
—Sod it! So what?  
—Mama!  
—Ho, what a beauty is this?  
She seems a mere seventeen,  
and her hair's—like snow!

And her black eyes  
so alive!  
—The sea is the bearer of snow.  
In a quarter of an hour I've gone gray.  
If you don't like the sight of an old woman,  
don't look, turn away!  
Vladimir! Volodya! Vladimir!  
Mama! He's naked!  
—Young lady!  
Corpses don't feel the cold!  
And the dead are not proud.  
—All right! All right! At ease!  
—The swine! He's laughing at the dead!  
—And suchlike shirts  
I've never worn—so choice!  
No blood stains,  
high-class cloth.

Footsteps—hand on shoulder.  
—Lad! I've cut down another skunk!  
He's up in the attic.  
By a machine-gun.  
—Oh-ho!  
—Where's mother!  
—My oh so white young lady,  
so you'd turned white  
even before our coming?  
The sea wind was not yet even blowing,  
not yet a whiff of the sea or the wind,  
yet snow had already fallen  
here, on both attic and head.  
Did the muzzles of machine guns jut  
from under the feather-bed?  
Never mind, never mind.  
It's just—early spring's  
cherry blossom  
fell on your brow as snow.  
Come to your senses, the leaves are falling  
my dear young lady.  
A fine floral lid  
for the coffin.  
—That'll do!  
—Shipmate!  
Why bother tormenting her?

—Now then,  
my dear young lady in white,  
to the wall!  
—This one? That one?  
Which one?  
I'm... ready!  
—Now, to the devil with her...  
—Wait!  
Enough blood's been shed!  
Away, you impassive doll!  
—Blood? There's been no blood today!  
Just effluence, piss and ooze.  
From this cattle-yard of people  
D'you see the murky pools?  
From 'er brother  
or husband.  
—Vladimir!  
—Mama!  
—Pity you didn't say "papa",  
that would have been more fun!  
Where is he, on the run?  
Like a thoroughbred trotter?  
Trotted off and took to 'is heels!  
Maybe he's the racing favorite?  
Catching up on 'is fellow flee-ers?  
So, go away, you doll,  
away to your room!  
Plague us no more!  
We're going to splice the mainbrace.  
Don't cry, my lass,  
this is no place for landlubbers.  
We also have our sisters  
in the villages and forests,  
but not in your capitals.  
Go your way in peace, woman,  
along your own path.  
—As there's a mirror, I'll have a shave!  
There's lots of time.  
A crooked glass gives  
a cross-eyed dial.  
Friends, out the window  
with all this junk—  
what's the use of such a pile?  
We'll make it into a sea,



like waves on the ocean free.  
Except there are no gulls.  
And the mirror—down with it,  
Smash with the fist!  
—I've cut myself.  
It's a vessel of red ink, this mirror,  
—Warrior cut up by mirror!  
Mirrors can be cruel at times. They  
observe doggedly,  
and we need no judges here—  
we're better off with darkness!  
—Lad!  
Give us your handkerchief!  
—Vladimir!  
Volodya!  
—E's perished! 'E perished  
today!  
Perished, perished!  
He won't hear you!  
Stretched out on the ground  
ruling the world.<sup>2</sup>  
And not breathing.  
—And what's this? A gentlemanly plaything,  
diversion for the white young lady?  
Of an evening she sits  
thinking about her husband,  
tapping out a quiet tune.  
And the sound of the black key  
is heard after the white  
following, like night  
doggedly after day.  
Who out of our mates can play?  
—Ah, yes we can....  
With the butt of a gun...  
Or with the gun-stock...  
Look, shipmates,  
move it over here,  
what a racket there'll be and  
thunder and singing...  
and a lament,  
like the quiet whine  
of a whelp caught under a fence.  
A whelp forgotten by all.  
And a rumbustious roar of cannons now breaks out,

and someone's guffaw, someone's mirth subaqueous, mermaidish  
They crowd round. A stringed murmur,  
a stringed guffaw, quiet mirth.  
—With rifle-butt, bang!  
Bang with rifle-butt —Laugh then, sea!  
Sea, laugh then! Let the big stormy fist  
straddle the octaves today...  
A shell into the enemy trenches... now!  
The virgin's holy feast-day in the dug-outs,  
where fellow-countrymen pass the time.  
At first they feed their needs  
the hard way,  
and then the worms.  
Two alternatives, two shirts:  
tighter one than the other.  
The same bill of fare for either palate.  
Listen how the strings ring out!  
Taking a nose-dive to doom.  
For long will it clatter  
the stringed copper.  
—Hammer it again,  
lad!  
Buzzing like the bees  
when honey is lifted by keeper.  
Bang! Bang!  
—That's the style, seamen.  
Our cause is the sea's:  
at a blow send it crashing!  
At a blow send it smashing!  
Break it, break it up.  
Plunder and destroy then,  
you salty dogs of seamen!  
Boldly! Don't be shy!  
Not for nothing did you hunger,  
the reckoning will come,  
and as for all this lumber,  
this old crate of doggie wails,  
onto the deck with it,  
out the window!  
Startle the women,  
that's the way!  
—It's just the job for the sea,  
stormy enough.  
It's for the likes of us,

not for the likes of mice.  
To smithereens  
Bang—bash!  
Once again the sea grew restful,  
the sea had been raging,  
the sea raged itself out.  
Ha, what strength.  
—Did it crush anyone?  
—Seems not.  
Only three old ants,  
out on a recce.  
What dust. What thrust!  
—Where's yer rifle, kiddie?  
Lad, can you pick me off that rook?  
—Aye, aye!  
Bang!  
Got it.  
D'ye fell it?  
—It fell.  
Dead.  
—And where's the old woman?  
Mother, are you here?  
Some grub!  
Wine and salmon!  
And a white table-cloth.  
Flowers. Glasses.  
We'll have a right old feast.  
Come on, look lively,  
Bring us roast and fillet,  
or else you'll be in for it!  
—Now, me lads, we'll wolf it down,  
bolt it down, brothers, scoff it.  
Guzzle it.  
Mess-time is here so feast your fill!  
Until your jawbones crack.  
And it keeps on stinking.  
The odor of the dead.  
—Vladimir!  
—It's Vladimir she's moaning after!  
And we're forgotten, we're not wanted!  
Let's see she's not disappointed:  
—We're here!  
—I'm here, Olya!  
—I'm here, Nina!

—I'm here, Verochka!  
—Miaow!  
—What a laugh!  
Put on a thin voice,  
give us a fishwife's scream.  
—Have a heart, boys, don't poke fun  
at the coffin, at death.  
—Skillfully you  
clubbed it with a gun butt.  
That will make it sing,  
make it ring, start it playing, 'til, like a dying bird, it plummets  
to the ground.

Like the sea in squally weather.  
Listen, in the doorway there's a notice:  
"Please knock."  
Our mate wrote in a bit more:  
"Please knock me over."  
on the doorway to our young friend's coffin,  
before the dead'un's sister and widow.  
Ha, ha, ha!  
What a dick.  
—And there's something in there  
to knock over a young lady widow  
with her hair gone gray.  
We, the wind, brought her snow.  
The wind from the sea.  
The sea, oh the sea!  
So, my lads,  
We will pass on, like death  
and grief.  
With us is the sea!  
With us is the sea!  
Corpses lying around.  
The sea—liquor galore,  
the sea—nostrils a-gore,<sup>3</sup>  
so piratical  
and irascible.  
Like a storm the hue of red cloth,  
the sea irascible,  
the sea of Pugachov.  
—With a sixth sense sniff  
of White bastard I got a whiff.  
Greenhorn! I sniff it,  
it smells white!

What's this, a bang!  
Standing behind the curtain,  
he was hiding, mammy's little boy.  
He missed the mark  
and laughs.  
I say: —"Not so fast, young fella!"  
and he:  
"Going to blow my brains out, then?"  
"We're free and easy," I say.  
—Bang, b-bang!  
And so merrily  
he tossed back his hair, and laughs.  
The way you ask the price of something  
bargaining.  
A business matter,  
a cut and dried matter,  
it's all the same in the end,  
there's nothing odd to it.  
Mother of God to it.  
Don't give a sod for it.  
"We're free and easy," I say,  
"one thing the sea can be,  
one favor that can be  
bestowed by the sea."  
—Bang, b-bang!  
—Here's how it was:  
the fella stops:  
—"Going to blow my brains out, then?"  
"We're free and easy"—  
I reply.  
Bang, b-bang! Smoke! And the air was scorched.  
There he lies now, with his goldenlocks,  
let his sister kiss him, as she sobs.  
"Sweetie, my sweetie,  
my golden sweetie."  
—Where're you off to, girlie?  
Let the pussy through!  
Wait!  
—Lad, wait a mo,  
Don't let the pussy through.  
Out the window!  
—What's yer name?  
—Maroosie.  
—Why not floosie,

rather suits you.  
—Sit down at the table, friends.  
—Straight as a die  
the old woman holds herself.  
It's true, Vladimir's her kith and kin.  
Her son. She's gloomy and ill-omened.  
"From under the oak, the oak, the oak!"<sup>4</sup>  
It's six o'clock, about.  
Pour out the wine, comrades,  
let all our feelings out.  
Drink, sea,  
frolic, sea,  
come on, more!  
Splash away!  
Let the sea be heard,  
the sea—liquor galore!  
"Celebrating his new wedding  
he's merry and tipsy... and tipsy..."<sup>5</sup>  
These are the days.  
—Come, sit down, shipmates, to inebriation!  
At the magic-carpet of dissipation.  
"From under the oak, the oak, the oak!"  
Sit down shipmates!  
—What's smoking?  
Firebird!  
—Oh, God, oh, God!  
Give me a light.  
My one's gone out.  
Went out little by little.  
Old 'un, you don't smoke—up there in heaven?  
—He's silent.  
The old man betrayed nothing,  
didn't come out of his shell.  
Hidden in the clouds.  
Doesn't matter. To us the vodka sea—liquor galore.  
And to God—the clouds. We won't fight over it.  
There's a god in the corner—  
on his other breast  
in the prickly crown of thorns,  
rivetted to the board, tattooed,  
engraved  
with blue powder on the skin—  
the custom of the seas.  
And that one's burning a candle...

Better than our's—a wax one!  
He in the corner looks  
and burns.  
And keeps a watch.  
Into samovar kindling  
I'd like to chop him up!  
Finely splinter him.  
Top quality fuel!  
Wasted on him  
are such dark blue eyes  
as would make you fall for him,  
like for a girl.  
It's a girlish face the god's got,  
only it's bearded.  
In two downward points  
streams his beard,  
like the somber wattle  
fold of the flocks by the lake,  
like the night rain,  
eyes of deep pre-daybreak blueness,  
both prophetic and silent,  
austere and beautiful,  
and tender as ineffable speech,  
they silently look down  
in reproachful mystery,  
on us, on the whole crew  
of saint-killers,  
on the drunken orgy  
of saint-killers.  
—Look out, he'll come down here  
and start playing havoc.  
He'll be over, at the bat of an eyelid,  
and as quick as a flash.  
Dark are his eyes, as the heavens,  
prophetic mystery in them,  
and close by all is calmly breathing.  
Lakes of blue thought!  
—Going to blow my brains out, then?  
Going to blow my brains out, girlish god,  
you've got those seven cartridges,  
with your big deep-blue eyes?  
And I'll say a thank you  
for the letters and greetings.  
—Sea! Sea!

He agrees!  
He batted his eyelashes,  
like a bird its wings.  
His eyes fly straight into my soul,  
fly and race, flutter and clatter.  
Hard-faced as execution,  
he surveys me with a dogged coldness!  
Opened wide-eyed by stories of horror,  
like birds race at me  
his deep-blue eyes straight into my soul.  
Like two sea-birds, big, deep-blue and dark,  
into the storm, two stormy petrels, harbingers of doom.  
And fluttering and clattering their wings, they fly! Hurrying.  
Down straight down! Diving to the depths of my soul.  
—So... I'm drunk... And that's the truth...  
But I want him to kill me  
here and now on the tablecloth,  
that's covered with wine-stains and glassware.  
—You band of brothers!  
Saintly killers!  
In your white shirts, you,  
white and blue like the stripy sea,  
with your wide trousers and black flat-toed boots below,  
and blue wings lying free round a proud, willful neck,  
like the ripple and surf of the sea,  
like the light-blue wind of the sea,  
and the black swallow in flight on the back of the head,  
above the familiar inscription, the name of the ship.  
Oh, sound of our country's floating fortress of the sea  
and name of our state's liberty!  
You band of brothers,  
sea-faring vagabonds!  
You tramp with your flat-toed boots  
over deck and dry land,  
in hour of strife you banish all vacillation,  
though you fear it not in the sea.  
Today you must listen to me:  
I want to fall dead on the spot,  
I want deadly fire to fall  
from the place of honor—  
from there a muzzle to loom  
so that I could call it—fool!  
When facing the end.  
Like that boy yelled to me,



laughing carefree  
in the face of the cartridge-clip of death.  
I burst into his life and killed,  
like some dark deity of night.  
But vanquished I was by his ringing laughter,  
in which the music of youth rang out.  
And now I want to vanquish God  
by merry laughter quite as mighty,  
though I'm gloomy  
now and grave. And it's hard for me.  
—God! I'm drunk... "Three sheets to the wind, the old 'un"...  
"It's time to get back to the ship." —Let's go!  
—I'm drunk, but listen...  
Let's have a smoke!  
And you and I will have a good chat.  
Many miracles you performed,  
but you were never a father.  
Never mind that! I know!  
You're a girl, but with a beard.  
You stroll in the meadow and pick flowers,  
you weave garlands  
and then look at yourself in the water.  
You're a blue-eyed country lass  
of field and village,  
with your curly beard—  
that's what you are.  
Lassie! Shall I  
give you some perfume?  
If you will fix  
the time and place,  
then I'll be there with flowers,  
refined and clean-shaven,  
languid.  
Then along the embankment,  
along the sea-shore we'll stroll.  
Arm in arm,  
they way they do?  
Let's have a kiss.  
We'll embrace and drink together.  
"Which art in heaven."  
—Shipmates, hang on,  
stay, don't vent your spleen!  
—Mermaid  
with your eyes so misty, eyes so mighty,

hit the bottle!  
 That's right.  
 —Shipmates!  
 Where shall we meet, then?  
 In the communal grave?  
 I'll bring along some spirit,  
 treat God to a swig of it,  
 and we'll invite some wenches.  
 In the next world  
 I'll entertain from three to six.  
 Be bolder:  
 only children fear,  
 and we have taken leave of youth.  
 We'll ladle liquor into this saint,  
 and praise to Odessa we'll chant.  
 Ye gods, ye gods, give us a smoke!  
 Enough said, I'm sorry I spoke.  
 Drink, old pal, there in the corner!  
 Aah!  
 He moved his lips,  
 and uttered a word... in fishes' speech.  
 He mouthed a word, an awful word,  
 he mouthed a word,  
 and that word, oh, brothers, was  
 "Fire!"  
 —You drunk? —No, we're drunk.  
 —So long, till the next world.  
 —Going to blow my brains out, then?  
 .....  
 —The old woman! The cunning old witch!  
 —You've set us on fire.  
 We're burning! Help! The smoke!  
 But I'm content and calm.  
 Here I stand, twisting me 'tache, and all's well.  
 Savior! You're a fool.  
 —Come on! Chief, hell!  
 Try rifle butts.  
 The door's of iron!  
 Do we shoot ourselves?  
 Or suffocate?  
 As you please!

Old woman:  
 (appearing)

*Translated by Neil Cornwell*

## NOTES

1. " $3^6 + 3^6$ ." The original explanation by P. V. Miturich was that this formula represented the time from the first death in the poem to the final holocaust, counted in units of heartbeats—that is to say 18 minutes ( $3^6 + 3^6 = 1458$  beats at 81 to the minute), which coincides approximately with the time taken to read the poem.

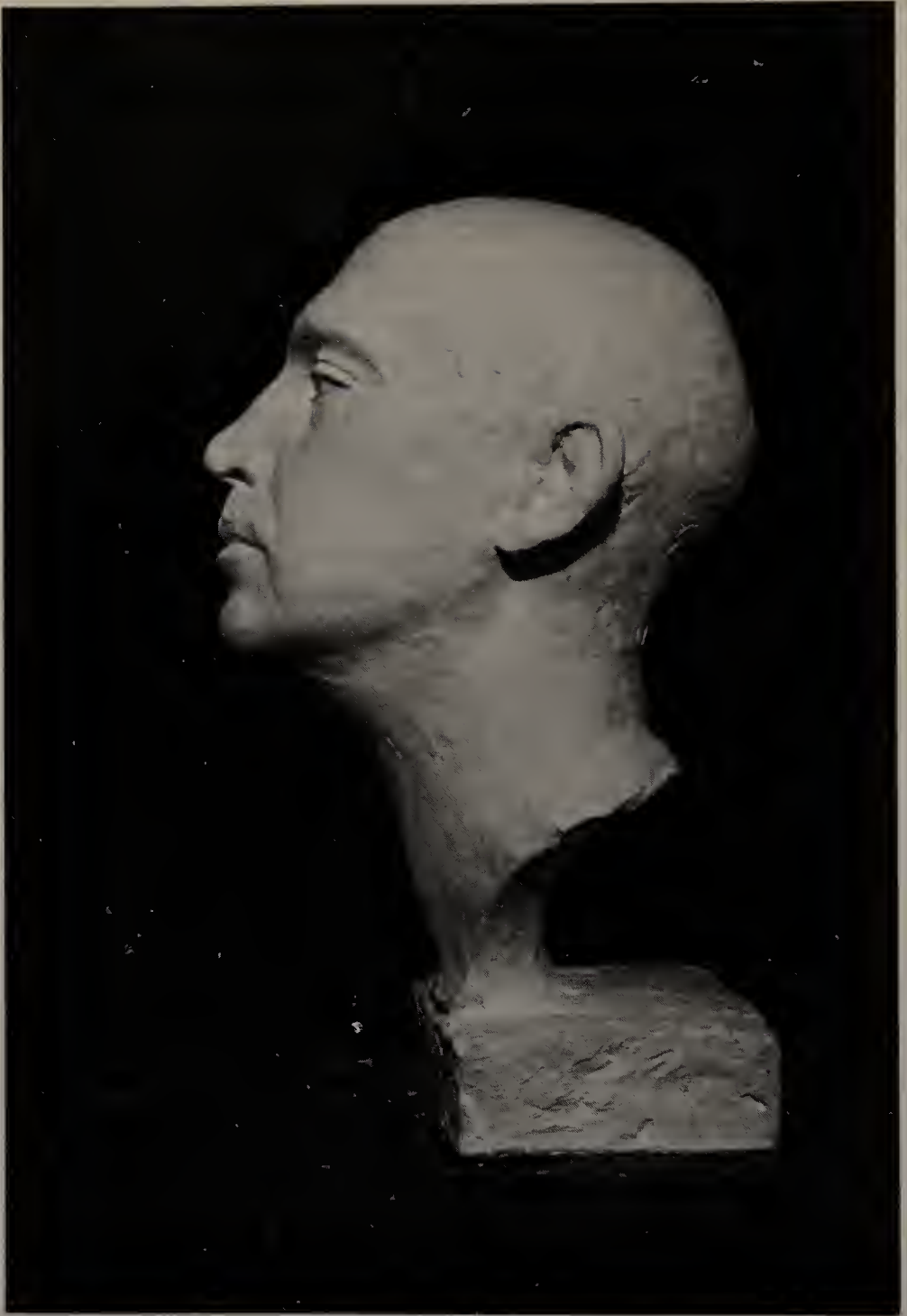
However, in his paper at the Banff Conference of Slavists in September, 1974, entitled "Khlebnikov and  $3^6 + 3^6$ ," R. D. B. Thomson saw the formula in the broader terms of Khlebnikov's historical and numerological theories: the number 3 and its powers tend to signify the *reversal* of historical events and trends (2 and its powers signify their *reinforcement*). If  $3^6$  is interpreted in days rather than heartbeats the resultant 729 is just one day short of 2 years. The addition of a further  $3^6$  brings the total to 2 days short of 4 years—almost exactly the amount of time which had elapsed between the October Revolution and the dating of the poem. One contemporary trend known to have been worrying Khlebnikov, among other people, was the "shift to the right" exemplified by the decision to open negotiations over the acknowledgement of Tsarist debts (a reversal of the previous policy of denial). The fact that the four-year timespan referred to by the formula is also expressible in the "positive" term  $2^2$  underlines the ambiguities contained in the poem itself and in Khlebnikov's attitude to Soviet power at this stage.

2. "Ruling the world." A play on words based on the meaning of the name Vladimir.

3. "Nostrils a-gore." Traditionally the mark of the *katorzhnik* or inmate of a Tsarist forced labor camp.

4. "From under the oak..." Line from a folk song.

5. "Celebrating his new wedding..." Lines from the folk song "Stenka Razin."



Osip Brik, bust by Lily Brik, 1939.

## osip brik / SHE'S NOT A FELLOW-TRAVELER

### 1.

At 12 midnight a woman passed by the table.

Sandarov devoured her with his eyes. Strepetov got up and bowed.

"Who's that?"

"Velyarskaya Nina Georgievna and her husband, a big operator."

Sandarov couldn't take his eyes off Velyarskaya.

"You like her?"

"Very much."

"I thought you Communists were supposed to be repelled by the charms of a bourgeois lady."

"Supposed to be."

"In that case what kind of Communist are you?"

"A bad one, I guess."

The Velyarskys sat down near by. Strepetov stood up and went over to them.

"Who's that with you?"

No one special. Just another Commie."

"The hell with him. Come, join us."

"No, I can't do that. He might come in handy."

Velyarsky laughed.

"Then get him over here."

His wife waved her pretty little hand.

"Oh no, spare me that. Do your wheeling and dealing without me."

Strepetov started to take his leave.

"Drop by, Strepetov. We're still in the same place. We have a new phone: 33-07."

"Without fail. See you soon."

Strepetov stood up.

"Where are you going? Home?"

"Yes."

"Let's stay awhile."

"No, it's time."

They left.

"I see you liked Velyarskaya an awful lot."

"So, what about it?"

"Why you suddenly got so quiet?"

Sandarov didn't say anything.

"Do you want me to introduce you?"

"No, I don't."

"Why not?"

"I have reasons."

"Okay, do what you like."

Strepetov headed toward Tverskaya Street, Sandarov toward Myasnit-skaya. By the lamppost Sandarov took out his notebook and made a new entry: Nina Georgievna Velyarskaya, ph. 33-07.

## 2.

Sonya Bauer brushed off the twentieth visitor.

"The boss is busy at the moment. He's not seeing anybody."

This phrase made her angry. Her boss, Comrade Sandarov wasn't busy at all. He was sitting at the table in his office and was smoking.

Comrade Tark came in.

"Well, is he still busy?"

"I must admit to you. He's not doing a thing and yet he ordered me not to let anyone in."

"What's the matter with him then?"

"I don't know. It's been going on every day for the whole week."

"What about business?"

"It's where it was."

"How do you explain it?"

Sonya was silent.

"Being his wife you might know?"

"I'm not his wife, Comrade Tark. Communists have no wives. They live together."

"Well, than as his companion."

"We live in different homes. I can't spy on him. I don't consider it necessary."

"That's too bad. As his party comrades we're concerned about him and don't want him to get out of line."

"Do you think he got out of line?"

"No, I don't. But I think he might. Now is a dangerous time."

Sonya shrugged her shoulders. Tark stood up.

"I would advise you to try to use your influence on him. There's a lot of people who do not wish him well. They'll be only too glad if something happens to him. If you ever need my advice I'm at your service. It's comradely duty."

He left the room. Sonya knew Sandarov had a lot of enemies. She also knew that Comrade Tark was one of them.

3.

Sandarov appeared at the doorway of his office.

"Sonya, if there's anything for me to sign give it to me now before I leave."

Sonya took a folder full of papers and entered the office.

"How come you're angry? You're not so happy about my behavior, is that it?"

"Are you happy about it?"

"Yes, very much."

"Then everything is all right."

Sandarov signed ten documents or so.

"Tark came to see you."

"The hell with Tark."

"To discuss something important."

"A party matter?"

"Yes."

Sandarov continued signing papers.

"What is that?"

"A request from the Industrial company for a two-month delay for the completion of the order."

"Turn it down."

Sonya gathered the papers.

"There's a party meeting today. Will you be there?"

"What's it about?"

"Commission report on day-care centers."

"I might come."

"Your presence is very much desired."

"I'm sick and tired of the party meetings."

"You've got a funny approach to things lately. One might get the impression that you're in the Party for your own pleasure."

"What are you bitching about? Was I ever in love with any of my party comrades?"

Sandarov took his briefcase and left.

Sonya surveyed the table. There was a notebook to the right. The top page was crisscrossed with writing. Sonya scrutinized it, tore it off and put it in her pocket. A single word was scrawled all over this piece of paper in various handwritings: Velyarskaya.

4.

Velyarsky met with his associate in the Armand restaurant.

"How's it going?"

"Badly."

"Go on. What else?"

"They've turned us down."

"What are we going to do about it?"

"I don't know."

"We have to come up with something."

The associate shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't do anything. I don't have any connections there."

Strepetov came up to them.

"Tell me, Strepetov, do you have any connections in Main Construction?"

"I sure do."

"Who?"

"Sandarov, a member of the Committee."

"Okay, then. Listen, I've got a deal for you. You can make money."

"At your service!"

The associate began whispering in Strepetov's ear.

"I see, but we can do even better."

"How's that?"

"Why ask for a postponement if you can get the money right away."

"What money?"

"For the work."

"But the work is not done and won't be done in time."

"I know, and yet you can get the money anyway."

"How's that?"

"Present the bills and get the money."

"Junk! You've got to be crazy."

"I'm telling you. As for the work you'll finish it sometime or other."

Velyarsky began laughing heartily.

"Not bad, eh? Good thinking."

"Just give me the bills, I'll take care of it."

"Come tomorrow to the office."

"All right."

When Strepetov was at a distance, Velyarsky gave a wink to his partner.

"It might not be a bad idea to make sure of some Cheka connections just in case. What do you think?"

"Hell no! We'll get by somehow."

## 5.

Sandarov was at home. He was lying on the sofa and dozing off. Sonya came in, sat at the table, but kept silent.

"If you want to discuss the topic of my misbehavior, go ahead. I'm not going to start this conversation, not me."



"Your misbehavior doesn't bother me a bit, especially that you're so pleased with yourself. What I would like to talk about is to clarify our relationship, that is between you and me."

"What relationship?"

"Personal. We've lived together for two years, that's no small thing."

"What are you getting at?"

"I'm not getting at anything. But it's obvious that something has changed between us, and I want to know what is going to happen to us?"

"We have no obligations to each other. We're Communists. We're not petty-bourgeois, and I hope no marital scenes are possible between us."

"I have no intention to make a scene."

"Then what's the matter?"

Sonya jumped up and pounded her fist on the table.

"Don't talk to me as though I were a slut that you got sick to death of. If it's all over, do me a favor, say so. I'll leave without a scene. I don't want to beat around the bush with you any longer."

"Sonya!"

"Sonya your elbow! Please be so kind as to tell me the straight truth. I'm not asking you for any of your conjugal faithfulness or any of that. But I'm not set on sharing Comrade Sandarov with a petty-bourgeois slut of yours!"

"What's that? What are you talking about?"

Sandarov jumped up from the sofa. Sonya threw the paper covered with writing in his face. Sandarov looked at it and clenched his teeth.

"Comrade Bauer, I doubt such disgraceful performance is in accord with the standards of Communist morale. I suggest that we break off our relationship for the time being. I hope you have no objections? Go now."

Sonya ran out of the room.

Sandarov crumpled the piece of paper and threw it on the floor. Then he picked it up, smoothed it out and put it in his desk.

## 6.

Strepetov caught up with Sandarov at the streetcar stop.

"I've been looking for you. Let's go to the Velyarskys."

"Are you crazy? Why on earth should I go?"

"You're off your rocker. Nina Georgievna is a most charming woman. I'd like to introduce you."

"You're out of your mind!"

"Why? Nina Georgievna is a most intriguing woman. Besides, she's well disposed toward Communists. She once had a Communist friend who was crazy about her."

"Who is that?"

"Some Ponomarev, an army commissar."

"Where's he now?"

"He was either killed or died of typhus. She's not sure herself."

"What's his name again? Ponomarev?"

"Yes, do you know him?"

"No, I don't think so."

Strepetov took Sandarov's arm.

"Let's go together."

"Leave me alone, will you? I don't want to meet any of your Velyarskys."

"Didn't you like her?"

"So what if I did?"

Sandarov jumped on the streetcar. Strepetov snorted.

"The hell with you. If you don't want to, don't. I've got other things to discuss with you. So I might see you tomorrow in your office."

The streetcar took off. Strepetov looked after it.

"The damn fool!"

He started to walk along the boulevard.

## 7.

Sonya found Tark in the party cell office.

"I decided to take you up on your offer and have a serious talk with you about Sandarov."

"Anything happened?"

"Nothing new, the same old story. And yet you know for yourself everything starts with small things."

"That's correct. And yet could you pinpoint what you have in mind?"

"First of all, he's completely abandoned his duties."

"Well, that's not so bad."

"Secondly, he's taking to abusing comrades. That's something new."

"That's worse."

"Then he started to talk carelessly, you know, funny."

Tark looked at Sonya.

"Tell me, is there a woman involved?"

Sonya kept silent.

"Excuse me if I said anything wrong."

Sonya squeezed her hands.

"All right. I'll tell you. There is a woman involved."

Tark cheered up.

"See? Who is she? Do you know her?"

"No, I didn't see her. But I know her name."

"Well?"

"Velyarskaya."

Tark raised his eyebrows.

"Velyarskaya... Velyarskaya... let's see."

He took a stack of papers from his briefcase.

"Of course. That's it."

"What?"

"Velyarsky is our contractor. He's one of the owners of the Industrial company. It must be his wife."

Tark started to pace the room.

"This could turn out badly."

Sonya turned toward him.

"I forgot to mention another thing. A certain Strepetov has been seeing him often. Obviously a dirty figure."

Tark came close to Sonya.

"It's absolutely necessary to keep an eye on Sandarov. He could get into trouble. Keep me informed."

Sonya nodded her head without saying anything.

When she left Tark shook his head and picked up the phone.

"Nikolai, is that you? Come over to the committee right away. I'll tell you a spicy story."

## 8.

Velyarskaya was lying on the sofa reading.

Her husband came in. He kissed her hand.

"Your Strepetov made me absolutely mad today. He's got some nerve, and he's a fool."

"What happened?"

"Don't you see, you have something going in Main Construction. A certain Sandarov, who works in Main Construction is very fond of me. So, now I have to get acquainted with this Sandarov, don't you understand, because it is very important for you and will be pleasant for me too since Sandarov is very interesting."

"What rubbish!"

"I yelled at him, I called him a scoundrel and threw him out."

"Good for you!"

"I really wish you wouldn't invite him over anymore. All I need is to get mixed up in your business."

"But I didn't authorize him to talk to you about it."

"I don't care who authorizes whom, but I think the whole thing is utterly disgusting."

"Okay, okay. No one is asking you to do anything. But if it were necessary you wouldn't refuse to do it for me, would you?"

The maid came in.

"A phone call for you, ma'am."

"Who is it?"

"They didn't say."

"Male or female?"

"Male."

9.

"Hello?"

"Is that Nina Georgievna Velyarskaya?"

"Yes, who is it?"

"My name is Tumin. You don't know me. Ponomarev, a friend of yours, asked me to remember him to you."

"Why? Is he alive?"

"No, he died of typhus six months ago. Permit me to drop by and I will tell you everything."

"Yes, of course. I'd be very glad."

"When would you like to see me?"

"Stop by tomorrow about three."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you know the address?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll be expecting you."

"Without fail."

Her husband was sitting on the couch, leafing through a book.

"Who was that?"

"The seamstress."

And she kissed him on the forehead.

10.

Before the committee meeting Tark called several party members aside.

"Here it is. Today we have to nominate a candidate for the party conference. We were thinking about Sandarov, right?"

"Right."

"I consider him unsuitable."

"Why?"

"I've always said he's not stable and now I'm convinced of it."

"Come to the point."

"He's showing off. He has stopped taking party interests into consideration. He creates opposition and stirs up criticism. He's one of the intelligentsia."

"Cut it out. Sandarov is an experienced reliable party man. We can

overlook that."

"That's true. But there's a rotting bourgeois smell about him, a smell of intelligentsia. It's undoubtedly there."

"You're talking nonsense."

"It is not nonsense. Here's the proof: he's gotten mixed up with some petty-bourgeois dame."

The party members dropped their jaws.

"You're kidding?"

"What's more, she's a wife of one of our contractors."

"Oh, hell!"

"Yessir. He dropped all his business. He hangs around bars with a little rascal and things like that."

"How do you know all that?"

"Don't worry, his wife, Comrade Bauer, told me."

The party members shook their heads.

"No good."

"Yeah, that's the way it goes, a woman, wine. All he needs is to take on gambling."

"You ought to have a talk with him as a friend."

"If you authorize me I'll talk with him."

"Okay, we'll authorize you."

The clock chimed.

"Comrades! It's time to begin. Almost everybody is here. We won't wait any longer."

Two and a half hours later a secretary was dictating to a typist.

"Article 3. Concerning a candidate for the party conference. Resolved: to nominate Comrade Tark. Unanimous."

## 11.

At 3 o'clock sharp the maid announced to Velyarskaya that Tumin was waiting.

A well-dressed young man entered the room. He bowed and kissed Velyarskaya's hand.

"Sit down and tell me everything."

"There isn't really too much to tell. I met Ponomarev at the front. He told me a lot about you. Then he came down with typhus and died. He asked me to come and see you without fail and if I ever come to Moscow to tell you that he loves you as before."

"Poor Ponomarev! I feel so sorry for him. Tell me, what else did he tell you about me?"

"That you are a remarkable woman, that you have remarkable eyes and hands, that you are unusually lively and real and that if I should ever see you

I'd definitely fall in love."

Velyarskaya laughed.

"Tell me, please. Do you think he's right?"

"So far he is. Your eyes and hands are remarkable. I won't venture to judge the rest on my first impression."

"What about falling in love with me?"

Tumin smiled.

"Such a possibility is not excluded."

"Merci. You are very kind."

Velyarskaya went up to the mirror and straightened her hair.

"Don't look at me like that. Otherwise I'll get anxious as though I'm taking an exam and am terribly afraid of failing it."

"Don't be afraid. At the worst I hope you will not refuse a re-examination."

Velyarskaya burst out laughing.

Tumin got up and came closer.

"Joking aside, Nina Georgievna. I have an important favor to ask you. I am an uncultured person, a proletarian. I don't know anything. I haven't seen anything. Here you have culture, art and theaters. Introduce me, please, to all these pleasures. Take on a work of cultural enlightenment."

Velyarskaya laughed until tears came to her eyes.

"Oh boy, you certainly can sweet talk. Forget this 'proletarian' business. If all proletarians were like you, Communism would be long gone."

"Here you are mistaken, Nina Georgievna. You are making a cruel mistake. I am a proletarian, a Communist. I am a very real Communist in my convictions, in my way of life and in my work. Do you think if I'm well-dressed, cleanly shaven and have a good haircut, I can't be a proletarian? An awful prejudice! Proletarians are obliged to be chic because now they are the rulers of the world and not at all beggars who have, as the saying goes 'nothing to lose but their chains.' "

"Are you in the party?"

"That doesn't matter. Let's assume I'm not in the party. Do I really stop being a Communist because of it?"

"I won't argue with you."

"What the party needs is not just Communists but party workers, well-disciplined, held together by solidarity of thinking, like in the army. You know, none of that self-concocted individualism, arbitrariness. I would be a white crow among them. That's bad. Right now I am a white crow among non-party people. That's good."

He suddenly stopped.

"However, I apologize. This must be totally uninteresting to you."

"On the contrary. It's very interesting. I just don't understand one thing. How is it that a Communist might not be needed by the Communist Party?"

"What do you mean 'not needed'? Of course, he's needed. But not as a

party member. You see, not all Communists do the party work. What's more, it's possible to be a perfect party worker and a very bad Communist."

Velyarskaya sat down on the couch and leaned against the pillows.

"Well, now you've completely muddled my brain. I don't understand a thing."

Tumin ran up to her and kissed both her hands.

"Excuse me. I'm not going to say anymore. You must be really fed up with me. I'm leaving."

"No, no. Stay. I like having you."

"No, I'm going. If you're not bored, let's go somewhere tomorrow, wherever you like. Start your culturally enlightening activity!"

"All right, let's go."

"May I come to pick you up?"

"Please do."

Tumin left.

Velyarskaya went up to the mirror. She put on some powder and then called the maid.

"Call the seamstress. Tell her to send my dress without fail by 6 o'clock tomorrow, no later, by any means."

## 12.

Velyarsky was picking on Strepetov.

"Listen, my dear. You can't do that! Nina Georgievna is raising hell."

"I assure you I didn't say anything of the sort. I don't understand what she got so upset about?"

"What do you mean you don't understand? You have suggested that she offer herself to Sandarov as a bribe. That's scandalous."

"Nothing of the sort. These are ladies' notions. I asked her quite simply that she come with me to see Sandarov, since he likes her and would therefore be more amenable."

"You don't have to explain it to me. I understand it perfectly. But she takes it all differently. She's not like you and me."

Strepetov made a helpless gesture and turned away.

Velyarsky gave him a pat on the shoulder.

"Well, don't get upset, Strepetov. Everything will turn out all right. You just took the wrong approach. Wait awhile and try again."

Strepetov jerked his head.

"Okay, let's do that and if it doesn't work we always have an emergency route."

"What's that?"

"Through his secretary, Comrade Bauer. A Communist, but a woman just the same."

Velyarsky burst out laughing.

"With you, Strepetov, we can't go wrong."

"What's important she approached me herself. 'Are you Strepetov?' 'Yes.' 'Are you waiting for Sandarov?' 'Yes.' 'I'm his secretary.' 'Nice to meet you.' This and that. So we talked. I want to take her to the theater."

They went outside. A cab was waiting for Strepetov.

"Are you going home? I can take you."

The cab started.

"You need a special knack with Communists. They fall for culture. That's the whole trick, my dear."

And he patted Velyarsky on the knee.

### 13.

Tumin and Velyarskaya left during the second act.

"Maybe I don't understand anything but this is unbearably boring."

"You're a crude proletarian."

"Guess so."

They went outside.

"Let's take a walk, all right?"

"My pleasure."

Tumin took Velyarskaya's arm. They started walking slowly along the boulevard.

"Are you married?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"No reason. Can't I just be interested?"

"Why does that interest you?"

"I'm interested in a lot of things about you."

"For instance?"

"For instance, how do you spend your day? What do you do all day?"

"I don't do anything!"

"Nothing at all?"

"Well, yes, I do things, that is I read, go for a walk, visit friends, go to the theater, go to the seamstress, go shopping."

"What about your husband?"

"My husband is busy with his own affairs. He comes home late, tired, lies down to rest a little and then goes out again. Sometimes we go out together."

"So, in a way it's as if you weren't married?"

Velyarskaya laughed.

"That's what being married is. Being together all day long is called something else."

"What do you mean?"

"Hm, I don't think you're such a crude proletarian that you don't



understand such things."

Tumin pressed her arm more tightly.

"You're an awfully lovely woman, Nina Georgievna. I do understand Ponomarev."

"Already?.."

They laughed and started to walk still slower.

"You're a strange person! You ask what I do. What can I do? Work?"

"Why not?"

"How? In what field?"

"You know I can have only one answer—in the Communist field."

"Swell! With enormous pleasure if it's going to be amusing."

"That's lovely! If it's going to be amusing!"

"Certainly! If it's not fun then why should I want to do it?"

Tumin frowned.

"See, there you go. Here's where it all starts."

"Here's where what all starts?"

"The line, the line that's impossible to cross."

"What line?"

"The female line. All women are like this. Especially the most qualified."

"I don't understand what you're talking about."

"I am saying that there's nothing amusing in Communism, and that therefore Communists have no real women. The women that they do have forgot a long time ago that they are women. That's why a Communist runs to bourgeois women, plays a role of a gallant suitor and tries to hide his Communism because, you see, it's not amusing... and gradually becomes depraved."

Velyarskaya laughed.

"Is that true of party members as well as of non-members? Is that what you're saying?"

"You want to know if it's true of me? Yes, it is."

Velyarskaya looked him in the face.

"Now you've gotten angry. Forgive me if I caused it."

Tumin turned away.

"For you it's funny, for me it's sad. A woman is a terrible thing, especially for us Communists, worse than the White Guard."

Velyarskaya moved away and freed her hand.

"Well, then. If the company of a bourgeois lady is so harmful to you then I personally can spare you of that nuisance. I have no interest whatsoever in your Communist fall."

They approached the doorway.

Tumin pressed her hand to his lips.

"Forgive me, Nina Georgievna. I got carried away. I won't do it anymore."

"Now you really have to beg for my forgiveness."

Tumin took both her hands and kissed each finger individually."

"Okay, you're forgiven. Call me."

And she disappeared behind the door.  
For awhile Tumin stood there thoughtfully.  
A cab with the two people inside drove up. A man wearing a bowler got out; the other made himself more comfortable.  
"I still intend to bring Sandarov and Nina Georgievna together."  
The bowler laughed and entered the doorway.

14.

Sandarov was sitting in his office. Tark came in.  
"I came to see you on the instructions of the party cell."  
"What can I do for you?"  
"Lately your behavior has been causing a lot of talk in the cell."  
"My behavior?"  
"Yes, yours."  
"That's interesting. So, what do they say?"  
"They say you have become bourgeois."  
"What makes them say that?"  
"Your attitude toward the party, your judgments."  
"You mean, because I criticize our party members?"  
"Something like that if you wish."  
"Can't they be criticized?"  
Tark made a sour face.  
"Comrade Sandarov, let's not get into dialectics. The point is clear. The party cell finds your behavior somewhat loose and commissioned me to make appropriate suggestions."  
"But, please, Comrade Tark. I'd like to know what I'm accused of? There's a lot of gossip going around. What else is the party cell good for?"  
"See, there you go. What else is the party cell good for! A real Communist would not talk that way about his party organization."  
"You don't agree with me?"  
"That's beside the point. Maybe so. But that doesn't mean you can talk about it in that tone."  
Sandarov shrugged his shoulders.  
"You've got a strange logic of your own which is apparently beyond my comprehension."  
"That's precisely the point."  
Sandarov started to pace the room.  
"This smacks of some kind of arrogant obtuseness and unwillingness to change, a fear to move anything from its place. 'Just look at us and admire! This is the way we are! We've always been this way and this is the way we'll be forever! If you don't like it clear out!' You can't get far on that principle."  
"Well, that depends. We've lived by it for four years now, and, apparently,

we aren't doing badly."

"Yes, four years. But now it's time to rejuvenate, to expand and grow deeper."

"On the contrary, it's now that party unity and self-control are particularly vital, otherwise it won't be long before we get swept away into the bourgeois swamp."

"That's not a real fear. A party Communist is always guaranteed against it."

"You think so?"

"As for me I can vouch for it."

Tark looked aside.

"What about your affair with Velyarskaya?"

Sandarov quickly came up to the table.

"Comrade Tark, I presume that the party control has certain limits and does not extend to purely personal matters. Isn't that so?"

"Not completely. If these purely personal matters reflect on the social physiognomy of a party member, the party has every right to have its say."

"In that case I demand party judgment. I have no intention answering to rumors."

"Don't get excited, Comrade Sandarov. I am carrying out the will of the party cell and am telling you what is being said about you. You may want to offer explanations, the question will be closed."

"I will offer no explanations, and I refuse to discuss this subject."

"That's for you to decide. However, I have to point out that the question of Velyarskaya becomes particularly touchy only because she is the wife of one of our contractors."

"What does that matter?"

"That matters, Comrade Sandarov, because an affair with the wife is only a step away from business dealings with her husband."

Sandarov rushed over to Tark.

"Have you lost your mind, Tark? Don't you hear what you're saying?"

"I hear perfectly. I consider it my party duty to caution you against it."

Sandarov walked toward the door.

"Comrade Tark, I would suggest that drawing a picture of my criminal future hardly enters into your party duties. You have said what you came here to say. And therefore your mission can be regarded as completed."

Tark stood up.

"I will inform the cell of the results of our conversation."

"Go, do it!"

Tark went out. Sandarov went up to the phone.

"Get the Moscow Committee on the line, will you? —Moscow Committee?— Oh, no one is in? Tell them then that Sandarov called, from Main Construction, and asked them to call back without fail."

Velyarskaya perhaps for a hundredth time went up to the mirror, and straightened her hair.

She walked away. She took a book and dropped it.

"Masha, didn't anyone call?"

"No, ma'am."

"Are you sure you were home all the time?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The phone rang. Velyarskaya answered right away.

"Hello? Who's speaking?"

"Nina Georgievna?"

"Tumin, it's you? Where have you been? I thought you'd decided to radically resist bourgeois temptations."

"Oh no, how could you? No, I was quite busy. May I come and pick you up?"

"Yes."

Tumin and Velyarskaya were sitting in a private banquet room.

Wine was on the table.

"Nina Georgievna, you know, when I'm with you I feel, as they say in novels, beyond time and space."

"So, is that good or bad?"

"Undoubtedly bad."

"Is that so?"

"Undoubtedly bad, because it means that you start to edge your way into my life."

"Is that necessary?"

"For me it is."

Velyarskaya threw herself against the back of the chair.

"If a mere mortal told me this, I would think that he was proposing. But with you Communists it must mean something else."

Tumin stopped talking. He was sitting with his head in his arms.

"You don't want to understand me."

Velyarskaya laughed.

"It's all right. Better come over here. Sit next to me and don't be silly. I understand you perfectly well, except for one thing. Why do you want to see things in such a complicated light when everything is so simple?"

Tumin moved very close and embraced her. Velyarskaya slowly moved her face toward his, and they kissed. Velyarskaya came up to the mirror.

"You see how simple it is?"

"*That* is simple."

"*That* is not enough, eh?"

Tumin didn't answer.

"How come you don't talk?"

"It's hard for me to talk to you, Nina Georgievna."

"Then don't."

She sat down next to him. Tumin was silent.

"Why did you get so gloomy? Did I offend you?"

She put her arms on his shoulders. She looked him in the eye. Tumin smiled.

"You are a charming woman, Nina Georgievna, and that's why nothing will come of it."

"What is supposed to come of it?"

"What's supposed to come of it... I would tell you, but you don't want to hear it."

Velyarskaya moved away.

"Okay, go ahead, tell me. I'm listening."

"You should understand. One could get to know a woman very intimately and still forget her right away. Or one can get to know a woman and forget everything but this woman. Either way wouldn't make me happy. If I were bourgeois it wouldn't make a bit of difference to me, but I'm not bourgeois unfortunately."

"What's the point?"

"The point is that either I have to become bourgeois or you have to become Communist."

Velyarskaya smiled.

"There's a third possibility, Tumin. It's for you to stop thinking."

She pulled him to herself. She embraced him. They kissed. For a long time they sat silently.

"It's time to go."

They were leaving slowly. They were leaving lazily.

Her husband was home.

"Where were you?"

"In the theater... would you have *The A.B.C.'s of Communism*?"

Velyarsky burst out laughing.

"Nope. Why do you need that?"

"Nothing important. I just wanted to read it."

"Are you having an affair with a Communist? Is that it?"

Velyarskaya didn't answer. She went to her room.

16.

Strepetov dashed up to Sonya.

"How are you, Comrade Bauer? Is Sandarov in?"

"No, he's not. He should be here soon."

"May I wait?"

"Yes, please. You can wait in his office."

"I'll be bored by myself, sit with me."

Sonya smiled.

"All right, I'll stay."

"Why do you want to see Sandarov?"

"There's a business deal I want to discuss with him."

"Anything I could do to help? He doesn't do a thing without me anyhow."

"Naturally you could, but..."

"What is it?"

Strepetov moved closer.

"The point is that we have a contractor, the 'Industrial.' They asked for a delay, and were turned down. Things have gotten so complicated now that no delay could help. We need money. However, you can get money by completing the work, but the work can't be done without the money. Do you see the hole we're in?"

"Well?"

"Well, we have to be paid for the work as if it were already completed and obtain an official endorsement for the full sum without the final inspection, using only the invoices. That's all."

"Did you discuss this with Sandarov?"

"Yes, I did."

"What did he say?"

Strepetov looked away.

"He's agreed."

"That's strange. He didn't say anything about it to me. Usually I prepare all the financial accounts for him, and then I go over the papers."

"He must not have had time. It's nothing really. The work will be completed anyhow, and we can file the inspection papers later."

"I see."

Strepetov sat closer.

"Such favors cannot be forgotten. 'The Industrial' knows how to be grateful."

Sonya turned away. Strepetov stood up and strolled around.

"Tell me, does Velyarskaya have anything to do with this?"

Strepetov quickly turned around.

"Velyarskaya? Why do you ask?"

"Isn't she the wife of one of the partners?"

"Yes."

"Doesn't Sandarov know her?"

"I don't think so. But he's madly in love with her, and she rather likes him."

Sonya stood up.

"Excuse me. I have to go back to work."

Strepetov looked at his watch.

"I guess I'll go too. I can't wait for Sandarov forever. It seems I don't need him as much now anyway..."

He took Sonya's hand.

"I hope."

He left.

The phone rang.

"Comrade Bauer? —Sandarov here. I'll be in in half an hour. Get the papers ready to sign. Make sure not to forget the financial reports. A lot of bills have probably piled up."

17.

Tumin drove his car to pick up Velyarskaya.

"Why is the top up?"

"It's rainy outside."

They drove to the outskirts of the city.

"Your propaganda is having its effect, Tumin. Today I read through both newspapers 'Pravda' and 'Izvestia.' "

"How did you like it?"

"It's very boring."

Tumin rushed to kiss her hands.

"Nina Georgievna, lovely and charming."

"But it doesn't mean anything. I'm firm in my decision to become interested in politics, and I demand that you get me all kinds of books."

Tumin embraced her impetuously. He kissed her on her eyes, head and shoulders. Velyarskaya gently pushed him away.

"Are you crazy? I'm telling you about politics and Communism, instead you kiss me. You're bourgeois. You're corrupting me."

Both were laughing loudly. Tumin was beside himself.

"Isn't it wonderful. This is my greatest victory at the Communist front. This is my trophy."

"Hold on, Tumin. It's too early to celebrate."

"That's nothing. What is important is that this is a beginning, that Nina Georgievna Velyarskaya has been driven back from her positions and is starting to vacillate."

Velyarskaya looked him in the eye.

"Is it really so important to you?"

"Terribly important. More important than anything."

Velyarskaya pressed herself closer to him and kissed him on the cheek.

"You're so cute."

Tumin grabbed her hand.

"You must be wondering what Communism has to do with it. It is very

hard to explain. But you must understand. I can't stand the idea that Communism is the same kind of business as, let's say, commerce or an office job. From 10 till 4 you're a Communist, and after that you do as you please. For me Communism is everything. Where there is no Communism there is nothing."

"One thing I don't understand. What do you mean when you say Communism. Is it politics? People? What?"

"I mean everything, not only politics or people. There's nothing that doesn't concern Communism. Communism is in everything."

"Are there books about all that?"

"That's the whole problem. There are no such books. There are some, but they don't deal with all that."

"That's sad."

"That's not the point. If you could only get a taste of it, you'd write your own books."

"I see you think very highly of me."

"That's true. I think that you're a remarkable woman. If you get into it, you'll go far."

"Don't rush, Tumin. It looks like you're ready to sign me up in the party."

"Oh no. It would be extremely harmful for both you and the party."

Velyarskaya slyly narrowed her eyes.

"For the time being you'll be my party, is that so?"

"That's exactly so."

They drove up to the house.

"When will we see each other again?"

"Come to my place Wednesday evening. My husband is leaving for Petersburg. I'll be all alone."

"Anything you say."

Velyarskaya entered the doorway. Tumin came up to the car. The chauffeur opened the door.

"No, that won't be necessary. Go to the car dispatcher and tell them there that you waited for me, but that I didn't show up and you didn't take me anywhere."

The chauffeur nodded and drove away.

## 18.

Sonya went to the cafeteria to have lunch with Tark.

"You were right, Comrade Tark. This whole affair is taking on a wrong turn."

"What affair?"

"Sandarov's."

"Sandarov is a lost person. After our last talk with him I have no doubts left."



"What's really bad is that big time operators begin to use him. That same Strepetov that I was telling you about spilled it all to me thinking that I will go in on it with him."

Tark pricked his ears.

"That you'll go in on what with him?"

"On one dirty deal which Sandarov agreed to already."

"Can you come to the point?"

"He agreed to pay money for the work which is not done."

Tark threw up his hands.

"How much worse one can get?!"

"Sandarov hasn't told me anything about it. Naturally I'm not going to bring it up myself either."

"Well, let it go at its own pace. When this whole thing will come to a head inform the Cheka."

"What do you mean the Cheka?"

"There's nothing else to do. You have to do it, it's your duty. You can't cover up for wheeler-dealers, can you? If Sandarov got himself mixed up in it what can you do? It doesn't matter when he gets himself in trouble, this time or the next time. He'll undoubtedly get caught. It's better for him to get caught now with a few sins behind him than later when he'll get a whole lot of them. I can see how it could be hard for you. But isn't it better sometimes to push one who is about to fall if you can't save him? At least he'd see right away where it could lead him."

Sonya stood up.

"I think so too. Besides, I have no reason to spare Sandarov, much less his friends-operators."

When Sonya left, the secretary of the party cell came up to Tark.

"Do you know the ruling of the Moscow Committee on Sandarov's complaint?"

"No."

"To recognize the actions of the party cell and Comrade Tark's as fully correct."

## 19.

Velyarskaya herself opened the door and showed him to her room.

"What's in the package?"

"These are the books you asked me for?"

Velyarskaya laughed.

"Thanks, but we'll put the books away for the time being."

She asked him to sit down on the couch. She sat next to him. Tumin smiled.

"You're very quick today, Nina Georgievna."

"As always."

"No, today somewhat differently."

"You're imagining it. I'm just very glad that you came."

They embraced each other and kissed.

"I brought all I could get more or less suitable."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm talking about the books."

"Oh, the books... I'll take a look and if it's boring I'm not going to read them."

Tumin made a sour face.

"I do want you to give it a try. Later I'll tell you the most important things that are not found there."

"Most important is your good attitude toward me."

"My attitude toward you is wonderful."

"Is that true? Do you love me a little bit?"

"Not a little bit. A lot."

"Really?"

Velyarskaya threw herself on his neck and passionately kissed him on the lips. Tumin didn't move. Velyarskaya stood up.

"It's awfully bright here. I don't like it. It hurts your eyes and doesn't make it cozy."

She turned off the chandeliers and turned on a small lamp on the table.

"See, that's a lot better. Now, go on, tell me how and why you love me."

Tumin dropped his head.

"I love you because you're a fascinating woman. I want to see you get involved. I want to make you to do what I do, live the way I live. I've got the impression that you're being wasted away, that you move in a void. You see, it's a shame."

"I see."

She stretched on the couch and put her hand in his lap.

"Sometimes it seems to me that it's quite possible that a woman like you, sooner or later, will have to long for something different, that you can't help getting tired to live the way you do now. How else could it be! Which means that you'll be ours because only in Communist work can you find that; nowhere else. But sometimes I clearly see that all of it is nonsense, and it's a helpless matter."

"Why is it helpless?"

"I don't know. It seems that way."

"You, my silly one."

Velyarskaya pulled him toward herself.

"You have wonderful eyes and lips, Tumin."

He bent over and kissed her. She curved her whole body toward him. Then she fell down on the pillows, holding him tight and still kissing.

Tumin softly began to move away. She noticed but didn't let go.

"Why? Why do you want to leave me?"

Tumin moved her arms away. She let him go and turned away.

"I can't have it this way."

She squeezed him again. She pulled him to herself.

Tumin firmly freed himself, stood up and went to the table.

"Don't do that."

At this point Velyarskaya abruptly stood up from the couch.

"Do you think, my dear, that I need your blabbering?"

Tumin frowned.

"I can leave."

"If you please."

"I'll go, Nina Georgievna, but I will never come back."

"Please, do me that favor."

Tumin left.

Velyarskaya threw herself on the couch and began to cry. Then she jumped up, rushed to the door, down to the outside entrance, out on the street. But Tumin was gone.

From this day on Tumin did not come back. Velyarskaya walked the whole city up and down, hoping to run into him on the street, but without results. Tumin has disappeared without a trace.

## 20.

Velyarskaya was lying on the sofa with her face tucked into the pillows. Her husband came in.

"Nina, Strepetov begs to be allowed to come in and explain himself."

Velyarskaya didn't say a word.

"Nina, do you hear me?"

Velyarskaya turned around.

"What do you want?"

"I'm saying, Strepetov offers explanations."

She again hid into the pillows.

"What's the matter with you, Nina. One can't say anything. How come this restlessness?"

Velyarskaya began to cry.

"Well, this is really silly. You, my dear, have to take care of yourself. You're positively not well."

She turned around wiping away her tears.

"What is it? What do you want? Leave me alone, for God's sake! Don't bother me!"

"I want so little from you. All I'm asking is for you to make up with Strepetov. It's so simple. It's not even worth talking about."

"Honest to goodness, it makes me sick!"

Velyarsky waited a minute.

"So, what do you say? Should I call him in?"

Velyarskaya didn't respond.

"Call him in?"

"Do what you want. It makes no difference to me."

Velyarsky called Strepetov in.

Strepetov came in, kneeled down, crossed his hands before him and dropped his head.

Velyarsky started to laugh.

"See, Nina, how can one be angry with a fellow like this?"

Velyarsky moved closer to the door.

"All right, now you do the explaining, and I'm going."

He left.

"Nina Georgievna, if I said anything wrong..."

"Never mind, Strepetov. I already forgot it."

"You seem to be upset by something, I see it. Can I do anything for you. I'd be happy to."

Velyarskaya looked at him closely.

"Yes, you can."

"I'm at your service."

"Find Tumin for me."

"Who?"

"Tumin."

"Who is that?"

"I don't know anything about him. All I know is that his name is Alexy, and that he works somewhere with Communists."

"Is he a Communist?"

"Yes, but he's not in the party."

"That's all you know about him, eh?"

"That's all."

Strepetov began to think.

"It's rather difficult."

"You should try. Don't tell anybody about it."

"That's for sure."

"It's very important to me."

"I'll do my best."

Strepetov kissed her hand and left. Velyarskaya took a couple of steps around the room. She picked up a book off the table. She sat on the couch. She began to read. Then she fell into the pillows.

*The A.B.C.'s of Communism* rolled down on the floor.

Strepetov mysteriously bent over to Sonya.

"Well, how is it? Ready?"

"Not yet."

He made a discontent face.

"Is Sandarov in his office?"

"Yes."

He went into his office. Sandarov gave him a questioning look.

"Important business brought me here. Quite a special matter."

"What is it?"

"Velyarskaya."

"Velyarskaya again!"

"Wait a minute. Velyarskaya is looking all over for a certain Tumin.

Why she needs him I don't know. Apparently she really wants to see him since she was very excited when she talked about him. This Tumin hangs around Communists. He isn't a party member, but it's as if he is."

"I know Tumin."

"You do? That's nice! Where is he? How can I find him?"

"Why do you need him?"

"What do you mean I? I don't need him. Nina Georgievna does."

"So let Nina Georgievna come to me, I'll tell her."

Strepetov was extremely happy.

"That's a different story. That's right! Very much so!"

"Then I'll pick her up right now and in 20 minutes we'll be here."

"Get rolling."

Strepetov rushed out of the office.

Sandarov knit his brows, pressed his lips tight and sat like that without moving for five minutes or so. Then he got up, picked a package off the table and came out into the steno pool.

"Comrade Bauer, can I ask you to take that to the presidium of All-Union Council of Economy and wait for an answer. I'm asking you to take it there personally and not to send it with a courier. This matter is important and confidential. I want you to go now, otherwise you'll be late."

Velyarskaya was waiting. Strepetov came in running.

"Let's go. I'll drive you to Sandarov."

"What are you up to, Strepetov? What is it?"

"Sandarov knows Tumin. He'll tell you everything in person."

Velyarskaya threw herself on his neck.

"Let's go, Strepetov. Let's go, honey. Right away."

Strepetov dodged away and sat on the chair.

"I'm sorry, Nina Georgievna, but things are not done this way. Sit down for a minute right here."

Velyarskaya sat down.

"Well, what is it?"

"Okay, here it is. You balled me out and chased me out of the house because I wanted to get you and Sandarov together. Now you yourself are ready to run there. I arranged it, don't forget. So, now it's your turn to do me a favor. You'll talk to him about Tumin and later say one word about our business."

"Fine, Strepetov! Only don't make me wait!"

"The word is such: There is probably a promissory note already made out to 'The Industrial' in his office. Sandarov must sign it. It's a simple formality. Let him sign it in your presence. That's all."

"Fine, fine! I'll tell him. Let's move."

Velyarskaya quickly left the room. Strepetov ran after her.

"Nina Georgievna, don't go into too much detail asking Sandarov about Tumin, otherwise he'll get jealous and will do nothing."

## 23.

A courier stood in front of Sandarov's office and wasn't letting anyone in. Strepetov got anxious.

"I just was there. He knows that I'm coming back. Go and ask him."

"The orders are not to let anyone in except Velyarskaya."

Velyarskaya gave a start.

"That's me."

"Please come in."

Velyarskaya walked into the office. Sandarov stood next to the window with his back to the door. Hearing steps he turned around. That same instant Velyarskaya gasped with surprise and threw herself toward him.

"Alyosha!"

Sandarov brought her to the sofa and sat her down.

"What is this? What's going on? I don't understand! Why are you here? And so different! And why Sandarov?"

"I am Sandarov."

"You are Sandarov? What about Tumin?"

"It's my pseudonym."

Velyarskaya pressed herself against him.

"How strange! Alyosha, my love, I'm so happy to see you, to be with you."

"Then why did you want me to leave?"

"Silly, did you believe me? Did you believe I could really chase you away?"

They kissed.

"But why did you call yourself Tumin? Why did you lie to me?"

"Does it make any difference what name I have?"

"Of course not. But still I want to know why it was necessary?"

"I don't know myself. I guess I just wanted to."

Velyarskaya looked him in the eye.

"But you're not going to leave me anymore? Ever?"

"That depends on you."

"If it does, then I'll never let you leave me again."

They kissed again.

Sandarov abruptly moved away from Velyarskaya. Sonya was coming up to the table.

"Excuse me for interrupting, but here's the reply from the All-Union Economic Council."

And she left.

Sandarov frowned. Velyarskaya made a move to go.

"My presence makes you uncomfortable. I'll go."

Sandarov didn't say anything.

"Well, see you. Come soon, Alyosha."

He kissed her hand and showed her to the door. Strepetov waited impatiently.

"Well, did you do it?"

Velyarskaya went by without noticing him.

Sonya raised her head.

"Don't worry, Mr. Strepetov. The promissory note will be signed today."

## 24.

Sonya took a bunch of bills out of the folder.

"Comrade Lebedev, here, take it. Make out a check for the whole amount of the promissory note."

"How about final inspection papers?"

"Do it without them. It's not really important."

About ten minutes later.

"Is it ready?"

"Here it is."

Sonya picked up the papers and went into the office. Sandarov was pacing up and down the room.

"The papers have to be signed."

"Give them to me."

Sandarov took the pen.

"Everything's checked?"

"Yes."

He signed the papers without reading them.

"Are there any more?"

"Just a check."

"Who is it made out to?"

"To 'The Industrial.' "

"So, they did finish the job. It's a good thing I turned down their request for a delay."

Sonya gathered the papers without saying anything and went out the door.

The phone rang.

"Sandarov speaking."

"Alyosha, I'm terribly nervous. Come at once."

"I'm on my way."

25.

The head of the Cheka put down the phone and looked up at the investigator who was coming in.

"What do you want?"

"You told me to bring the file on the 'Industrial'."

"Oh yes. I got a call from the Moscow Committee a minute ago. What is the case about?"

"It was initiated by Bauer, secretary of Main Construction."

"Is she working for us?"

"No, she hasn't worked for us before. This is her first case."

"What's the charge?"

"Misuse of funds."

"Who was arrested?"

"One of the owners of the firm Velyarsky, his wife and a go-between Strepetov."

"Have they been interrogated?"

"Yes."

"Did they plead guilty?"

"Velyarsky says he doesn't know anything. The negotiations for obtaining the money on the account of the contract were indeed in progress, but he didn't participate in the negotiations. Strepetov did. He maintains that if Main Construction issued the promissory note illegally, 'The Industrial' has nothing to do with it."

"Whose signature is on it?"

"Sandarov's. One of the Trustees."

"Did you interrogate him?"

"Not yet. I subpoenaed him. He is waiting to see me right now."

"Did you interrogate Velyarsky's wife?"



"She's in the prison hospital. She's ill. At the preliminary interrogation she was very nervous and made a statement that she definitely didn't know anything about it and had nothing to do with this deal."

"Why did you arrest her?"

"Bauer pointed her out as a principal go-between between her husband and Sandarov."

The head of the Cheka gave an irritated shrug.

"This is a small domestic matter. Listen, leave this case with me and bring Sandarov over. Take his pass away just in case."

The interrogator left. The head of the Cheka picked up the phone.

"Is this Main Construction? Comrade Bauer? This is the Director of the Cheka. I'd like you to come over right away. You'll get the pass from the commandant."

## 26.

The head of the Cheka was looking at the file. Sandarov was brought in.

"Sandarov?"

"Yes, that's me."

"Have a seat."

The director handed him a piece of paper.

"Is that your signature?"

"Yes, it is."

"Did you know that the promissory note was fishy?"

"What do you mean fishy?"

"That it was issued for the work contracted but not completed?"

"No, I didn't know that."

"Did you check the cover documents? Did you check the bills and the final inspection papers?"

"No, I didn't."

"How could you sign it then?"

"It's the secretary's duty to check the documents."

"Who is the head secretary?"

"Comrade Bauer."

"Was she the one who gave the check to you to be signed?"

"Yes."

The director motioned for the interrogator to go.

"Listen, Comrade Sandarov. A stupid thing happened. You signed a false check for 'The Industrial.' We were informed about it. The representatives of the firm, Velyarsky and Strepetov, and Velyarsky's wife were arrested."

"Velyarskaya was arrested?"

The director gave him an ironic look.

Sandarov jumped to his feet.

"This is all nonsense. I don't understand. What does Velyarskaya have to do with it."

"She was the go-between between you and the firm."

"What rubbish! I've never once discussed this business with her. As a matter of fact I didn't ever speak to anyone about this."

"Including Strepetov?"

"Including him. Never."

The director looked through the file.

"Strepetov stated during the interrogation that the negotiations were in progress."

"In any case, it wasn't with me."

"Who, then?"

"How would I know?"

The director smiled.

"Don't get excited, Comrade Sandarov. Sit down."

"I can't help getting excited when the devil only knows what's going on. Why does a woman totally unrelated to the whole thing have to be arrested?"

"We'll try to clear that up."

Someone knocked on the door.

"Come in."

Sandarov turned around.

## 27.

Sonya Bauer walked into the room. Sandarov rushed toward her.

"Sonya, what's going on?"

The director raised his hand.

"Excuse me, Comrade Sandarov. Let me follow the order of things."

Sandarov and Sonya sat down.

"Comrade Bauer, it turns out that it's your duty to go over the documents?"

"That is correct."

"Why then did you submit the check to him to be signed without the final inspection reports?"

"That was what Comrade Sandarov wanted."

Sandarov gasped in surprise.

"What I wanted! Sonya, come to your senses! What are you talking about?"

"Strepetov told me that Comrade Sandarov agreed to it."

"This is a lie, a brazen lie!"

The director stopped him.

"Tell me, Comrade Bauer, did you talk to Comrade Sandarov about this?"

"Yes, I did."

Sandarov dropped his jaw. Again the director stopped him.

"What did he tell you?"

"I don't remember exactly."

"Try to remember."

Sonya was silent. The director frowned.

"Tell me, Comrade Bauer, did you know that Comrade Sandarov knew Velyarskaya?"

"Yes, I did."

"Are you the wife of Comrade Sandarov?"

"We're separated."

"How long ago?"

"Not too long."

"Before or after he met Velyarskaya?"

"After."

"Was that why you decided to denounce Comrade Sandarov?"

Sonya gave a start.

Sandarov jumped up and stared at her with an expression of horror on his face.

"What? You denounced me? Me?"

Sonya dropped her head. Then she covered her face with her hands. Her shoulders began to jerk. She gave a loud cry and had a fit of hysteria. Sandarov rushed around. The director pushed the button.

"Water, please."

## 28.

Sandarov drove Velyarskaya home. She maintained an angry silence all the way.

"See, you're home already."

"Merci. But that doesn't do me much good. I have to get my husband out."

"That'll be much harder."

"Then try harder."

Sandarov grinned.

"You're talking to me in a rather strange tone."

"How else do you wish me to talk? It was you who started this whole mess. Now be so kind as to clear it up."

"Don't worry, Nina Georgievna. I'll do what I can. But your husband is a profiteer. As you know, we Communists do not grant protection to profiteers."

Velyarskaya shrugged angrily.

"What business is that of mine? My husband supports me. That's all I want to know. How he manages to support me, where he gets the money doesn't make a damn bit of difference to me. The point is I can't exist without him."

Sandarov sighed.

"I thought you viewed things in a completely different light, Nina Georgievna."

"What do you mean different?"

"Yes, different. In any case, if you need money I can always give it to you."

Velyarskaya got furious.

"What has come over you, my dear? Are you a total fool? Have you lost your mind? Do you think you can support me on your lousy salary that you get working God knows where. Don't you know that I spend more on powder than you earn in a year? To hell with your pennies."

Sandarov blushed, became thoughtful for a moment, and then began to laugh loudly.

"Nina Georgievna, you're right. I'm a fool. Take care. I'll go and try to get your husband out."

He quickly left the room.

Velyarskaya stood perplexed. Then she shrugged it off and called the maid.

"Masha, prepare me a bath. Move."

## 29.

The head of the Cheka finished listening to the interrogator's report.

"So, Comrade Bauer confessed everything?"

"Yes."

"What about this Tark?"

"He's one of Sandarov's colleagues. He's also a member of the regional party committee."

"His role in this case isn't clear to me."

"Bauer says she followed his instructions."

"Was he interrogated?"

"He confirms that he talked to Sonya about Sandarov more than once. But he categorically denies his part in this thing with the check for the promissory note."

"Has Velyarskaya been released?"

"Yes, as soon as you asked."

"All right. Now do what I ask you to. Separate the case of Sandarov, Bauer and Tark from the rest, enclose your conclusions and send it to the Central Committee for a ruling. As for the profiteers, put them in jail by administrative order. Is that clear?"

The interrogator nodded his head, took the case folder, and left. The Moscow Committee member, present at the report, grunted.

"Isn't it strange? As soon as a Communist gets mixed up with bourgeois

scum, something nasty happens."

30.

At the railroad station a Moscow Committee member came up to Sandarov.

"Are you leaving, Sandarov?"

"Yes. The Central Committee ordered me to."

"Where are you going?"

"Novo-Nikolaevsk."

"Is that in connection with your case?"

"Yes."

"How did it come out?"

"I was reprimanded and transferred to work in Siberia."

"What happened to the others?"

"Bauer was expelled from the party."

"What about Tark?"

"Tark was also transferred, to the Urals, I think."

"Is he here?"

"I didn't see him. But he is to take the same train."

"Did you make up with him?"

"Yes, completely, he was absolutely right. I acted like an adolescent."

The train whistled.

"Well, good luck."

Sandarov jumped in the car, went to his compartment and stood next to the window.

The train started to move.

Velyarskaya was walking rapidly along the platform, surveying the windows.

Sandarov rushed into the hallway and onto the platform. He jerked on the door.

Someone powerful grabbed him from behind and pulled him into the car.

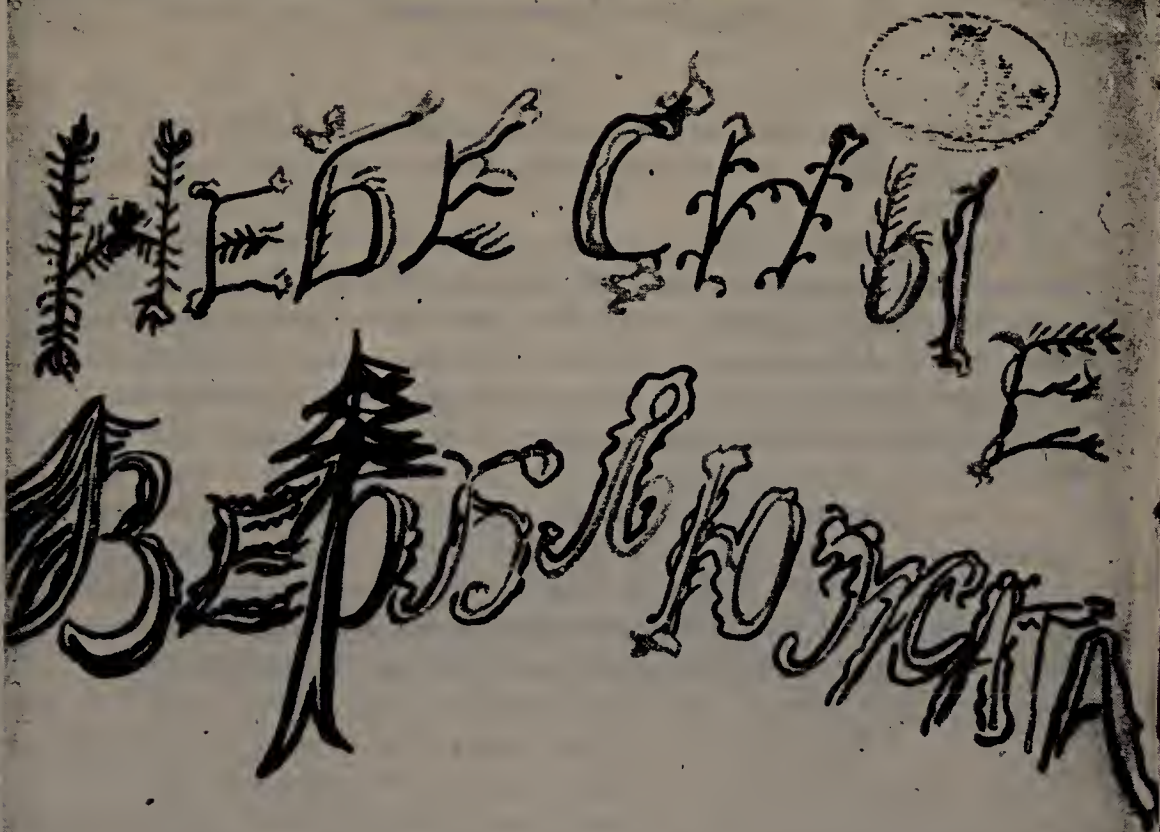
"Forget it, Comrade Sandarov. To hell with it. Such a small thing! It's not worth breaking your head over."

Sandarov turned around. Tark was standing in front of him.

*Translated by Anya M. Kroth*



Elena Guro, 1910s



ΕΛΕΝΑ ΓΥΡΟ  
ΒΕΡΝΑΚΟΖΗΤΑ

ELENA GURO / LITTLE CAMELS IN THE SKY

Translated by Kevin O'Brien

**Ε. ΓΥΡΟ.**

1914.

## AN AD IN THE PAPER.

### EXTRA WARM UNDERSHIRTS, DRAWERS, SOCKS, TUMMYWARMERS MADE FROM CAMEL DOWN

Here's how it happens: they ambush shining young spirits, tall and kindly... looking like golden, lanky little camels covered with down of a sacred sheen.

Cracking whips in the air, they herd them into a bunch. The tender good-natured creatures—too good to understand how others cause pain—crowd and huddle together, stretch their necks across one another, press against the coarse enclosure... and lose their tender down in that crush.

Then they gather from the ground this down from the little camels of the sky (so warm with its life-giving spring warmth) and weave undershirts from it.

"You mean they just kills those poor little camels?" I was asked anxiously.

"Why kill them?" They drive them and drive them till enough of their down rubs off and then release them back to the sky till the next time. And in a mere minute their down grows back even better than before.



## PATCHES OF THAWED SKY.

The distant, unbearably pure strips northered.

All day, amid clouds, lakes swam like swans... proud in the azure. A thawed patch of rosy sky lived among the black birches—and breathed. Breathed. And the birches were wet.

From upper air heralds headed past patches of thawed sky... past all the sloping sky.

And they were heard only by the tender and proud souls of trees lit from the depths of the horizons, and by towers not understood by anyone... and by the tender tumbled sky, pressing its caressing palms to the earth.

And they went along the sky—which had neared the earth and grown submissive in its sereneness—along the strawtoned and tender sky which no longer shunned the earth. And tiny twigs stirred in that sky... troubled and touched by the city's nearness. The twigs watched tram after tram fly past.

Heralds passed—and the illumined souls of the remote summits and towers heard them.

And those already revealed heard—and prayed.

And somewhere lay lakes... lakes... lakes.

When a young man goes to meet the north, the wind beats his brow... his high pure brow, not yet knowing fear.

Hair streaming like a horse's forelock. And horse-like mettle toward what's ahead—while ahead lie... lakes, lakes.

Somewhere a little porch was thawing then, and a larch stretched, fir-like over it. And the larch breathed.

● **YOU CAN'T SHOW THIS TO EVERYONE, CAN YOU?**

Forgive me singing about you, shoreline;

    You're so proud.

Forgive my suffering for you—

    When people, not noting your beauty,

Violate you and chop your forest.

    You're so distant

And inaccessible.

    Your soul disappears like the luster

Of the bay

    When you see it close at your feet.

Forgive my coming and upsetting

    The purity of your solitude,

Of your reign.

Like a mother muffling her son's throat with a scarf, I followed the soaring of your ships, proud proud creatures of spring!

We don't want to indulge but to overcome ourselves. Workers would buy sunflower seeds—let's buy some—why are we any better? Our squeamishness is sad and it binds us.

Mr. poet! You're dropping your notebook overboard!

The yacht soared on the sea. We suddenly saw a black belly in that sea... just lying there... And we tacked so skillfully that the boat became winged like a slice of salmon... And played among the waves... it couldn't get enough of it—again and again!

And the waves were impressive.

Are we going to end our friendship?... Not likely—after all, we're travelers together—the storm's behind us, spring ahead!...

We were swung and tossed up.

Separation is only for those who hang back like cowards...

O to fly somewhere together and leap and choke down shining spray...

All together... right now!...

The wind blew toward us and the larches smelled lovely.

At the exhibition of our friends, the public roared with laughter. Great! Great!... Will your little drama end soon?... We have faith on credit! We have faith...

Yesterday we barely made it back from the sea coast... the waves lashed, the wind whined like a mosquito in my hair—death! death!... Great! Great! The public roared with laughter.

And the larches shone with spring.

## SPRING, SPRING!

How funny the little camel was! He prepared diligently for his exams, and then flunked out because of shyness and eccentricity. And at dawn, instead of poking his nose in his pillow, he wrote poems on the sly.

Being diligent, he deprived himself of the joy of the spring sky's first leaves. Still, he couldn't manage to keep his pants from sliding above his belt or his shirt from bunching up... or to act right before strangers.

He couldn't play tennis, and couldn't pretend he simply didn't want to. And everyone saw that he couldn't because of shyness... and that he wanted to hide his shyness and couldn't do that either. With anguish, he realized they could tell, even when his back was turned, how unbearably awkward he felt... So he usually saw fun as something moving off or flashing in the distance through trees.

Yes, but the cranes' untouched dawns shine at the bottom of mirror-like lakes. Lonely pure skies.

As the little camel looked at the sky, in that rosy sky a warm kindred region brimmed over.

The crowned fir keeps rushing up into the blue abyss, keeps remaining before my eyes, yet keeps rushing up in victory.

Then I'm filled with great shame for all my "costs and damages."\*

We promise not to lower our eyes when those we love meet us with mockery. (And those in whom we believed yesterday—or just this morning). No! We'll take their mockery into our quiet, bright, wide-open eyes and bear it like a badge on our breast... not hiding it.

This is the mockery of one to whom I wish happiness.

May all my daydreams gather round your head—the daydreams of a happy dreamer—round you, my sad sad mocker.

\* A term for legal expenditures (trans. note).

● I'm dumb, I'm untalented, I'm clumsy, but I pray to you tall firs. I'm really awfully clumsy, I'm... a coward. Yesterday I became frightened of a man I don't respect. It's from cowardice that I don't know how to ride a bicycle. I haven't got a drop of will power, but I pray to you tall firs.

Yesterday I just couldn't get myself to tell a kind lady who gave me milk and cookies that I... write decadent verse — from the agonizing fear that she might ask where I'm published. No, I said that my chief mission in life was to teach enthusiastically. Today I'm kicking myself with shame and repentance.

Yesterday I finished some poems not at all the way I'd wanted, anyhow I knew they'd laugh at me. But now that they've all gone to the train station for some open-air festival — I pray to you tall firs, without you I'm very dumb, very...

## AT A SAND MOUND ON A SKY BLUE DAY.

Over there stand tsars crowned with candles...

In the free, free upper air, above the crown of tsars, an empty flagpole bores tenderly into the blue.

I make a vow here: never to be ashamed of my real self ("real"—that self which writes poems they don't want to print anywhere).

Not to be nervous when entering a drawing room, and no matter how many unpleasant guests are there — not to forget that I'm a poet, not a worm...

And never to desire to be printed in their magazines, to be like all the rest, or to take the lives of animals. Why do I think that also?

The poet is the giver, but not the taker of life... Look how nice the world is—washed clean by the sun, it already believes in your feeling and your future writings, and looks at you with gratitude...

The poet is the giver of life, but not the aggressor, the taker. And I promise to make no bones about telling elegant hunters—no matter how attractive they are—they they're villains, villains!

And so what if no one cares for me — I'm strong!

But will I keep my word?... Will I keep it?

I clench my fists, but I'm alone... and around me—such majesty.

All this leaves me so quickly.....

My hand lifted a stone and hurled it... spiraling, it traced an arc above the edge of the forest, in the blue land... All its life it was on earth, and suddenly my hand gave it flight... Did it feel bliss, flying through the blue?

\* \* \*

Green curls flutter in the sky.  
The sky laughs.  
Flags at dachas dash,  
flow from proud flagpoles,  
splash in the blue wind.

\* \* \*

Scatterbrain, madman, soarer,  
maker of spring storms,  
sculptor of restless thoughts,  
driving the azure!  
Listen you mad seeker,  
rush, dash,  
shoot past, unshackled  
intoxicator of storms.



\* \* \*

Dreamers, swear here someday...  
seeing the upsweep  
seeing the unsweep of tall firs...  
the soaring of distant ships,  
seeing sharp summits sway in the sky  
entrusting to no one their proud purity—  
Swear to a dream and unfading faithfulness,  
proud knighthood of madness!  
And be faithful to your youth  
And the plight of the sky.

\* \* \*

Earth, tell me why one soul will fall silent in youth, while another  
soul sings, sings of you...

Sings of you with immeasurable voice.

And sings, earth, of your kind sun!

How is it that one soul lives, is lovely, and then suddenly falls silent and  
lives without a voice... as though there were nothing more for it to say  
its entire life?

## A PACT.

If you want to ally yourself with that which makes the piny depths mysterious and the pale sky divine; if you're filled with the firmness of ancient sagas, and when you had read them a northern pride awoke in you... and a longing to stomp your feet and toss your head high (with its unplaited mane)—run straight before you to the sky's bright brink.

"Stomp stomp... ah, a round meadow!"

"Who are you?" unseen ones shout, so it whistles in your ears.

You answer:

"A conqueror!"

"Insolent!"

"I'm a creator. I'm Balder's bright hurricane!"

And your stomping can be heard.

Ahead—amid gaps in the tips of firs—the molten velvet of sunset. Its voice is silence. It's a sign, addressed to you—and already implying a pact. Put your fingers to your lips! Shsh!...

At twilight you return... feeling neither your feet nor the road. You, a human, have turned into a twilight creature. You're full of understanding, but don't feel like talking. You could speak with deep quiet signs—the way the evening's quiet sky speaks. It's already completely dark in the house... only some windows staring into the room... You undress without a candle—in deference to the sensitive guardians of the night.

But if you are unfaithful and inflexible; if you rush to rid yourself of that which makes you special and is uniquely yours... If the lonely hours of the eve of sacrifice frighten you—and the feat of pure silence, and the bitter offenses of those who seem to you splendid—then you must fear the white nights and the long twilights of summer's beginning... and these guardians of twilight when the signs are wrought.

But will my being marked as special stop altogether?

You'll tell a friend: "In some ways, I don't love the white nights! They weary me... they watch me... and I feel lost. I don't love them though they're lovely!"

Because, human, you betrayed your dreams one day. You surrendered. Forgot what went before... you didn't even notice that. You said: "My youth's past—I'm already over thirty... we all calm down."

But from that time the white nights began to torment you. Walking in the garden you're ashamed to weep... to pray before a jasmine bush or birch trunk in the white nights. You no longer go out several times each evening (always with that same stirring)—to meet a whitening trunk or spire, the tower of a pine tip at the end of a path... And you're right to fear! Better

try to arrange it so that you won't meet those eyes, those summons... in the white nights! In the white nights!

But evenings of the young summer can be as bright and transparent as tears.

## A CONVERSATION

I was returning to the city from visiting where it had been very bright, festive and painful. Because there are certain imposing rooms—blinding and filled with a loud, unconstrained, detached din that's complete without you. Rooms always painful and awkward to enter, in which you always wind up a pauper or a fool, and from which you depart into the darkness... feeling like an orphan in this wide world. Such rooms before Christmas—that greedy feastday of the fortunate—are simply unbearable.

You glance back at the radiant windows once more—no, nowhere... never yet... were lights in windows so beautiful. Or did people live so glitteringly and gaily!...

Towards evening it was quiet and pleasant when I wearied of waiting for my train on the little forest platform. Through the darkness one sensed many, many trees at hand; and something important was happening in that darkness.

The earth had thawed, roofs dripped; and in the lamplight impetuous wet twigs prayed with shy rapture into the close, trusting, warm sky.

A semiphore was glancing at me with its friendly green eye. I paced up and down the short wooden platform, and kept watching the twigs (which gleamed with water beads beneath the dim, solitary light) pray into the deep, quiet sky.

This lasted a long time, and my soul began to hear more than usual, and I heard the earth ask it:

"Listen, you're so near me now, you hear the voices of the air and of snow-drip... you can also hear me. You see, I have some worries. I have certain children I must entrust to someone. Search for, shelter my children—they're very clumsy and silent... instead of speaking loudly, proudly, they scarcely move their lips.

Defend my children—others have offended them. They work in offices instead of writing poems... instead of enjoying me in freedom.

Most important—no one notices that they're beautiful because their shoe laces hang loose; their breeches are stretched over their little knees; and freckles sit all awry on their noses—yes, on their noses and above their eyes. They don't know how to bow without backing away and stepping on surrounding shoes!

Accept my children—they're shy. When one should remain silent, in their fright they speak frightfully loud, so that everyone looks round in indignation. But back at their hovels they toss on their beds in anguish... recalling their feats among polite society—it's so unbearably embarrassing they're ready to scream and bite from bashfulness. But no one understands that, what it means to fall into a frenzy and bite from bashfulness.

Though I weep over them, I can do nothing for them: switches and

canes are torn from me.... to beat my children."

She spoke in kindly grief and rays ran from her... caressing, mild and moist like down; and the thaw and birches prayed, just as someone young feels both pity and fear toward someone stern near him.

The smell of melted snow swept over me. Whistles whirled from behind the bend. A locomotive leapt, eyes flashing.

The forest station stayed behind me, dripping tender voices... and now it was as though I bore a treasure in my breast or went to stand sentry somewhere.

From beyond the forest, the shrill whistles seemed resin-fresh and fearless.

\* \* \*

Pine boughs' bending: a flame.  
Golden signs stand above the dune, in the evening sky.

## VASYA.

They deceived you, your elders. Year after year they deceive the young. But I'm a mother... I can't be bought... I'll tell the truth.

Yes, they deceived you—they taught you to say, "One's future lies in a secure job"... A young man can't risk his whole future... It's too serious. After all, his whole life's ahead!...

But they can't deceive me, a mother, when eyes which I gazed on like the sky grow dim from copying meaningless papers.

Tell me, you 12-year-old boy—what do you imagine when they say "the future" to you?! A field, a meadow, the sun, a stream and a boat... right? Not a pile of paper or a cardtable in some smokefilled club... every night till dawn...

Well listen! They won't give you your future! They're deceiving you—they won't give you that meadow, boat, stream! With those faded eyes, you won't find your future now—those friends, that girl, that path which promised you your real happiness!! Your eyes are faded, after all! Spring no longer weaves soft shadows over your eyebrows. Light no longer streams from your half-lowered, bashful face...

"What a fine young man your Vasya's become!"

O yes, they've forced you to acquire the official bearing—when entering a room you no longer shrink, shrug your shoulders and hunch your neck, tender little camel!

It's a lie. None of you think about young men, you care only about old men like yourselves and that you understand.

You hate youth, you envy it too much—you persecute it and cut it to your measure so it won't sting you with its purity, integrity and capacity for real creativity.

When you lisped on about "a secure job," you were thinking of an old man with a bald spot and pot belly, traveling to Karlsbad.

And this young man—you forced him when still a boy to spend all his spring months in the city, gazing in sad boredom day after day at the gray stone courtyard of the prep school... with the hopeless dull gaze of those who've submitted to penal servitude.

Year after year you deprived him of spring!—Of little violet stars in the spring forest, of yellow butterflies in the morning—of merry daisies like little suns in a sea of grassy juice. When he wouldn't submit, you forced him, not sparing any means—and if you didn't beat him, worse—you deceived him: "Study Vasya, study, you'll become smarter!..."

Oh did you seriously believe he'd grow smarter, deprived in those most sensitive years of all God's earth? Study from the cradle! What about spring? Are you supposed to learn to love spring when you've grown coarse, worn out?

Smarter! But didn't you yourself say, "What good are all these textbooks, so stupidly written—in any case it'll just be forgotten, and it's completely useless!"...

While you provided yourself with poets' works, music, flowers, dachas, trips abroad?!

"And what about Vasya?" Vasya's got to study! You've hated your Vasya, you've envied his youth, you hurried to squeeze him into a uniform with epaulettes, so he wouldn't sting you—with his bright young body reminding you of an angel and a heaven you'd forgotten. "Smoothe down those cowlicks!—you look so inspired!" you remarked ironically when suddenly you saw, through your regimentation, that the sun had burst forth in him.

You sent him off to military school, made him take each step to the crackling of a drum and the shouts of drill. While each year at that time the birdcherry bloomed and scattered its blossoms, and swallows wove their nests!

People sometimes gaze at greenery with the most frenzied greed! Don't you know that? Have you forgotten? You've forgotten for good, you no longer know.

You tore him away from his little animals, the only creatures that understood him.

And did you ever ask him then what he himself desired, what he longed for?

Hugging the dog's neck, he resisted and cried on that hazy morning when you sent him off to military school. You did that for his happiness? For the happiness of awkward, lanky Vasya... as he was then? Yes?... No! You simply killed that Vasya, sacrificing him to a future bald gentleman with hemorrhoids who was then born into the world from the corpse of the youth you'd tormented. A bald gentlemen, resembling you—who've lost the very taste and meaning of life...

You deceived me, his mother, on that morning as well. You forced me to be a hypocrite and plead. "Papa's so upset! I have aneurysms! Vasya, you've got to spare Mama." And on that morning we killed my Vasya. No, worse—we lured him into a trap, tossed him into a wolf pit where for years he lay rotting with his broken legs—where his soul lay dying of hunger—for years—then it died. And like two accomplices we went away from the pit, ignoring his cries for help.

And at night, how much he wept there... alone, biting his pillow. —He was happy then?

Later, an adult, he'll come to me and say: "I've met her, I sense that it's she! Why didn't she recognize me? Mama, why can't it ever be mutual?"

What can I tell him?

Your girl? She'll fall in love with my Vasya? Vasya with his shy face and trusting eyes and his rakelike hands dangling awkwardly... But they've

“given you bearing” my darling, and I myself hardly recognize you! You’ve acquired bearing and become quite a young man! You, my confidential clerk! Love, that Girl, The Sun, the meadow, the stream. No, forget all that now, just find yourself a solid match now!

Comrades, friends! Why?! You can find colleagues anywhere, anytime. Why this mission of yours? You’ll get your periodic rewards, career advances. My darling, that’s no meadow spread before you, but the civil service or a commercial career—just as we had hoped for you.

Well then, you’re probably happy now?

Where’s your smile?



## SKYBOOKS

On the squares, near the gardens, where the workers were relaxing, or the creators, as they had begun to call themselves, there arose high white walls resembling white books spread open on the black sky. Here there crowded crowds of people, and here the creative commune,<sup>1</sup> by means of shadeprint on shadebooks, transmitted the latest news, casting the necessary shadeletters from the beaming eye of the spotlight. The novelties of the Terrestrial Globe, the affairs of the United Camps of Asia, that great union of workers' communes, verses, the sudden inspiration of their members, scientific novelties, messages for their relatives, directives from the soviets. Some, inspired by the inscriptions on the shadebooks, would go off by themselves for a while, write down their inspiration and within a half hour it would appear on the wall in shady words cast by the light-glass. In foggy weather they used the clouds for this purpose, printing the latest news upon them. Some, as they died, requested that the notice of their death be printed on the clouds. On holidays "shot painting" was arranged. Shells of varicolored smoke were shot to various points of the sky. For example, the eyes were a flash of blue smoke, the lips—a shot of scarlet smoke, the hair—silver smoke. Amid the cloudless blue of the sky, the familiar face which emerged on the sky signified the tribute which the populace paid to its leader.

## AGRICULTURE. THE PLOWMAN IN THE CLOUDS.

In the spring you could see two cloudships creeping along like flies across the sleepy cheek of the clouds, industriously harrowing the fields, plowing the earth with attached harrows. Sometimes the cloudships were concealed. When a dark cloud concealed them from view, it seemed as if industrious clouds, harnessed to yokes like oxen, were pulling the harrow. Later, skyfliers would fly past like magnificent watering cans, concealed by the clouds, to moisten the plowed field with artificial rain and to let out whole streams of seeds. The plowman had resettled in the clouds and tilled whole fields at once, the lands of an entire family commune.<sup>2</sup> The lands of many families were tilled by one plowman hidden in the spring clouds.

## MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. SPARKWRITING.

In places an underwater road with glass walls linked together both banks of the Volga. The steppe had come to resemble the sea even more.

In the summer land vessels moved across the endless steppe, racing on wheels with the help of sails and the wind. Stormships, skates and sailsleds linked the village centers. Every fishing settlement was equipped with its own field for sending out airskiffs and its own set for conducting ray-talks with the whole terrestrial globe. The spark voices heard from the other end of the earth were immediately printed on the shadebooks.

## HEALING WITH EYES

The sowing of the fields of clouds, the shadebooks connecting the scientific commune with the entire star, the sails of land vessels covering the steppe like the sea, the walls of the squares like great teachers of the youth—all these greatly altered Lebediya<sup>3</sup> in the course of two years. In the shade reading rooms, the children at once read one and the same page turned over before them by a man behind them... In a fenced-in area the plants, birds and turtles were granted the right to live, die and grow. A rule was established that not one animal should vanish. The best physicians had found that the eyes of living beasts radiate special currents which have a salubrious effect on mentally unstrung people. The physicians prescribed contemplating the eyes of beasts as treatment for the spirit, whether the eyes be the meek, submissive ones of a toad, or the stony gaze of a snake, or the bold ones of a lion, and they ascribed the same significance to them as a tuner has for an unstrung instrument. Healing with eyes was used to the same extent as healing waters today.

The village had become a scientific commune, administered by the cloud plower. The winged creator steadily approached the commune of not only people, but of all creatures living on the terrestrial globe.

And at the door to his house he heard the rap of a monkey's tiny fist.

1915-1916

*Translated by Gary Kern*

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## NOTES

1. The Russian word is *obshchina*.
2. The Russian word is *zadruga*.
3. *Lebediya* is the ancient name for the steppe region between the Don and the Volga.

The Two Trinities

On the proud barque of minus-one, to sail over the soul of Razin, over its wide waves, as over a wide river, to steer his skiff through white willows and elms against the wave, against the current, choosing his fate by the Volga, a fate terminated by the block like an eagle by a hard beak,<sup>1</sup> but giving life a new current, one which runs counter to the stars overhead, cutting across time from the Kalmyk steppes to Zhiguli, sailing across the sounding stream of his own I. And to count, like a miser, the transparent coin of the waves, the plash of the waves, as the phantom barque of minus-one sails softly on the river of Razin, against the natural current flowing in time, against his I, through the black waves of Zhiguli, from the lower reaches of the simple head lying in its own thought on the executioner's ax, being riddled by the eyes of the suddenly thoughtful crowds, to the life sources of the young Don Cossack in Solovki who cut his way across all Russia in order to hear northern speeches, to see the eyes of the northern god, the god of the north, or on the Dnieper, where he stood above a deep pool, with pagan daring in his eyes, and gaily exhorted rusalkas<sup>2</sup> from their blue wave—and they came, pressing to their watery curls the many resounding names of those who had illumined the ancient chronicles.

No wonder the hills halloo: "Take the boat, you lubbers!"<sup>3</sup> And the axial rays of the rusalka-number, rooted in an imaginary "no," reach out toward the "yes" numbers.

No wonder each night the Volga puts on the brigands' kerchief of a rollicking Razin song and, blue beauty that she is, watches the dawn kindle the dusk of the forests with its early red-calico match.

To sail from the end of life to youth.

Then from the executioner's ax, as wide as a cow's tongue, the head hops and jumps down, puts itself on the shoulders and adorns itself with the phantom of enormous bogatyr curls. "Hey, stand by!" it calls out, placing a fist against the bogatyr<sup>4</sup> mouth.

To populate one's own sail, one's own boat, in the form of a young sailor—the negative Razin—now in a spiked helmet, now in a red-calico shirt wide open so that the chest of great plans would be as a bed with turned-back covers, and from there to peer into the depth of the river—into the dark world of the deep pool, peer at the shadows cast by a fleeing, frightened crab.

"Hey! Razin-Double, take a seat in the boat of Me"—to be a boat for the dead man multiplied by minus-one—"a boat hollowed out of my days and nights; come sit on the bench of my life."

Negative blue Razin-Double, the ash of incantations rains down upon

you from my hands.

Be a black fallow field to the plow of my flashing will; like a bridle adorned with brass and put on the head of a fierce, unbroken steed, submit to my will.

From the red block, like a Volga bird in a cage, to sweep aside the unruly hair of the iron heated whitehot for the tortures before execution, the unruly hair of the great sea of death, into which the Volga of this life has flown, so he can sail toward the first raptures of the young I, the raptures of the savage young South-Russian bogatyr avid for heaven, who sought the bases of truth in the noise of the waves by the rocks of the Arctic Sea, beneath the mighty tumult of the thousands upon thousands of governments of birds, which had erected the precise structures of a temple with the rocks of their wing plashing, with the rocks of their voices.

The young bogatyr stood on the shore of the nocturnal sea and listened to the voices of the flying cranes, to the avalanche of victory in their voices, and he read the flying book, the nocturnal pages of nocturnal clouds, and no one would have recognized in that young bogatyr the future rebel, stern and proud, who wrote letters to the neighboring tsars which began with that disdainful: "My dear brother."

The vatic eyes of still a boy, with the first fuzz on his lips, were lifted like widely opened forest lakes toward the vatic voices of the birds, who may well have cried from that place: "Brother, brother, you are here!"

There he sought those axes central to the structure of man's world, the main pilings of his faith, which later became the powerful pilings he drove into the native land of his forefathers, into the everyday life of his own land.

This was not the furious old leader<sup>5</sup> of several centuries, the heir to the land of his forefathers. This was a boy hermit, a boy anchorite, with quiet thoughtful eyes, a boy who came from his own sea to the sea of Lomonosov.<sup>6</sup> A movement of ice in the sky, gray floes of birds, a flooding of the sky with the black lace of flocks. The orderly bunches of governments, the oppressively trumpeting cries in the air. A precipitous deluge of black, rushing milky ways. Phantoms of a flying air cavalry, patterns of specks, and battle-cries of the heavenly infantry flying to lay siege to spring, singing troops storming the ramparts of spring, with the trumpet voices of the cranes cutting through the world with their sonorous cries, storming winter's castle with a war of songs. The spring sky of the north was forever reflected in the big desolate eyes of Razin, the eyes of a youthful hermit, traveler along the shores of the Arctic Sea.

There were two Trinities. The green forest Trinity of 1905 on the white, snowy peaks of the Urals, where, in an icon frame of snowy brocade, eyes vatic and quiet gaze at the whole world, the dark eyes of the clouds. The terror-stricken air rushed pellmell from that place, but the eyes of the gods shone from above in the rays of silver eyelashes as a silver vision.

And the Trinity of 1921 in Halhala (northern Persia), in the native

land of Razin's early derring-do. Beyond Perm, at the extreme northern point of the Volga's tributaries, where the Volga splits away from the rivers of Siberia that flow northward, was where the first Trinity passed. At a rocky mirror of mountains, down whose slopes, on the opposite side, rivers run into the sea, which is loved by the Volga from the north, there passed the second Trinity of the pivotal year 1921.

"We know, they're going off to pray to their god," concluded the northerners of the Perm taiga when we outfitted ourselves with black boots, bindings and hide shoes, strapped baskets to our shoulders and left just before Trinity to spend a month foresting on the snowy peaks, to seek forest happiness, dreaming of the sables and martens that inhabited the Konzhakov Rock. The mysterious snowy range beckoned and called to us.

The Serebryanka River flew along its channel; wrapping in its snowy hair the slippery black rocks, it embraced them with foam like its most dearly beloved and it bestowed its mountain kisses lavishly. Inclining your ear to the river, you could hear the halloos of girls, a living human laugh and the old songs of the Russian villages.

Who took from whom the strums and human voices: the river or the village? In the instantaneous abyss are the threads of the swift river wave.

As a footman rushes and hurries with a letter sewn up in the lining of his coat—so the river has kept in its blue waves the letter that the north wrote to the Volga.

Someone was laughing there in the depth of the waters and boisterously shouting the bold forest "halloo!" to one who had turned down his face, the stranger from another land, from the world of people. When the river receded by the channel of a rocky hole, on the half-dried channel of the wet marsh could be seen wide claws, haphazardly printed by a bear, published by the river in a deluxe edition with wide margins and beautiful colophons of pines, in a dust cover of sandy banks and remote snowy mountains topped by a black pine.

These inspired songs of an ancient folk, these little songs are so filled with the breath of life that one can tell how old the composer was, where he was going, what mood he was in, whether he was angry or thoughtful, whether the universe struck him as a gloomy curse or a peal of church bells filled with the peas of silver words, as the slash of a drunkard's saber on the head or a thoughtful handclasp at night.

The publications of the forest were printed in books of black marsh. Not just bears, but even hunters can read these chastushki<sup>7</sup> in the edition of the marshy swamps, which goes back to the first ages of the world.

What Laura will read the songs of the forest Petrarch?<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile we press onward against the river, higher and higher, toward the stern ceilings of the mountains.

## NOTES

1. Possibly a reference to the old Eastern custom of having a captive eagle placed before various items; the one it seizes with its beak serves as the basis for telling someone's fortune.

2. rusalka—a water nymph, the spirit of a girl or child who died unnaturally, often a girl who drowned herself out of love.

3. "*Saryn' na kichku!*"—the battlecry of marauding bands on the Volga, it means literally: "Riffraff, to the bow!"

4. bogatyr—a heroic giant of Russian folklore, defender of the Russian land and performer of great deeds.

5. In Russian, *glavnyi iarosta*—evidently a play on words: *glavnyi* (*main*) and *iarost'* (*fury*) and *starosta* (*elder, leader*).

6. The famous Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-65) was born the son of a fisherman in Arkhangelsk, by the White Sea. Razin was born the son of a prosperous Cossack in Zimoveisky, by the Sea of Azov.

7. chastushka—a popular folk rhyme, usually with a topical or satirical content.

8. Petrarch addressed his love poems to an unknown woman, Laura.

"Are you teasing me, Emma?"

"Eve, Eve..."

"So it's true? You are going to live here, quite near?"

The tense freshness of pine trees flashed by. The fresh sky was turning pink.

"So near! Yes. Ah, it's hard to believe it! Just think—nothing but little twigs, melting snow next to the front steps, a cold morning, to be able to run in at any moment, and to know that the summer ahead of us is ours, ours! The storms are ours, the fir trees are ours, the clouds are ours, poems, evenings!..."

"Emma, the happiness of life is flowering with such deafening speed."

.....

It was unexpected; for the first time I found myself in the corner where Emma worked. On her manuscripts, instead of a paperweight, was a cobblestone.

"Emma Karlovna! Do you write too?"

The clouds crawled behind the iridescent balcony window.

"Yes, but I have not yet dared to publish.. (Her severe upper lip barely moved). "Well, it is difficult..."

The day outside the window was huge, cloudy but warm. On the table there was a pile of papers, the writer's handwriting distorted, as if by lightning, stormy, like spring. Emma! The orderly daughter of a German gardener. Old German buckles on her shoes... And suddenly many large clouds appeared, black clouds, storms, intimacy. With their hands nervously clutched into fists they sat motionless, next to each other. The balcony windows showed tension.

Drops were falling. "Eve Lvovna, are you afraid to get your feet wet? Would you like me to show you the nursery and the seedbeds? It smells good there after a rain... We can go while the men are talking... Have you been married a long time?"

Emma walked in front. Her rather large legs under her skirt, held a little above the ankles, aroused incomprehensible confidence—so deep that the depth was tranquillity. As if something ahead had suddenly become clear, as if Eve had entered some harbor. It even seemed to her for a moment that there would be no need to leave these seedbeds and fresh earth. Those feet in brown stockings shifting like a crane's, showing lanky ankles, gave the walk something intimately warm, reliable, permanent and calm. I felt like talking, mouthing the words slowly, tasting the insignificant, idle phrases with pleasure.

I remembered how, as I was walking along the road, I thought that Emma would be tightly corseted, her face red and eyebrowless, her hair arranged on the top of her head like a snail shell; that she would bring pretzels on a tray for

coffee; and, well, that it would be boring—really, are they going to remove the roses. And now I was laughing so hard I could scarcely breathe, this was nothing like what I had expected...

"Eve, what do you think, do men talk together the way we do?"

"I don't know; once I overheard two of my cousins talking, and sort of... But they pretend more than we do."

"Eve, you have such luxurious hair—surely your hairdo never falls down?"

"My hair takes so very many pins, and still it's not manageable."

.....

Yesterday they were washing the windows at Emma's. Marfushka was standing at the window and washing.

Probably nobody was at home.

.....

"You were walking in a gray rain among the cliffs. You were walking into the crazy wind of a mad March..."

Emma was passing under the windows, her collar starched and white. She passed by in a businesslike way. Emma was going somewhere. March chilled the face, its freshness biting.

I thought that Emma would pass by the deserted gray fence, by the waste land, as yet undeveloped, that led into the beautiful city. Once the city was full of inspiration, severe, even lonely; now it was Emma's city, the houses as hard and self-confident as Emma's collars.

"Among the cliffs, among the cliffs she would go, from the gray country, from the proud country."

"Eve, admit it, you ran up the stairs! Eve, with your weak heart!"

"Emma, be quiet, be quiet,—on the lilac tiny leaves are opening, sharp, light, exactly like a mouse's ears! There are tiny leaves on the lilac already, let's go..."

.....

The carriage was taking them out of the city. And as they rode past the many, still empty, country balconies, they seemed to understand with a sudden gladness the whole enormity of life. A few people, surprisingly, had already moved to the country, and the small corners of their way of life—samovars and white milk pitchers—refreshed by the uncustomary lack of population and by the leafless freshness of spring, represented in themselves the unexpected beauty.

Equally surprising, the sky was impatiently clear, between the distinct tree trunks of evening.

Bending towards each other, they whispered: "You see, right here, this tiny green sprout has crawled out, and here it is red, and through it something has coalesced in us. The sprout will go, but what we have seen together in friendship will remain in our friendship; this is the secular sacrament: the cup of morning is yellow, at evening it is blue, and at night white."

The next day she was calm and joyful. She opened the cold wicket gate.



The fresh gray morning puddles were becoming frozen. The "next day" was precisely the second day of the holiday. She wanted to tie a little ribbon on the wicket gate. She thought: "Life is at times very simple: Kolya picked a dandelion, today is Monday." Eve laughed: "Today is Monday"—white words. Emma was resting.

.....

Eve spoke: "Why do I like your tiny bottles? It is very silly for you to have these bottles; really one should not have pink and blue bottles. It shows that you have been hiding for a long time within your family, that you think of yourself as an object of attention, and of festivities. How funny it is! But I am happy that life surrounds you with this kind of caress... We hide behind the tiny pink bottles, ribbons, and frilly white dresses, to avoid noticing our storms, our tall, black fir trees, our passionate expectations of downpour."

Emma arrived, breathless, "I am going to try my luck, Eve, try and wish with all your mind for me to succeed."

She left. Eve wished firmly: "Fate, let Emma be successful today, serene and sunny may she grasp the handle of your door."

And the thread stretches to the distance between them, and supports them both.

.....

Eve was ill. Her husband held Emma by both hands.

"I am counting on you, Emma Karlovna, on your wisdom... I feel at ease letting her go with you..."

This was a dream. "Emma, how quickly the stars of our life reach their prime. It is terrible, beatitude rushes at us so quickly. What madness, what wonderful madness life is!"

This was a dream. Eve and Emma scarcely looked around the country cottage. Then for some reason they took each other by the hand and ran here. A gigantic darkness, full of the small pliable twigs of spring, nodded to them. Quickly and trustingly the sky turned pink. Their slightly damp cotton dresses seemed hurried.

Eternity smiled through the fir trees. Something rushed impatiently to meet it and implored it to stop. Then, with a quick and friendly glance, it said, "Eternity is yours, yours..."

A samovar was brought out on to the neighbor's balcony. Over there they sat down to tea. The cold was Mayish, and the white flowers bloomed quickly like daring stars.

Somewhere between worlds two rays were linked, a sweet sound throbbed.

They were pleasantly surprised that the floors in their large room were new and unpainted.

"Eve, are you asleep?"

"Not yet."

"What is it that I hear outside the window, the rustling of large wings?"

"Perhaps it is the noise of the forest, or eternity flying around like a huge

bat, since we are living in eternity now, Emma."

"No, wait a little—separation happens, the words of separation exist, final moments, don't they?..."

"They do not exist, Emma! Separations exist only when people believe in separation. Do you hear how the wooden floor smells of pine, how profound it is? Isn't it eternal?..."

.....

Ripened and fulfilled, the day was departing...

Above the swing a July evening sky had already become entangled in the black net of the willow. And from the other side there was moisture, as if the lilac had serenely melted into the spring sky and filled it.

"Eve, understand, one has to rise above one's ecstasy in order to create; no matter how much that ecstasy has tormented you, only then will it become beauty for people."

"But I do not want to move beyond my ecstasy, since it is the most beautiful thing in me; I want to melt in it, and be forgiven by life."

Leaning over, they whispered quietly. "Do you know, Emma, the touch of ecstasy is fleeting, but that is only a reflection of the enormity; I see every thread of the moment, continuing to its end, to its homeland where it is eternal, where nothing is transient and everything is eternity, and that is why fleeting ecstasy struggles so painfully."

Their separations were short, and they were eulogies to life.

Emma was walking and thinking, "Is it empty? Is it sad?"

But there had already been established through space a bright firm tension between them. It was pleasant for her that she had broad shoulders and a firm neck. There went the broad-shouldered friend of Eve.

She understood with a half-smile: "Eve is thinking about me."

And the road became comfortable; the broad shoulders and the firm neck ceased to be superfluous to the peculiarity of her own figure.

The damp leaves of evening could be smelled.

"Eve, Eve, here I come, Eve. Lithe, tall, reckless Eve! With my red tanned arms I am coming; our goal is the same."

.....

And so, since they were united by a thread from afar, and since their threads were eternal... I do not want to end this tale. I do not want to know the chance happenings of unreal life. Perhaps they have both died. Perhaps one of them, the darker, taller, and more impatient... Perhaps their souls died earlier, only their proud bright souls...

And to you, black, sharp fir trees this tale is dedicated. To you who are proud, unexpected, impatient, irreconcilable..."

*Translated by Milica Banjanin*

*LADOMIR*

And the castles of world trade  
Where with a face of malevolence and rapture  
The chains of poverty shine,  
One day you will turn to ash:  
You who have collapsed in ancient debates,  
And whose torture chamber is in the stars,  
You, carry the thundering gunpowder in your hands  
And call on the palace to explode.  
And if in the glow of the flames  
A puff of gray smoke were to sink,  
Throw down the gauntlet to fate  
With hands bedecked with blood instead of banners.  
And if the fire were apt,  
And if a sail of blue were to billow,  
Stride into the flaming tent—  
The fire in your breast—and tear it out.  
And where profits spend the night—  
In a glass case where the tsar's castle is—  
Methods of explosion are fine,  
And even intrigues of clever females.  
Slave of the rich, where is thy knife,  
When God himself is like a chain?  
O girl, with your braid, during a rendezvous,  
Strangle the murderer of your youth  
Because as a bare-foot virgin  
You cried for alms from him.  
Go with a cat-step, pure,  
From the tender midnight.  
You, invalid, kiss his gay lips  
With consumption  
And if you have no glands  
Go to the mad dog,  
Kiss his saliva,  
Kiss the enemy  
Until he vanishes.

\* \* \*

Slave of the rich, halloo,  
Poverty has toyed with you,  
You crawled like a mendicant to the king  
And kissed his lips.  
Aching with a great wound  
Taking a bolt from the glow,  
Grab Aquarius by the mustache,  
Beat The Dogs over the shoulders<sup>1</sup>  
And let the space of Lobachevsky<sup>2</sup>  
Fly from the banners of the nighttime Nevsky.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

This is the creatocracy marching<sup>4</sup>  
(Having substituted C for A)  
The gatherhood of Lodomir  
With the Workingworld at the helm.  
This is Razin's rebellion<sup>5</sup>  
Flying into the sky over Nevsky,  
It allures both the sketch  
And the space of Lobachevsky.  
Let Lobachevsky's level curves  
Adorn the cities  
Like an arc over the toiling neck  
Of Worldwide labor.  
And lightning will sob  
That it scurries like a servant,  
And there will be no one to sell  
A tight sack of gold to.  
Death's death will know  
The hour of its return  
And the earth's repetitious prophets  
Will banish the redundant letter.<sup>6</sup>

\* \* \*

On the day of winter's death and in early spring,  
Hungarians offered us their hands.<sup>7</sup>  
Worker, build your own castle of prices  
From stones made of heartbeats.  
(And, clinking glasses with Virgo,  
He will remember clever melodies  
And the voice of ancient athletes,  
And will go out to the murmur of swords.)  
And the linden tree will send

Its ambassadors to the Supreme Soviet,  
And there will be no one to desire  
Events of sinful joy.  
And let the kings take pride  
In the vulgar carving of palaces,  
As often the crutches of saints  
Served as a facade for robbery.

\* \* \*

When God himself is like a chain,  
Slave of the rich, where is thy knife?  
Onward, prisoners of the earth,  
Onward, plunder of the hunger-strike.  
One man labors in the dust,  
While the clever one snatches the harvest.  
Onward, prisoners of the earth,  
Onward, freedom to the hungry;  
But for you, kings of profit,  
Your eyes are left behind—to weep.  
Toward universal health,  
Let's imbue the verbs with sun,  
Let thrones float down the Dnepr like Perun,<sup>8</sup>  
Like fallen gods.  
Fly, human constellation  
Ever farther into space  
And pour the earth's dialects together  
Into a single dialogue of mortals.  
Where a blast of the heavens is like a swarm of stars,  
Like the breast of the last Romanov,  
A tramp of thought and friend of rakes  
Forges the constellation anew.  
And like the last kings' wedding rings  
And executioners' blocks,  
You whirl in the air, forlorn  
Swindlers, madmen, and shouting crowds.  
The prattle of textbooks bores us,  
About a black swan that lived in the south,<sup>9</sup>  
But the swan with scarlet wings  
Flies from the tempest of the leaden snowstorm.  
Tsars, your goose is cooked.  
The execution place is reserved.  
And the secret of the military  
Is that the bride flies in, in crimson.  
And let the last tsars,

Quashing anger with a smile,  
Stand, petrified,  
Over the glow of the sunset's graves.  
You gave wing to the constellation  
That soldiers might storm the sky,  
You blew up the riverbed of seasons  
And menageried the kings.  
And he sits, last-born king,  
Behind distinct, iron bars,  
Neighbor to a mob of monkeys,  
Slurping up the vodka of poisoned thoughts.  
Thrones, glory and honor,  
You drowned in a royal blue haze.  
And daughter of thoughts-invisible,  
Your last tear flows.  
Capitals reared up on their hind legs,  
Trampling the valleys with their hoofs,  
The living march to storm the thrones.  
The sea will remember and tell  
With its stormy voice  
How the maiden acquired her lace castle<sup>10</sup>  
For a dance before the throne.  
The sea will remember and tell  
With its thunderous peals,  
How the palace was had for a dance  
Before the executioner of a hundred peoples.  
With its threadwork of laces, the limestone  
Of their majesties' girlfriend's palace  
(Now the private residence of a dancer),  
Flings a summon to the alarum of minds.  
You remember that hour of the nighttime storm,  
When you followed the enemy by his scent;  
The sky cried to you, "Whee!"  
And it howled in its horns with rage.  
And the executioner's handwriting on the sky,  
And claps of thunder,  
And somebody blissfully idiotic,  
Watched the earthly fires.

\* \* \*

Germany's G dropped<sup>11</sup>  
And the Russians' R fell.  
And I see L in a mist of fire  
On the eve of Kupalo.<sup>12</sup>

Raise a bow over the cloud,  
Over the violin of the terrestrial globe;  
And stamp the fireman of the knowing fire  
With a black name.  
Why, the Tsar is only a beggar,  
And a poor relative is the king—  
Onward, gang of freedom,  
And let the hammer of liberty fall.  
You will be cannon-fodder  
And like a scabby corpse of wars—until  
The breeze of the hopak reclines<sup>13</sup>  
On the waves of the universal dance.  
You hear: "hoch" is dead,<sup>14</sup>  
"Hurrah" and "banzai" hushed—  
Where God is red,  
Your groan of anger thrust.

\* \* \*

And Hiawatha's clever skull  
Will adorn the peak of Mont Blanc—  
His land is not to blame;  
He will enter the provinces of Landoman.<sup>15</sup>  
And the Valparaisians rush toward the onza,<sup>16</sup>  
Toward the Hondurans, rubles rush.  
And you, madman, try and make  
The dagger lie in blood.  
Now the news is of hatred,  
Bloody it with yourselves;  
You of bygone centuries, rot—  
Throw yourselves into the sea of thoughts.  
And strike up a tune again, daybreak,  
And call forth regiments for freedom  
If the iron kaiser's subjects  
Arise anew like iron from the river.  
Where the Volga will say "love"  
The Yangtze-kiang will utter "the"  
And the Mississippi will say "whole"  
And old man Danube will utter "world"  
And the waters of the Ganges will say "I."  
The river idol will outline  
Lands of greenery.  
Always, forever, here and there!  
Everything for everyone, always and everywhere—  
Our cry will fly through the stars!

The language of love drifts over the world  
And the Song of Songs applies for leave to heaven.  
Light blue spaces of the seas  
Will peep into themselves like eyesockets,  
And in sketches I shall read the fates,  
Like crimson summer lightning streaks.  
Wars have pecked out your eyes—  
Go, troubled blindmen,  
Beg for such powers,  
As your fathers adored.  
I saw trains of blindmen,  
Arms outstretched to relatives,  
The affairs of merchants—always misers—  
Are the guarantees of dirty vice.  
Wars have torn off your legs—  
In Siberia there are many crutches—  
And perhaps the gods will help  
The plane fields to intersect.  
Stroll in the night, skeletons,  
In the glass holes of palaces,  
And let wits coin witticisms  
Like the chimes of corpses.  
For the last time over the city of Krupp,<sup>17</sup>  
Rustling like the bones of dead troops,  
The accursed soul of the golden corpse  
Hovered everywhere.

\* \* \*

You populate the jails with yourselves;  
Harmony from handrails to steps,  
But full of smoke and alarm,  
Where the skyscraper neighbors a cloud.  
The regiments of iron kaisers  
Are covered with a thick layer of dust.  
Adam's apples have been pierced  
By the convulsive fingers of the past.  
But you, knowing strings of hernias,  
Having dressed the sore with a shirt,  
You know the dreadful game;  
Your groan—is it torment, really?

\* \* \*

And this for the first time on earth:



Konenkov's carvings of Razin's forehead<sup>18</sup>  
Like a sacred book in the Kremlin,  
And Shevchenko is not afraid of the day.<sup>19</sup>  
Soldier and vagabond of freedom,  
Did you see a herd of horses run by?  
The doorpost of turbulent liberties,  
Shattering the cast-iron.  
A knee to the chest.  
Be forceful somehow.  
And go, wind of cast-iron smallpox,  
Under whispers of "lord, lord."  
And you showed your ancient sores of eyes  
To the nighttime god—  
Seek idiots just a little better—  
And you showed the road to the sky.  
Like a hand of the earth,  
Mouths of the buried are shut,  
Like a kernel.  
Bring the wind of burning mansions  
To temples of slander.  
Whomever gold chokes by the throat  
With an implacable fist,  
He, cursing with the strength of a hammer,  
Is acquainted with lightning's word.  
A team of six horses with bowed heads  
Does not carry the landowners;  
The whole continent blazes  
Like a star redder than flames.  
And you, icons of freedom!  
There is a wreath around the eyelashes of a secret,  
Kurrat-al-'Ayn's<sup>20</sup>  
Huge eyes glisten.

\* \* \*

And the sayings of Tsong-kha-pa<sup>21</sup>  
Blend with the pure dew;  
The Slav with the light-brown braid  
Tears off petals of water-lilies.  
Where the crimson bull of the battle  
Is still smoking from the execution,  
Freedom goes Everlasting  
Raising the banner boldly with its arm.  
And skyscrapers sink in the smoke  
Of the divine explosion;

Sales and profits embrace the palace  
Like gray rings.

\* \* \*

He, the city, who has just broken  
The shaft of God,  
Stands peacefully on the corner; the alarm  
Hardly bothers his horse's mouth.  
He, the city, is proud of the old truth  
And the force of laughter like beauty—  
In the eye of the heavenliest of muzzles  
He chews the iron bit;  
Always cruel and forlorn,  
Caress its throat with a broad razor!  
From the whole celestial case of instruments  
You took the rebellion of an uprising,  
And it falls on the anvil,  
Under the hammer, into the divine sketch.

\* \* \*

You forged the deity into horseshoes  
So that it might serve you better,  
And you hurled well-armed fetters  
At the crow's spine of the heavens.  
Personifying his own horse's skull,  
Having enmeshed it with a clever mane  
And crippled its eyes with whiting,  
He, chalky, enkindled the flint.  
Who is the rider and who is the horse?  
Is he city or god?  
But the alarming tread of his feet  
Wants the gallop and pursuit.

\* \* \*

Where Izanagi read<sup>22</sup>  
Monogatari to Perun,<sup>23, 24</sup>  
And Eros sat on Shang-ti's knee<sup>25</sup>  
And the gray crest on the bald head  
Of God looks like snow,  
Where Cupid kisses Maa-Emae,<sup>26</sup>  
And Tien talks to Indra,<sup>27, 28</sup>  
Where Juno and Cinteotl<sup>29</sup>  
Watch Correggio

And are enraptured with Murillo,  
Where Unkulunkulu and Thor<sup>30</sup>  
Play checkers peacefully,  
Leaning on their elbows,  
And Astarta is enraptured<sup>31</sup>  
With Hokusai—there, there!<sup>32</sup>

\* \* \*

Like a bloody row of eagle-owls,  
Tall palaces burn.  
And where labor strides so freely,  
And the rebellious cue strikes ore,  
They shine, rebelliously deep,  
The eyes of the cast-iron Virgin.  
Oxen bellow again in a cave  
And an infant drinks a goat's udder,  
And people walk, beasts walk  
To god-births of contemporaries.  
I see freedom for horses  
And equality for cows:  
Like an epic of dreams  
The years will flow together;  
From the eyes of man, the bolt has struck.  
He, who knew that there's no glow cleverer  
Than the blueness of the horse's fire,  
He will give refuge to the ambassador of horses  
In Ostozhenko, in Volkonsky's private residence.<sup>33</sup>  
And once again the stark dissenters,  
Covered with stars like the Arctic Sea,  
Will cover the nocturnal triangles  
Of a face and of freedom.

\* \* \*

From the "*mesiats Ai*" to "*igrai ovragi*"<sup>34</sup>  
The whole year for us is toil,  
And they say the gods are kind,  
That labor is not without rest.  
Until sunset you and your wife together  
You knit together sheaf after sheaf.  
What, then, did the rye Lord say?  
—Thank you, serf.  
And from the sowing to the harvest  
To the first snowy path,

White troops with sickles  
Knitted heavy sheaves.  
You are wound up by the barin's rope.  
You are kissed by the priests' whip,  
Breathe like an ox—until sweat  
Does not scorch your shoulder,  
And chew the hunk of grain,  
Cruel bread; which day is it  
Until you will be freed  
By the hand of earthly ruin?  
And fill the ladles of freedom  
With a song of gay poison,  
Freedom goes Everlasting  
Like the fire of the ecumenical soul.  
It will be coats of timeproof armor  
On the chest of universal labor.  
And, (in the understanding of a hut),  
The bridle of governments will be transferred to a number.  
It will be the last battle  
Between the hungry slave and the ruble;  
Glorify yourself, friendship of wheaten cereals,  
In the worker's hammering hand.  
And let the pestilent ink  
Cover the pages of existence;  
The breathing of fate has changed  
The edges of free clothing.  
And it will take wing, the beautiful  
Corner of labor's earthly sail;  
You will fly there eternally swarthy,  
Holy youth,  
To the siege of the golden plague.  
Thieves of heavenly eyesockets, come;  
Be able, better minds,  
To put muzzles on plagues!  
And let a small bird resonantly chirp  
About the blue air of spring,  
Tomorrow the executioner will throw you down  
To post-human dreams.  
It's the surf of humanity  
At the death of cliffs.  
The Great-Russians  
No longer have a native land.

\* \* \*

Where London conducts trade with China,  
Arrogant palaces tipping their clouds  
Like Panama hats—  
Let's not consider their ashes,  
Creators of the approaching.  
So little we lost,  
Going with the path of rebellion—  
The presidents of the globe<sup>35</sup>  
March like a daring crowd.  
For thirteen years the futurists kept  
At their bosom, in their eyes and gazes,  
The burning powder of the days of Nosar',<sup>36</sup>  
Secluding themselves in Krasnaya Polyana.<sup>37</sup>  
Holder of the banner of liberties,  
Ruling the ride with a bridle,  
Fly down the blue road  
To the superhuman campaign.  
And having buried the relics of times,  
Drink freedom from a starry glass,  
So that the cathedral hammer of a giant  
May rumble along the sunny pig-iron.  
You will fasten a sail to a constellation,  
So that the earth may fly stronger and more rebellious  
To the over-world tier.  
And the bird of the stars may remain as before.  
Sweeping the market from the face of the earth  
Hurling down castles to the ground,  
You will build a roof from starry blocks:  
Glass bell of the capitals.  
Like the grating of mirrored windows,  
You, the large owl of blue glows,  
You will spin a cocoon of silk,  
Flights—thread of the caterpillar.  
And nocturnal sounds strike like bells  
To the earth—giants,  
When the mirrors abandon them,  
And the net of capitals will cast out its camps.

\*

\*

\*

Where the fleece of the fields  
Is combed by the comb of clouds in nocturnal color,<sup>38</sup>  
Where birds in the air catch  
The grain flying down from the sky.  
The sorcerer of flights

Crossed a cloud with early spring,  
And a hand sowed grain,  
A plow man swung on the clouds.  
Tugs go like a cloudy knot,  
Fleeces of the earthly harrow,  
They will grow ears of rye,  
Herds of horses of the sky will cherish them.  
He did not beg: "Be kind to me, gods,  
And bear a rich harvest!"  
Rather be entrusted the winter crops to equations  
And carried a series of numbers in his breast.  
And there they ground out with millstones  
The flour of edible clay  
Nightly mills of steep hills,  
Waving with tired wings.

\* \* \*

And speeches of knowledge in lightning's body<sup>39</sup>  
Are proclaimed to the gay youths,  
Textbooks flew though the air  
To schools of every village.  
Beyond downpours of rye, try and find  
The one who crossed the East,  
Where the train to the north carried cabbage soup,  
The boiled water of edible lakes.<sup>40</sup>  
Where the barin's fishing-rod lay  
And the barin's son went boating,  
For the mouth of the capitals, the wave is roasted  
And smoke of the lake's vodka rises.  
Nocturnal engines of the lake's cabbage soup  
Carry heavy vessels,  
The frost will forge them into blue blocks  
And will bring them to the peoples' eyesockets.  
Here is the sea, surrounded by a case  
Of hillshaped glass,  
A top-knot of heavy smoke  
Is hanging like the forelock of a deity.  
Where construction casts a shadow  
And the palace of the seas is ready,  
The troika carried a castle of waters  
A sea of foaming whales.  
The mirror-like desert of clouds,  
The lake-maker is capable of flying.  
The bard began to sow uprisings of letters

Like fields of machine-tools.  
Those youths who took an oath<sup>41</sup>  
To destroy languages—  
You've correctly guessed their names—  
Walk crowned with wreaths.

\* \* \*

And bravely you pass, in an abandoned  
Sheepskin, turbulent and bold,  
To ignite the bonfire of initiative  
Of changes in the earthly way of life.  
Loving the traveller's road,  
He took a series of numbers, as if it were a cane,  
And taking a root from his imaginary self  
He vigilantly noted in it the nymph of the one  
Who has nothing.  
He found a double-faced root,  
To see the nymph at the uprooted tree  
In a country of the mind.

\* \* \*

Where pearls of the Pechora burn<sup>42</sup>  
Through a headdress of distant stars,  
Go there, helper of the heavens,  
Great with the force of a lever.

\* \* \*

We will carry the Neva in buckets  
To extinguish the fire of the Canine constellation,  
Let the train cut through the blue with soot,  
Taking wing along networks of forests.  
Let the heavens tremble  
With your terrible steps,  
Tie the constellation with a log,  
And the dale with a grid of axes.  
Crawl like an ant through the sky,  
Explore its cracks  
And, sky-blue tramp, demand  
Those blessings that were promised you.

\* \* \*

By the descendant of a northern tempest  
With the cruel force of a lever,  
Mining-hammers, sledge-hammers, and hammers of masons  
Were erected in the constellations of night,  
Setting up staircases to the sky.  
Put on the spiked helmet of the fireman,  
You will climb the walls of the moon  
In the smoke of the gaseous fire.  
Dress the sky in a hammer,  
Give the sun a couple of whirls,  
Spin the wheels of its gears—  
Where the East is in a red glow.

\* \* \*

Trading clocks for hours,  
Paying for supper with a smile,  
You place heartbeats on the scale<sup>43</sup>  
When an account of work is needed.  
And vigilant temptation of profit,  
Inequality and piles of money—  
The mighty engine of olden days—  
The contemporary will replace by a song.  
The authoritative whistle will light up  
The silence of the great desert  
And the train, a swift messenger,  
Will vanish more crowned than the constellation.

\* \* \*

Building a spool from the earth,  
Where there is only a wire of terrors,  
You glorify the sweet shepherdess  
And the dragon-flies at the tiny brook,  
And there will be equality signs  
Between work and idleness,  
The holy batons of dead power  
Are freely entrusted to singing.  
Both idleness and the mother of inspiration  
Are equivalent to labor.  
It will take the mighty crow-bar in its palm  
With the supernatural force of rapture.

\* \* \*



And your flight is always forward.  
Misers of legs will reappear later,  
And the time of bombastic justice,  
And merchants then will recognize the truth.  
March along the sea of slander.  
Spring the steps of your heel!  
The eaglet in a cast-iron shell—  
Licking his crimson wings like a calf—  
Taking to the air, like a match flame.  
Draw not with chalk, but with love,  
That, which will be drafts.  
And fate, having flown down to the headboard,  
Will bend an intelligent ear of rye.

*Translated by Gale H. Weber*

### Translator's Afterword

This is the first English translation of *Ladomir* by Velemir Khlebnikov, first published in a lithographed edition of 50 in Khar'kov, 1920.<sup>44</sup> An abridged version was later published in *LEF*, No. 2 (1923). The complete text was again published by A. E. Kruchenykh in *Neizdannyyi Khlebnikov* (Moscow, 1928), this time significantly altered from the original Khar'kov version by Khlebnikov himself. The changes consisted of abridgements and stylistic corrections consistently executed throughout the poem.<sup>45</sup> The translation has been rendered from the text of *Ladomir* appearing in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. I (Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Munich, 1968), in which brackets designated the abridged sections of the poem. I have left these sections intact and removed the obtrusive brackets.<sup>46</sup>

The holophrastic title *Ladomir* designating the universal land of the future, is constructed by a method dating back to Old Russian. It consists of two roots *lad* [harmony; living creature] or the archaic *lada* [sweetheart; also the name of the Old Slavic goddess of love] and *mir* [peace; world, universe], conjoined by the vowel *o*. The tension of this morphogocially symmetrical construction finds its resolution in the smooth confluence of its parts, generating a word whose meaning is reflected in its form, a place which has its characteristic inherent in its name, and a title which superbly suits its poem.

Khlebnikov's principal preoccupation in *Ladomir* is with the destruction of the old order and synthesis of the new.<sup>47</sup> These Apollonian themes erupt now in images of bold, inexorable, explosive revolution, and now in beatific visions of a glorious new dawn. Enemy images arise not thematically, not as a slow rumble mounting to some climactic clash, but are interspersed askance throughout the poem. The structure is holographic, antiphonal, stark coruscations in full voice. Temporal relations are shattered. Events are displayed as quick, disordered, multilayered cross-sections of time. Verb tenses seem distorted. Past and future intermingle in a vision of vast, fulminating upheaval.

As to Khlebnikov's use of allusion, a word of warning is in order. Certain passages read like a gazeteer of lost locales, forgotten gods, and all-but-nameless personalities. Is this conceit, obfuscation, or does it show us something less superficial than a quirk of

style? It must be remembered that Khlebnikov composed not in the drawing room or the archives, but in ditches, fields and footpaths. While his repertoire of arcane references reflects an often astonishing scholarship, it never becomes an end in itself; the poem is constructed not around the allusions but with their help. They are condensations and intersections of whole blocks of concept. This allusion is spontaneous, a form of shorthand, a direct reflection of his cognitive style, and consequently it is among the purest forms of poetic expression.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to several people who took the time to make comments and suggestions during the preparation of this translation, especially to David Mann and John Bowlf for invaluable assistance, and to Vahan D. Barooshian for the original suggestion of this project.

## NOTES

1. The constellations Canis Major and Canis Minor.

2. The parallel of Euclidean geometry allows that through any point in a plane, one and only one line can be drawn parallel to a given line in the same plane. In the nineteenth century, several mathematicians discovered that the parallel postulate is not necessary to the self-consistency of geometry, and can be replaced by certain other axioms that result in radically different, non-Euclidian geometries. By toying with the parallel postulate, the Russian mathematician Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky (1792-1856), discovered a geometry in which not just one, but an infinite number of lines may be drawn through any point in a plane, all parallel to a given line. The space of Lobachevsky is the abstract notion of a universe conforming to the rules of this geometry.

3. Nevsky Prospekt is the main avenue of St. Petersburg (Leningrad).

4. Khlebnikov creates the word "*tvoriane*" by changing the first letter of "*dvoriane*" [aristocracy]. By substituting "t" for "d" the root of the word becomes "*tvor*" (from "*tvorit*"—to create). In his essay of 1920, "Our Basis" ["Nasha osnova"], in the section "Word Creation" ["Slovotvorchestvo"], Khlebnikov writes, "If we have a pair of such words as '*dvor*' and '*tvor*,' and we know the word '*dvoriane*,' we can construct the word '*tvoriane*'—the creators of life."

5. Stenka Razin was the leader of a Cossack and peasant rebellion on Russia's south-eastern frontier between 1667-1671. The Cossacks were inspired by anarchistic ideals, the peasants by hatred of serfdom which had been legalized in 1649. While a certain degree of social protest was present, the tone was set by the anarchic element whose aim was looting and destruction. For this reason, Razin is relegated to a minor figure by most Russian historians. In folklore, however, Razin is a popular hero, the incarnation of a free man who triumphs over society and nature. Khlebnikov refers to Razin in many of his works, and wrote an essay in 1922 entitled "Razin."

6. The letter "iat" was removed from the Cyrillic alphabet in Russia during the orthographic reforms of 1918, on the grounds that it duplicated the function of the letter "e."

7. This refers to the revolution of 1919 in Hungary.

8. Perun is the chief god of Slavic mythology, creator of lightning and thunder. He is portrayed with three heads with fiery red faces, surrounded by flames. A perpetual fire was maintained in his honor; if extinguished it was rekindled by sparks struck from a stone held in his image. His symbol was the hammer; his name yields solar fire.

9. Possibly a reference to the pretentious villa named "*Chernyi lebed*" in Petrovsky Park, Moscow, owned by Nikolay Pavlovich Ryabushinsky (1876-1951). Like many of the modernist intellectuals, Khlebnikov derided Ryabushinsky, the ostentatious editor of *Golden Fleece*.

10. Tsar Nikolai II gave a palace to his mistress, the ballerina Matilda Ksheshinskaya.

It was from the balcony of this palace that Lenin appeared when he returned to Russia in April, 1917.

11. In his essay "Conversation between Oleg and Kazimir" ["Razgovor Olega i Kazimira"] of 1913, Khlebnikov writes: "The duality, the division of the ancient world into G and R (Greece and Rome), consists of the Russians and Germans in the new age. Here G and R are more ancient than countries. This is no game of chance." In this passage, L represents Lodomir, the universal country of the future. For Khlebnikov's writings on the letter L itself, see his essays "Destruction of the Word" ["Razlozhenie slova"], 1915-1916, and "A List. An Alphabet of the Mind" ["Perechen'. Azbuka uma"], 1916.

12. *Kupalo* is a Ukrainian agricultural festival celebrating the beginning of the harvest and the summer solstice. With the advent of Christianity, Kupalo became associated with St. John the Baptist's Day (June 24, O.S., July 7, N. S.) from which it took certain Christian features. The celebration includes the burning of a bonfire, floating of wreaths, singing of Kupalo songs, collecting of herbs, casting of spells, and performing of some vestiges of ancient rites, the meanings of which are no longer understood. The feast symbolizes the strongest and most luxurious growth of vegetation. This is also the period during which supernatural forces, *rusalky*, *mavky*, vampires and witches are believed to be active.

13. *Hopak* is a Ukrainian folk dance performed by men.

14. *Hoch*, German, "high;" a term used in hailing the Kaiser. *Banzai*, Japanese; a patriotic cheer addressed to the emperor, wishing him long life.

15. Khlebnikov's neologism *Liudostan*.

16. Refers to America during the Spanish-American War, where money from the whole world flowed together. *Onsy*—old Spanish money; *Valparaiso*—a trading port in Chile.

17. Krupp is a family of German steelworks owners. Established in Essen since the sixteenth century, they have played an important role in Germany's industrial and social development, and in the production of armaments. They produced much of the artillery used by the German army in both World Wars.

18. Sergei Timofeevich Kononov (1874-1971) was a well-known Russian sculptor. He molded many peasant figures and portraits of famous persons as well as subjects from Greek and Slavic mythology. He sculpted a bust of "Lada," the Slavic goddess of love, in 1910, and a monument entitled "Stepan Razin and His Band," in 1919.

19. Taras Grigorevich Shevchenko (1742-1849) was the Ukrainian national poet and playwright. He was an ardent patriot and leader of those who opposed Russia's rule over his native land.

20. Kurrat-al-'Ayn is a pseudonym of the beautiful and cultured Persian poetess Zarrin-Tadj. She was a heroine of Babis, who openly declared their secession from Islam in 1848. She was the first Persian woman to dare to show herself unveiled to her brothers of the faith. After several Babi insurrections, two Babis unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Nasir al-Din Shah in 1852. There followed a new reign of terror, during which Kurrat-al-'Ayn was strangled after a long imprisonment. See Kh. S. Ivanov, *Babidskie vostaniia v Irane* (L 1939), for part of the correspondence between the Russian Ambassador Prince Dolgoruky and the St. Petersburg Court concerning the Babi insurrections. Also, Martha Root, *Tahira the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman* (Karachi, 1938); Khlebnikov writes about her in his essay "October on the Neva" ["Oktiabr' na Neve"] .

21. Tsong-kha-pa was a reformer of Tibetan Buddhism; a historical person deified.

22. Izanagi and Izanami literally mean He-who-invites and She-who-invites. In Japanese mythology, they are a pair of the Seven Divine Generations, deities born without parents. They were the last primal pair so born.

23. Monogatori literally means narration. A form of Kabuki dramatic technique, it is used for the narration of event and communication of important matters from one actor to another. The motion, sometimes graceful, sometimes grotesque, is always fantastic, and of the nature of the dance.

24. Perun—see no. 8.
25. Shang-ti in Chinese mythology is the lord of heaven and earth. He was worshipped only by the emperor. Same as T'ien.
26. Maa-Emae (Maani-Emo) in Finnish mythology, is the earth mother.
27. T'ien—see no. 24.
28. Indra in Hindu mythology is the god of the firmament and fertilizing rains. Wielder of the thunderbolt, he has a beard which flashes like lightning; he is the bringer of rain and harvest and bestower of wealth upon his pious followers.
29. Cinteotl (Khlebnikov writes Tsintekuatl') literally means one flower. He is the Toltec Indian maize god and ruler of the fourth hour of the night. He is the mate of Chicomecoatl, the goddess of earth and love.
30. Unkulunkulu literally means he-who-is-beneath. In Zulu belief, he is the progenitor of the human race.
31. Astarta is the great mother in Phoenician mythology. She is the goddess of fertility, water and sexual love.
32. Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) is the celebrated Japanese landscape painter.
33. Prince Sergey Mikhailovich Volkonsky (1858-1937) was a philologist and a theater specialist, closely associated with the Imperial Theater.
34. A realized metaphor of the whole year (from May to April). In a letter to his mother and sister in May, 1921, Khlebnikov writes from Persia that there *mesiats* is called *Ai* (it is not clear whether this refers to the calendar month or the moon). In *Ladimir*, however, he is referring to the month of May, possibly by virtue of etymology from the folk saying "Ai, ai, mesiats mai: i tepel i kholodel." In other poems of Khlebnikov, "ai" is synonymous with "mai," such as "Rus' pevuchaia v mesiatse Ai," and "Zachem v gliadelkakh nezabudki?" "Igrai ovragi" comes from the Slavic folk calendar. According to folk customs, the 14th of Paril is the day of Mar'ia Egipetskaia, and there is the saying: "Mar'ia—zazhgi snega, zaigrai ovrazhki." Also in "Rus' pevuchaia v mesiatse Ai": "Po Batievoi doroge/ Proleteli grachi./ Eto on zaigrai ovragi!" Here "grachi" [rooks, in the crow family] is used as a metaphor for spring; the "grachi" are the heralds of spring, flying in March and April. [The above information was brought to my attention by Alexander Parnis of Kiev.]
35. See Khlebnikov's prose essays, especially "The Proclamation of the Presidents of the Globe" ["Vozzvanie predsedatelei zemnogo shara"] and "The Order of the Presidents of the Globe" ["Prikaz predsedatelei zemnogo shara"] .
36. Khrustelev-Nosar' was a Menshevik who, in 1905, was chairman of the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Afterwards, he became a political adventurer. According to Professor N. Stepanov, this was not known to Khlebnikov.
37. Krasnaia Poliana was the summer home of the Sinyakovs in Khar'kov, where pre-revolutionary Futurists met (such as Khlebnikov, Assev, and Petrovsky).
38. This passage envisions the control of rain, and therefore growth of food, by scientific means. The "sorcerer of flights," the "plowman" of the clouds is the cloud-seeder, who "crossed a cloud with early spring," a genetic metaphor for this type of weather control.
39. Khlebnikov envisioned the use of radio for education. In his "Proposals" ["Predlozhenie"] (1915-1916), he suggests the use of "radio for the broadcast of lectures from the Main University to village students. Any student at the foot of a green hill will receive educational news, and the teacher will be an ear-trumpet of the attentive village. The language of lightning is like the conductor of scientific truth." Also see Khlebnikov's essay "Radio of the Future" ["Radio budushchego"], written in 1921.
40. In "Proposals" Khlebnikov suggests the cultivation "in lakes of edible beings, invisible to the eye, so that every lake would be a cauldron of ready-to-eat, even if uncooked, lake shchi [cabbage soup]. Dining crowds, bathing will be scattered along the shores,—the food of the future."

41. See: Vahan D. Barooshian, *Russian Cubo-Futurism 1910-1930*, (Mouton, 1974), and Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism* (London, 1969), for a detailed history of the Futurists and their discussions on language.

42. The Pechora is a Siberian river which originates in the western slopes of the North Urals and empties into the Barents Sea.

43. In "Proposals" Khlebnikov suggests a new unit of exchange "by means of an exchange of heartbeats. To count out each piece of work by heartbeats—the monetary unit of the future, in which every living creature is equally rich."

44. The manuscript was dated May 22, 1920 by Khlebnikov.

45. N. Stepanov, ed., *Velemir Khlebnikov. Izbrannye stikhotvoernia* (M, 1936), p. 488.

46. They can be recovered from the Fink edition or from the *Sobranie proizvedenii Velemira Khlebnikova*, Vol. I (L 1928).

47. For an analysis of *Ladimir* both thematically and stylistically, see Vladimir Markov's *Longer Poems of Velemir Khlebnikov* (Berkeley, 1962), 146-153.



Pasternak, 1918

# Сестра моя, жизнь.

Helen, thy beauty is to me  
Like those Naxos-banks of yore  
Edg. All. Poe

Твои черты прекраснее тираки  
На Спарте, спрыгивающей со скалы  
Глук. Акелета

Ханс то заморозиле уно  
Бундесрате ина тундере ан  
Бр. Марколенд

Es bräust der Wald, am Himmel ziehn  
Des Sturmes Donnerflüge,  
Da mal' ich in die Wetter heim  
O Mädchen, deine Lüge.  
Nik. Lenau.

Но сѣмь сонъ, понималъ, советъ мѣ одурять  
Стоя въ стѣнѣ, какъ въ морѣ по волнѣ,  
Какъ завидѣвъ за садомъ въ заборной дѣрѣ  
На Камышинѣ пронесшійся поезде.  
Изъ тѣнѣи и одной ночи.

Сестра моя жизнь и сегодня въ разливѣ  
Равноблестя весенний дождель обобсеждь,  
Но люди въ брезговкахъ высоко брызгливы  
И въ жилво жалитъ, какъ змѣи въ оветъ

У старшихъ на это свои есть резоны  
Брезговно, безспорно смѣшонъ твой резонъ,  
Что въ грозу милови глаза и газоны  
И пахней сырѣй резедой горизонтъ,

Что въ макъ, когда поезде въ росписанъ  
Камышинской въ тѣхъ читаетъ въ купѣ,  
Оно грандиознѣй свѣтлого писанья  
И стальныхъ отъ пыли и бурь канатъ

Что только нарвется разлазвившисъ, тормавъ  
На мирныхъ селѣхъ въ заколустившисъ винъ,  
Съ матрацовъ и медитъ, не можли платформъ  
И солнце, садясь, собользнуетъ мнѣ.

И въ третій тѣскувъ, утѣмваеиъ звонокъ  
Сплошнннй извѣненбелъ: жалъю, — не здѣсь.  
Поездъ шторку несетъ обгоравшей ночью  
И рѣшнѣиъ стѣнѣ со ступенекъ къ звѣздѣ.

Мигаю, моргаю, но стѣнѣ гдѣ то сладко  
И въ драмаморганахъ любимая спитъ  
Тѣмъ часомъ какъ сердце тѣща по площадкѣ,  
Вагонными дверцами свѣтлетъ въ стѣнѣ.



*My Sister Is Life*

My sister is life and today in a flood tide  
She splattered on everyone like a spring rain,  
But people with pendants are ever so peevish  
And they bite politely, like snakes in the grass.

Now the older folk have their reasons for this.  
But surely, oh surely your reason's absurd  
For eyes and lawns that are mauve in the storm  
And horizons that smell of wet mignonette.

For reading in May, in a railway compartment,  
A schedule of trains—the Kamishinsky line—\*  
And thinking it grander than Holy Scripture,  
Than coach seats gone black from the storms and the grime.

For the scurrilous brake's unending encounters  
With tranquil muzhiks full of backwater wine;  
From mattresses, glances—"Can this be my station?"—  
And condoling with me, the sun settles down.

And at the third ripple, the bell sails away  
In purest apology: "Sorry, not here."  
A smoldering night billows up through the blind  
And the steppe disappears, from the steps to the star.

Winking and blinking, but somewhere they sleep well  
And like a mirage my beloved's asleep  
Just when my heart, splashing by past the platforms,  
Is scattering railroad-car doors on the steppe.

1917

*Translated by Ephim Fogel*

## *Spring Rainstorm*

It chuckled to a birdcherry, sniffed and drenched  
the lacquered carriages, the shivering trees.  
Under an astonished moon the fiddlers slosh  
to the theater—Citizens, into chains!

Puddles on cobblestones. Like a throat  
choked with tears deep roses burn  
like damp diamonds. Whips of joy  
splash roses, eyelashes, and clouds.

Then the moon molds the chains,  
rustle of dresses, power of rapt lips,  
molds like an epic of plaster,  
molds a bust molded by no one.

In whose heart did the blood speed  
to glory pouring down drawn cheeks?  
There the blood beats: the minister's hand  
plucks aortas and mouths by the bunch.

Not the night, nor the rain, nor the chorus  
erupting: "Hoorah... Kerensky!"  
This is a blind exit to the Forum  
out of yesterday's catacombs.

It's not roses, mouths, nor the roar  
of multitudes thronging at the gate,  
but the tide of rocking European nights  
decked in the pride of our asphalts.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

*The Purpose of Poetry*

It's a tightly filled whistle,  
it's the clinking of jostled ice;  
it is night, frosting the leaf,  
it's the duel of twin nightingales.

It's the soundlessness of sweetpeas,  
it's the tears of a universe in a pod;  
it's a Figaro of music stands and flutes  
pouring like hail on garden plots.

It's all the night finds hard to find  
in the murky deeps of lakes—  
and to carry a star to the orchard  
on open, wet, shivery palms.

It's a mugginess flatter than planks in water,  
alders obscuring the horizon;  
those stars would do well to giggle,  
in this universe—a soundless place.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

*Rain*

She's here with me. Play on,  
flood, rip the dusk with laughter,  
drown, float as an epigraph  
toward a lover like yourself.

Spin a mulberry spindle  
and beat against the windowpane;  
wrap it around and tie it  
to make the darkness deepen.

Night at midday, comb of rain.  
The sopping rubbish—take it!  
Let it spill from every leaf  
into eyes and temples and jasmine.

Hail to the Egyptian dark!  
They trip—only to giggle.  
And then the smell of people—  
bolting out of a thousand hospitals!

And now we run to pluck,  
like the sigh from a hundred guitars,  
our petit Saint Gotard  
washed by the linden fog.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

*An Even More Sultry Dawn*

All morning a dove cooed  
at your window.  
Branches  
sprawled in the gutters  
like wet sleeves.  
Fine rain. Skimpily dressed,  
clouds waded through the dusty market,  
rocking,  
I'm afraid,  
my longing on a market stall.  
I begged them to stop.  
They seemed to stop.  
Gray dawn, like the gossip of convicts,  
like a quarrel in the bushes.

I wished for a time to come  
when beyond your window  
water would roar in the washbasin  
like a melting glacier,  
and bits of your songs,  
and warmth of your sleepy cheeks  
and forehead would pour like ice  
into the hot glass on the dresser.

But the sky, in the mumble  
of marching clouds, under banners,  
did not hear my prayer  
in the powdery silence,  
wet as an army overcoat,  
or the dusty sound of threshing,  
or a noisome quarrel in the bushes.  
I begged them—  
don't torture me.  
I can't sleep!

But it went on drizzling, and clouds  
trudged through the dusty market  
like recruits filing past a farmhouse at dawn,  
trudged not for an hour, not for a century,  
like Austrian prisoners of war,  
like a muffled gasp,  
like a hoarse cry:  
"Sister...  
some... water!"

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

### *At Home*

Heat flutters on seven hills,  
doves strut in sweaty hay.  
A turban slides off the sun:  
time for a fresh towel  
(soaking in the pit of the pail)  
to wrap around your cupola.

In town, the gossip of membranes,  
jumbled flowerbeds and dolls.  
Better stitch the curtains:  
—it walks, marches like a Mason.  
We move through life in a drowse,  
and then a kiss steals our sleep!

Worn out by groans and dust  
the city makes its bed in the street.  
Now for the first time in years  
the steppe is able to breathe.  
No way to exhaust all  
the curses for this heat.  
Stars, posters, bridges—  
go to sleep!

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

*Postscript*

No, I'm not the cause of your grief.  
I didn't deserve to be forgotten by my country.  
The sun burned on drops of ink,  
as on clusters of dusty currants.

Cochineal spread through the blood  
of my thoughts and writings.  
That wormy redness didn't come from me.  
No, I'm not the cause of your grief.

It was evening etched from dust  
that kissed you, choking on ochre pollen.  
It was shadows taking your pulse, it was you  
turning your face towards the fields,  
that burned, swimming on the hinges of gates,  
replete with ashes, dust, and poppies.

It was the whole summer in a blaze  
of pods and labels and sun bleached luggage,  
sealing the wanderers breast with wax,  
setting your hats and dresses on fire.

It was your eyelashes, sticky with sun,  
it was that savage disk butting its horns,  
goring walls, flattening fences.  
It was a carbuncular sunset humming  
in your hair, perishing for half an hour,  
shaking the purple off marigolds and raspberries.  
Not, it wasn't my love, but your loveliness.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

### *A Sultry Night*

It drizzled—but didn't bend  
the grass in the storm's sack.  
Only the dust swallowed pills  
of rain—iron in a quiet powder.

The village was past healing,  
the poppies dazed and deep;  
a red rash inflamed the rye  
and God trudged in fever.

In the orphaned, sleepless,  
damp universal waste,  
groans tore from their posts,  
the whirlwind dug in, abated.

Behind them the squinting drops  
scurried blind. Pale wind and wet  
branches had a falling out at the fence.  
I listened attentively: they quarreled about me!

I wondered if that garrulous garden  
would keep talking until eternity.  
I'm still invisible to the street,  
blind to the prattle of bushes and shutters.  
Once they spot me, no way out:  
they'll talk, talk, talk me to death!

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

*English Lessons*

When it was Desdemona's time to sing—  
and so little life was left for her,  
she wept, not over love, her star,  
but over willow, weeping willow.

When it was Desdemona's time to sing—  
and she raised her voice courageously  
about the black day, her blacker demon  
prepared a psalm of weeping streams.

When it was Ophelia's time to sing—  
and so little life was left for her,  
the dryness of her soul was swept away  
like straws from haystacks in a storm.

When it was Ophelia's time to sing—  
tired of the bitter taste of dreams,  
onto which trophies did she clutch?  
A bouquet of willows and bloodwort.

They shed what was left of their passion,  
and entered, hearts no longer beating,  
the pool of the universe, to sacrifice  
their figures, deafen them with constellations.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

*Balashov*

On working days the coppersmith  
tinned, hammered, spliced,  
and from time to time shared a share  
of oil with the fire.

Anyway, your chest was tight,  
and skies chanted: "yours, yours."  
Anyway, they flowed through heat,  
into train cars, over the luggage.



The chorale scattered in the rain,  
over a grave, into the caps of Molokans;  
then pine groves lifted it  
toward departing clouds.

Anyway, large as a sun,  
Balashov rose and set,  
opening, in early autumn days,  
the grief of an old wound.

Wetted with June's azure  
the marketplace turned blue and trembled.  
The idiot-saint-amputee  
imitated a saw through his nose.

My friend, you ask who decides  
that the babble of this idiot should burn?  
It is in the nature of lindens and stones,  
it is in the nature of summer, to burn.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

### *Don't Touch*

"Don't touch. Wet paint." the sign said.  
But soul paid it no mind,  
now memory's stained by calves and cheeks  
and hands and lips and eyes.

More than for any loss or gain  
I loved you because  
you caused this white and yellow world  
to turn a whiter white.

My friend, I swear that this dust,  
will be whiter than  
fever, lampshades, or the white  
bandage on a brow.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

## *Diseases of Earth*

Encore! When giggles explode  
with mother of pearl, bacterial blood,  
with wet rumblings, streptococcus clouds,  
the knives will flash at lightnings.

Then—enough. Immovable titans  
will choke in the black vaults of day.  
And the tetanus will scorch the shadows,  
and the snakes recoil in torpor.

The flood has come. Flitter of watery fear,  
wind, shards of vicious spitting.  
From where? From blizzards, fields,  
from Kliazma, or some sardonic pine.

Are these verses so fermented  
even thunder is struck by their pain?  
It must have been in delirium  
when it consented to be the earth.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

## *Our Thunderstorm*

The storm signed the lilac like a priest  
and veiled the eyes and clouds  
with sacrificial smoke. Go straighten  
the ant's sprained leg with your lips.

Peeling of toppled pails.  
O what greed!—is not the sky enough?!  
A hundred hearts beat in a ditch.  
The storm signed the lilac like a priest.

Enamel meadow. The azure earth  
scraped out by cold and ice.  
But even finches won't rush to shake  
that crystal ecstasy from the soul.

They drink the storm at barrels,  
from sweet jars of plenty,  
and clover's a deep ruddy brown  
like the claret strokes of painters.

Mosquitoes stick to raspberries,  
planting their malaria probiscus  
in this very spot, where summer  
basks in the aura of roses.

They inject and abscess through the blouse,  
and pirouette like a red ballerina.  
They jab their stinger of mischief  
where blood clots like wet leaves.

O believe in my game, and believe  
that pounding migraine at your heels!  
It is the destiny of day's wrath to burn  
wildly in the bark of cherry trees.

Did you believe? Now lean your cheek  
close to mine, closer, closer still,  
and in the blaze of your holy summer  
I will breathe it into a flame.

I will not hide it from you:  
you hide your lips in the snow of jasmine.  
I feel that snow on my lips too:  
it melts on mine in sleep.

Where can I spend my joy?  
In a carafe, in poems  
whose lips are parched  
from poisons on written leaves?

They wage war with the alphabet,  
they burn in the blushes of your cheeks.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*

To love, to go in endless thunder,  
to stamp out anguish, wear no shoes,  
to spook hedgehogs, to pay good  
for evil to cranberries in cobwebs.

To drink from branches that whip your face,  
snap back and slash the azure:  
"So, an echo!" And at the end  
to lose your way in a thicket of kisses.

And ramble everywhere with turnips.  
To know at sunset that the sun  
is older than those stars and carts,  
older than Margarita and the innkeeper.

To lose your tongue like a subscription  
to a storm of tears in Valkyries eyes,  
to grow as numb as the sweltering sky,  
to drown the forest masts in ether.

Stretched out in thorns, you rake up  
the residue of years like pinecones.  
On the highway; sign of an Inn;  
winter light; frozen; eating fish.

Clambered down to sing this tune:  
"Old and gray, I walked and fell,  
the town was choked with weeds  
washed by the tears of soldiers' wives.

In the shadow of a moonless barn,  
in the flames of flagons and groceries,  
perhaps even the old husk of a man  
will perish in his time."

And so I sang, sang and died,  
died and circled back to her  
embraces like a boomerang, and—  
as I recall—said goodbye.

*Translated by Mark Rudman and Bohdan Boychuk*



Khlebnikov, G. Kuzmin and S. Dolinsky (publishers of "A Slap in the Face"), Mayakovsky.



## A SLAP IN THE FACE OF PUBLIC TASTE

To those who read—our New First Unexpected.

*We* alone are the *face of our Time*. The horn of time blows through us in the art of words.

The past constricts. The Academy and Pushkin are less intelligible than hieroglyphics.

Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc., etc., must be thrown overboard from the Ship of Modernity.

He who does not forget his *first* love will not recognize his last.

But who will be so gullible as to turn his last Love to the perfumed lechery of a Balmont? Will he find a reflection of today's virile soul there?

Who will be so cowardly as not to dare to tear the paper armor from warrior Bryusov's black tuxedo? Will he find the dawn of an unknown beauty there?

Wash your hands which have touched the filthy slime of the books written by countless Leonid Andreevs.

All those Maxim Gorkys, Kuprins, Bloks, Sologubs, Remizovs, Averchenkos, Chornys, Kuzmins, Bunins, etc., etc.—need only villas on a river. That's the way fate rewards tailors.

From the height of skyscrapers we look at their insignificance!...

We decree that the following *rights* of poets be respected:

1. To enlarge the *scope* of the poet's vocabulary with arbitrary and derivative words.
2. To feel insuperable hatred for the language that existed before them.
3. To tear with horror from our proud foreheads the wreath of cheap fame which you have made from bathhouse switches.
4. To stand on the rock of the word "we" amid the sea of catcalls and outrage.

And if *for the time being* the filthy marks of your "common sense" and "good taste" remain in our lines, nevertheless, *for the first time* the lightning flashes of the New Future Beauty of the Self-sufficient Word are already on them.

Moscow, December 1912

D. Burlyuk, Alexander Kruchenykh  
V. Mayakovsky, Viktor Khlebnikov



Stills from *Enchained in Film* with Mayakovsky and Lily Brik. (Courtesy of Lily Brik and Helen Segall)



Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the name of art of the future, Futurists' art, we have started the grand destruction of all areas of beauty. This will not stop—no, it cannot stop at the theater door.

Our hatred for yesterday's art, for the neurasthenia cultivated by paint, verse, and footlight and by an unproven necessity to reveal even the most minute experience of people who are withdrawing from life, compels me to propose as evidence of the inevitability of accepting our ideas, not lyrical pathos, but an exact science, that is the study of the interrelation between art and life.

My contempt for existing "art journals," such as *Apollo (Apollon)*<sup>2</sup> and *Masks (Masky)*,<sup>3</sup> where confused foreign terms swim around like grease spots on a gray background of senselessness, forces me to feel real pleasure that my address is printed in a technical cinema journal.

Today I pose two questions:

- 1) Is contemporary theater art?
- 2) Can contemporary theater survive the competition of cinema?

Having fed its machines with thousands of horsepower, the city for the first time made it possible to satisfy the material needs of the world employing only six to seven hours of daily labor. Now the intensity and tension of contemporary life have stimulated a colossal necessity for the kind of free play of cognitive aptitude which is art.

This explains the intense interest today's man has for art.

It is true that the division of labor brought to life a separate group of workers of beauty; if the artist, after abandoning, for example, the scrupulous copying of "the charms of drunken schoolmistresses," turns to broad democratic art, he must give society an answer to the question: under what circumstances does his labor cease to be individually essential and become socially useful?

Having declared the dictatorship of the eye, the artist has the right to exist. Having established color, line and form as self-sufficient values, painting found its eternal path to development. Those who have discovered that the word, its outline and its phonic aspect determine the flourishing of poetry, have the right to exist. These are the poets who have found the path to the eternal bloom of poetry.

Does the theater, which until our arrival served only as an artificial cloak for all types of art, have the right to independent existence under the garland of special art?

Contemporary art is spectacular, but its decor is a product of the

decorative work of an artist, but it is an artist who had forgotten his own freedom and has stooped to a utilitarian view of art.

As a result of this point of view, the theater may appear only as an uncouth oppressor of art.

The second component of theater is "The Word." But there too, the appearance of the esthetic element is conditioned not by the internal development of the word itself, but by the application of that word as a means of expressing moral or political ideas which are incidental to art.<sup>4</sup>

And here too, contemporary theater appears only as an oppressor of the word and the poet.

This means, that before our advent, theater did not exist as an independent art. But is it possible to find, in history at least, some kind of trace which would make its affirmation possible? Of course, yes!

Shakespearean theater did not have decoration. Ignorant critics explained this as unfamiliarity with decorative art. But wasn't that period a time of the greatest development of realism in painting? The Oberammergau theater,<sup>5</sup> you know, does not bind words with chains of inscribed lines.

All these phenomena can be explained only as the premonition of the special art of the actor, where the intonation of a word which does not even have a specific meaning, and where movements of the human body which are invented but free in their rhythm, express the greatest inner feelings.

This shall be the new free art of the actor.

In the present, however, while transmitting the photographic depiction of life, the theater falls into the following contradiction: The art of an actor, which is in essence dynamic, is being enslaved with the dead background of decoration. This glaring contradiction is destroyed by the cinema which harmoniously records movements of the present.

Theater has brought itself to the brink of destruction and must bequeath its legacy to the cinema. The cinema, after making the naive realism and artistry of Chekhov and Gorky a branch of industry, will open the way to the theater of the future and the unfettered art of the actor.

1913

*Translated by Helen Segall*

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#### NOTES

1. This article was published in the movie periodical *Kine-zhurnal* (M. July 27, 1913).

2. *Apollon* was a monthly Petersburg journal devoted to art and literature.

3. *Masky* was a Moscow journal devoted to the problems of the theater.

4. Thus, for example, the supposed flourishing of the theater during the last ten to fifteen years (The [Moscow] Art Theater) can be explained only by the temporary rise of the social [level, e.g.] ([Gorky's *The Lower Depths* and [Ibsen's] *Peer Gynt*), because plays with petty ideas live for a few hours and then die for the repertory (The author's note).

5. Oberammergau, a village in Bavaria, famous for the performance of a Passion Play every tenth year. The dramatic representation of the sufferings of Christ arose from a vow made by the inhabitants in 1633, in hope of staying a plague that was then raging.







## vladimir mayakovsky / WE ALSO WANT MEAT!<sup>1</sup>

Soldiers, I envy you!

You have it good!

Here on a shabby wall are the scraps of human brains, the imprint of shrapnel's five fingers. How clever that hundreds of cut off human heads have been affixed to a stupid field.

Yes, yes, yes, it's more interesting for you!

You don't need to think that you owe Pushkin twenty kopecks and why does Yablonovsky<sup>2</sup> write articles.

However, that's something else!

Poems, poems, there's a milliard of poems (that's yesterday).

In the hallway two milliards of poet's feet joyfully began to scuff, but...

Mayakovsky entered—

And why is it that many fearfully hide the sexless children of thin-juiced muses?

Let's make ourselves understood.

They say that I am a Futurist?

What is a Futurist? I don't know. I never heard of one. They do not exist.

"Mademoiselle Critique" told you about them. I'll show her!

You know, there is a good brand of rubbers called "Triangle."

All the same, not one critic will start wearing those rubbers.

He'll be scared of the name.

A rubber, he'll explain, should be longishly-oval and on this one it says "Triangle." It'll pinch the foot.

What's a Futurist—a brand name, just like "Triangle." Under this brand name appeared (in poetry readings) the one who embroidered:

**Yesterday as I was reading  
Turgenev enchanted me anew**

**Vchera chitala ia, Turgenev  
Menia opiat' zacharoval,<sup>3</sup>**

as well as those screechings like Khlysts<sup>4</sup> at their rites:

**Dyr, bul, shchil...<sup>5</sup>**

And even the trade name "Futurists" is not ours. Our first books: *A Trap for Judges (Sadok sudei)*, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste (Po-shchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu)*, *Prayer-book of the Three (Trebnik*

*troikh*)<sup>6</sup> we called simply, collections of a literary group.

It is the newspapers who christened us "Futurists." However, there's no need to a swear at one another. It's funny! If Vavila were to shout "Why am I not Evgeny?" what difference would it make?

For us—the young poets—Futurism is the toreador's red cloak, it is needed only for the bulls (poor bulls!—I compared them to the critics).

I have never been to Spain, but I think that it would not occur to any toreador to wave a red cloak in front of a friend who was wishing him good morning. Nor is there any point in our nailing a plaque on the good-natured face of some village bard.

In all our manifestoes, in a prominent place on our banner was:

"All creativity is free."

Come to us!

We shall receive each of you with dignity. Only, do not let Apukhtin's fat figure loom between your eyes and life. Only keep your language pure and uneaten up by the phrases of the "venerables."

Today's poetry—is the poetry of strife.

Each word must, like a soldier in the army, be made of meat that is healthy, of meat that is red!

Those who have it—join us!

Never mind that we used to be unjust.

When you tear along in a car through hundreds of persecuting enemies, there's no point in sentimentalizing: "Oh, a chicken was crushed under the wheels."

Our cruelty has given us strength, so that without having once given into life, we carry our banner:

The freedom to create words and to create from words.

Hatred for the language which existed before us.

[The strength] to reject with indignation the wreath of cheap glory made from bathhouse besoms.

[The strength] to stand on the clod of the word WE in a sea of whistles and indignation.<sup>7</sup>

1914

*Translated by Helen Segall*

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#### NOTES

1. This article was first published in the newspaper *Nov'*, No. 116 (Moscow, November 16, 1914).

2. Iablonskii, S. (pseudonym of Sergei Viktorovich Potresov), a journalist and feuilletonist. In 1914 he wrote for the newspaper *Russkoe Slovo*.



3. From a poem by Igor Severianin, "A Letter from a Country Estate" ("Pis'mo iz usad'by").

4. "Khlysts"—A Russian religious sect known for its fanaticism.

5. From A. Kruchenykh's transsense poem published in the Futurist manifesto *The Word as Such (Slovo kak takovoe)*.

6. "Trebnik"—A prayer-book containing order of service of all ceremonies and rites except the Eucharist and the ordination of priests.

7. The last four paragraphs are modified quotations from *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste (Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu)*, signed by Mayakovsky, Burliuk, Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov.

## vladimir mayakovsky / A DROP OF TAR<sup>1</sup>

*"A speech to be presented on the first suitable occasion"*

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This year is a year of deaths: almost everyday the newspapers weep with loud sorrow about someone venerable who has departed into the better world before his time. Everyday with a drawn out wail, the brevier cries for the multitude of names slaughtered by Mars. How noble and monastically severe are the newspaper published today. They are wearing the black mourning garments of funeral announcements and their eyes shine with the crystal tear of an obituary. This is why it is somehow particularly unpleasant to see that this very same press, which has been ennobled by grief, aroused such obscene glee concerning the death of one very close to me.

When the critics, harnessed in pairs, began to drag Futurism's coffin along the filthy road, the road of the printed word, the newspapers were blaring for weeks: "Well, well, well! That's right where it belongs! Drag it, drag it! It's high time!" "How did it die? Futurism died? Impossible?!"

Yes, it died.

It's been a year since this fiery-worded being, which barely maneuvered between truth, beauty, and plot, was replaced on the stages of lecture halls by the most boring Kogan-Aikhental'd-like<sup>2</sup> old men. For a year now lecture halls have been filled with the most boring logic and attempts to prove sparrow-like truths instead of the gay crashing of decanters on empty heads.

Gentlemen: Could it be that you are not sorry for this unbalanced big fellow with red haired forelocks, slightly foolish, slightly uncouth, but always, oh! always daring and burning. But how can you understand youth? The young who value us will not return from the field of abuse for a long time. You, on the other hand, who have remained here to work peacefully in newspaper and other offices, you are either suffering from rickets, and incapable of carrying arms, or are old bags, stuffed with wrinkles and gray hair, whose job is to contemplate the most serene transition into the other world, rather than to think about the fate of Russian Art.

But, you know, I too am not very sorry for the deceased, though, it is true, for different reasons.

Revive in your memory the first gala debut of Russian Futurism, celebrated by such a ringing "slap in the face of public taste."<sup>3</sup> As a result of this spirited scuffle, three blows, headed by the three calls of our manifesto, have become particularly memorable:

1. Crush the canonic frost which transforms inspiration into ice.
2. Destroy the old language which is too impotent to keep up with life's gallop.
3. Throw the old greats overboard from the ship of contemporaneity.<sup>4</sup>

As you can see, there is not a single building, not a single comfortable corner, [only] destruction and anarchy. This is what the Philistines were laughing at as if it were the eccentricity of the insane. This turned out to be "devilish intuition" embodied in the stormy present. War, while broadening the borders of states and of the brain, forces one to penetrate the boundaries of yesterday's unknown.

Artist! How can you capture rushing cavalry with a delicate net of contours. Repin!<sup>5</sup> Samokish!<sup>6</sup> Take away the buckets, he'll spill the paint.

Poet! Do not seat a mighty battle into a rocking-chair of iambs and trochees. It'll smash the whole rocking-chair!

The smashing of words, is word innovation! There are so many new ones Petrograd heads the list, and [what about] conductress! Die, Severianin!<sup>7</sup> Why should Futurists shout about the oblivion of old literature? Who will be able to hear the trill of the mandoline-player Bryusov<sup>8</sup> through the Cossacks whoop? Today all are Futurists. The people are Futurists. *Futurism SEIZED*<sup>9</sup> *Russia in a mortal grip.* Not seeing Futurism in front of you, and not knowing how to look into yourself, you began to scream about its death. Yes! Futurism as a special group died, but it has spread in all of you like a flood.

Since Futurism is dead as an idea of the chosen few, we do not need it. The first part of our program—destruction—we consider completed. So don't be surprised if today you should see an architect's blueprint in our hands instead of a jester's rattle. And the voice of Futurism which yesterday was still tender with sentimental dreaminess, will today cast itself into the bronze of a sermon.

1915

Translated by Helen Segall

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#### NOTES

1. Originally published in the Futurist collection *Seized (Vzial)* (Petrograd, 1915). The title alludes to the Russian saying: "A spoonful of tar in a barrel of honey [spoils the batch]."

2. Mayakovsky creates a neologism from the names of two contemporary literary critics: Petr Semenovich Kogan (1872-1932) and Yuly Isaevich Aikhenval'd (1872-1928).

3. Title of the Futurist manifesto *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste (Poshchichina obshchestvennomu vkusu)*, signed by Mayakovsky, Burlyuk, Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov.

4. This is a paraphrase from *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*.

5. Repin, Iliia Efimovich (1844-1930), painter.

6. Samokish, Nikolai Semenovich (1860-1944) painter.

7. Severianin, Igor (pseudonym of Igor Vasilevich Lotarev, 1887-1942), poet.
8. Briusov, Valerii Iakovlevich (1873-1924), leading Symbolist poet.
9. *VZIAL* - (SEIZED) - Title of the Futurist collection in which this article was published.

I

In a workers' auditorium I shall abstain from polemical attacks and merely attempt to give some explanation. The noble pathos with which some of our comrades have spoken makes no sense. One must approach the issue soberly. First I wish to turn my comrades' attention to their distinctive slogan "I don't understand." Let these comrades try to poke their noses into any other area of knowledge. The only answer one can give them is, "Learn!"

The Futurists' work, as with any poetic work, must be viewed with perspective. If Futurism were approached in this way, then it would become clear that in contemporary literature there are no other movements which are as significant as Futurism. Futurists were the first to raise the questions demanded by the present. It is true, that the Futurists vary in their degree of clarity: simply, there is the clear and the not so clear. But the tasks are not alike either: the propaganda factor, daily existence, realization of the common factor, and so forth—are various gradations. This must also be understood. And as far as those kinds of comrades, who do not understand exactly what tasks Futurism assigns itself and how it solves them, are concerned, only one kind of advice is possible: unite as a union of nonunderstanders.

They said that in my poem<sup>2</sup> one could not grasp a general idea. First of all, I read only fragments, nevertheless, even in those fragments there is a key question, a basic core—daily existence. This daily existence, which has changed little, this daily existence which is now our most vicious enemy, transforms us into Philistines.

My poems were called "hewed prose." Those who have described my poems in this way, apparently have a definite notion of what poems should be. Their model is apparently old Classical poetry.

II

Russian and Italian Futurism have both similar and dissimilar features. Russian Futurism sets as its tasks:

- 1) Formal treatment of material.
- 2) Application of this material to practical needs. It is in the area of formal methods that the similarity between Italian and Russian Futurism exists. For example, both the Tula and foreign Croesus factories, manufacture

armaments, however, the aim of the armaments' application is different. The existing difference is in the aims.

We are sticking with the name of Futurism because for many this word is the flag to which they can rally. (Of course, for many this word can also be a scarecrow.) When our understanding [of the term] becomes the masses' understanding, then we will renounce the term.

It is necessary to call attention to the fact that for us Futurism is a generic name. Our private name is—Comfuts (Communists-Futurists). Ideologically, we have nothing in common with Italian Futurism. The common [ground] exists merely in the formal treatment of material.

### III

In contrast to you and your group, comrade Rodov,<sup>3</sup> we do not produce for eternity, we are not metaphysicians. Since when do we have to restrict ourselves with some kind of limits? All that Marxism provides is the approach, the method. On the basis of this method our activity varies. Dialectical principle is its basis.

You say, that we lack content, and yet from one of our poems you make fifty of your own. The proletarian writers are taking our position. Both we and they are learning from life.

*Translated by Helen Segall*

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### NOTES

1. This address was delivered on the 3rd of April, 1923.

2. Mayakovsky refers here to *Pro eto* (*About This*).

3. S. A. Rodov (b. 1893), poet and literary critic. Between 1923 and 1925 he was a manager of the periodical *Na postu*.

The Futurists are dead. There are no more Futurists: there are Presentists.<sup>1</sup> It is true that they still call themselves Futurists, and that a "Futurist Gazette" was recently published in Moscow, but this is nothing more than the last swing of momentum. The same momentum which forced the bolsheviks to steal the venerable name of socialists and democrats for such a long time, until having such a name became absolutely indecent for them. Most likely, the Futurists will soon convene a Futuro-Congress of Futuro-Soviets and announce: "Henceforth we are Presentists. Indeed, from the newspapers of the former Futurists it is indisputably clear: for them *futurum* has become *praesens*, the future—the present; their beautiful "Somewhere-out-there" has been found, and it is our present, mighty, glorious, noble Republic of Soviets. Indeed, it is now in particular that the "days of freedom for all," the "sunny days of freedom" (an article in "Proletarian Art") have arrived. Now in particular it is clear to everyone: "the joyous light of freedom has spread everywhere" ("Address to Young Artists" by Burlyuk). Now in particular we have at long last lived to see that happy time, when

Our valiant  
Life, like an ocean's wing,  
Has spread simply-miraculously-very simply.  
(*"Sten'ka Razin,"* V. Kamensky)

And truly: Does not everything take place very simply in the Somewhere-out-there discovered by the Presentists? So good-naturedly and simply, as people do swatting at mosquitoes; so good-naturedly and simply, pulling chunks out of Russia as they would from a free *pirog*. If only somewhere, even in a dog house, there would remain that happy, free, Somewhere-out-there.

Until the Futurists became Presentists, one could admire them as the Don Quixotes of literature: if Don Quixote happened to be funny—his funniness was beautiful. That mop-headed quality of theirs, their recalcitrance, and their very absurdity were all fine: all of this was stormy youth and genuine rebellion.

But that was the Futurists. The Presentists, however, long to wear on their forehead a formal stamp: "Comrade-pioneers of proletarian art, pick up and try at least two books: Mayakovsky's "War and Peace" and Kaminsky's "Sten'ka Razin," and we are convinced that you will command the People's Commissar Soviet to publish millions of copies of these public

books in the name of the triumph of proletarian art."

The Futurists in their "Manifesto" demand the "destruction of privileges and control in the area of art." But in this same "Manifesto" the Presentists in Red Guard fashion are checking the trustworthiness of the authors: "As before, the theaters are staging 'Judean' and other 'Kings' [the works of the Romanov's]." Henceforth, only the poorest peasants have the privilege of writing and staging plays: right? And only from the courtly life of the—people's commissars?

The presentists, employing the style of the "Red Gazette" and the Red-Gazetteered Blok, cry out in their "Manifesto": "October has thrown the bomb of Socialist Revolution beneath the feet of capital. Far off on the horizon appear the fat asses of the fleeing factory owners."

The futurists would not hesitate to complete this picture with the figures of the people's commissars, longing to shake hands with these fat asses (see Lunacharsky's interview). And the futurists would know that a fat ass is not the face of just the "fleeing factory owners," but that a fat ass is the face of every proprietor, for man does not beautify his environment, but environment beautifies and remakes the man.<sup>2</sup>

The futurists, of course, would give this "face" a wonderfully contemptuous kick, but the Presentists would kow-tow to the proprietors: "You who have taken up Russia's heritage, who will become (as I believe) the proprietors of the whole world, of you I ask this question: With what fantastic buildings will you cover the sites of yesterday's fires?.. You realize, for our necks, for the necks of the Goliaths of labor, there are no suitable sizes in the garderobe of bourgeois collars" ("An Open Letter," Mayakovsky).

For the Futurists, truly, there were not suitable collars, and only for the sake of constant rebellion against traditional clothes did they wear the yellow jackets of uniforms and words. The Presentists chose the cast-off clothes of the "poorest peasantry," dressing up in decrees and printing "Decree No. 1 about the democratization of art: dirty literature and indecent art." The Futurists created style, the Presentists follow style. With the Futurists, everything was their own; with the Presentists, it was already an imitation of the government samples, and, like every imitation, their decess could not, of course, surpass the divine, charming stupidity of the originals.

And was it worth it for the Futurists (today's Presentists) to take part in this competition? Indeed, the Futurists had Mayakovsky, but this was a very talented one, who created his own unique, weighty, coarse poetic music, a parallel to the music of Prokofiev's "Scythian Suite" (see Mayakovsky's "Our March" in the newspaper *Futurists Gazette*). The Futurists had quite a vernal, spontaneous person with V. Kamensky, in his "Kolibaiki" and his "Zemlyanka." The Futurists were always unique, and this was their greatest strength. Why in the world do the Presentists want to be like the thousands of others? The Futurists ran as a crowd; why in the world do the Presentists



run behind the crowd? So our lives pass so quickly that the Futurists have already grown old, already grown tired of being unique, already become impotent in rebellion and are rotting with the senile passion of the "urtsing" to the embraces of Lunarcharsky? Are the Futurists sharing the fate of the Russian Scythians who have begun to live a peaceful, sedate life? Is it really flattering for the Futurists to drink from one cup with the old man they have met, Heironym Yasonsky? Do the Presentists really need to remember Burlyuk's lines ("My Friends"):

It is not you, perennial toadies,  
Who challenge the world to quarrel.

*Translated by Joe Denny*

["Delo Naroda" No. 9, March 31, 1918, p. 4  
signed *Mikh. Platonov*]

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#### NOTES

1. In translation: *futurists* = those who will be, *presentists* = those who are [The Russian here is *futuristy - budushchniki*, *presentisty - nastoiashchniki*. Trans.]

2. A twist is given to the Russian proverb: "environment does not beautify the man, but man his environment."

gary kern / EVGENY ZAMYATIN'S "THE MODERN RUSSIAN  
THEATER"

This work was first read as a lecture (in Russian) in Prague on December 20, 1931, a month after Zamyatin left Russia. At that time it was reviewed in Prague and in Russia and stirred up considerable controversy. Written up as an essay, the work was published in German, French and Serbo-Croatian translations in 1932 (see Alex Shane, *The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin*, 82-89). The Russian text has not been located.

The present text is based on a typed English manuscript with numerous revisions in Zamyatin's own hand. The English of this manuscript is fluent, but riddled with problems—Russian word order, Germanic transliterations, British spellings, and errors in grammar. In preparing the manuscript for publication, therefore, I was faced with this choice: either reproduce the author's text and satisfy the archivist, or make the obvious corrections and interest the general reader of Russian literature. I took the second approach, reasoning that the archivist could go to the archive to learn about Zamyatin's English. For the general reader, then, this is a "reading version" of the manuscript. All the changes I made were minor (mostly word order and verb tense), and in no case was the meaning altered. I have also added some notes.

I wish to thank Alex Shane, who provided bibliographic information; Nina Berberova, who directed my attention to the manuscript; and the Princeton University Library, which granted permission to use the manuscript.

Moscow... A strange city, entirely unlike any European capital. America growing through the ancient walls of the Kremlin, the geometrical Lenin mausoleum next to the multi-colored Asiatic Saint Basil, a moth-eaten droshky next to the newest Hispano-Suisa, both stopping at the command of a policeman's white stick, the policeman wearing European white gloves and having an obviously Mongolian face with high cheekbones and narrow eyes; large shop windows displaying caviar and sturgeon and on the opposite side of the street a long queue of people waiting to buy herring or grain...

But on entering the Hotel Metropole on Theater Square, all this is left behind and one finds oneself in a comfortable and respectable European atmosphere: this is a hotel for foreigners only, this is "abroad," the "chervonets" is not accepted here, one must pay with foreign currency.

One summer evening in 1931, as I was dining there with the well-known American film producer Cecil B. de Mille, our talk drifted to these astonishing Moscow contrasts—and then, of course, to the theater.

"Your theater," said de Mille, "is now, of course, the most interesting one in Europe and America. Your actors and producers are the best in the whole world, but..."

Let this "but" remain for the time being in the wings of our article. I mention this remark of an American producer about the Russian theater in order not to be in the uncomfortable position of a man who praises what is his own.

Yet I believe I could just as easily have cited any of the readers of this article, for who in the most cultured circles in Europe has not seen the Russian theater, or at least has not read enthusiastic reviews about it? Who does not know that names of Stanislavsky, Diaghilev, Meyerhold, Anna Pavlova, Chaliapin, Mikhail Chekhov, Kachalov? And if someone decided to arrange the Olympics of the World Theater, the majority would certainly vote for the Russian theater. History, I think, has already counted these votes, and in today's world competition the Russian theater emerges the winner.

There is a saying: "The winner is not judged." But this saying, like so many others, should have been turned the other way round a long time ago. It ought to be said: "Only the winner should be judged." The winner can hear the truth—and can bear to hear it, which is not so easy. The theater—I mean the genuine one—is definitely the result of COLLECTIVE work, a creative melting of three fundamental elements: the playwright, the producer and the actor.

The most fundamental difference between the Russian and the modern European theater, and the secret of the Russian theater's success, lies in the fact that its foremost leaders understood (I would rather say, felt) this collective

principle and carried it out in practice. Their collective buildings are of very different, very dissimilar styles. But the important thing is that each of the foremost Russian theaters has a clearly expressed countenance, has its own focus, where all the rays converge as in a burning glass and thus obtain the power to set fire to the spectators. In no Russian theater of any importance today can one see something that is happening in many theaters in Berlin and Paris, and is considered a most usual procedure there, namely the changing of the cast for each new play. At one time this was as impossible for the Meiningen Theater as it is now for the Stanislavsky, the Tairov, or the Meyerhold.

The tendency of the European theater to rely on the talent and art of one or various individual actors is its chief weakness, while the tendency of the Russian theater to rely on a permanent ensemble of actors, who are united by a single school, is its greatest strength.

After the Revolution in Russia, acting schools and studios sprang up like mushrooms after the rain. Especially in Leningrad: there were the theatrical schools of the militia, the firemen, the sailors, the students, the clerks of different commissariats... But all these studios disappeared as quickly as the mushrooms. Only a few serious theatrical schools continued, such as the Institute of Scenic Art (ISI) in Leningrad, the same Institute in Moscow and Kharkov. But even these schools produce no more than the raw materials for the real actors' schools, which some of the Russian theaters are now. The existence of such schools guarantees the long life of the theater, for it makes the theater independent of individual masters, it secures the succession of the actor's art.

In this respect, Stanislavsky's school—the Moscow Art Theater ("the First MKhAT")—is most typical. At one time it seemed that this theater owed its success to a happy chance, which united so many first-class actors in one group. But in the last few years the old masters have gradually left the scene, and not because their talent is on the wane, but because this talent no longer finds suitable material in the new plays of the revolutionary repertory. When, for instance, the splendid Kachalov, with his mild gestures, his velvety voice, appears on the stage playing the part of a muzhik, a "red partisan" (in Ivanov's play *The Armored Train*), one is reminded of an Arabian steed harnessed to a cart loaded with timber. The Arabian steed, of course, can draw the cart, but it is not the most pleasant sight. Some of the Art Theater's other old "stars" found themselves in the same position as Kachalov, so bye and bye they disappeared from the playbill skies, and it seemed as if the twilight of the theater were near.

Nothing of the sort happened. The school, the collective spirit of the theater had done its work: new stars rose in the place of old ones. Among his young pupils Stanislavsky found actors of great talent quite worthy of taking the place of the old masters (young actors like Yanshchin, Khmelyov, Livanov). And besides this, the former studios of Stanislavsky's theater had already grown strong roots by this time, and these studios quickly became independent first-rate theaters like the Second Moscow Art Theater ("the Second MKhAT") and

“Vakhtangov’s Theater.”

The history of the Second Art Theater is an interesting example of what I have said above about the way the work of actors is organized in Russia. One of the founders of this young theater and later its manager was Mikhail Chekhov (the nephew of the famous writer).<sup>1</sup> In Moscow during the last few years before he left Russia, he was indeed the god of the theatergoing public, and the public was not mistaken in its choice: Chekhov is in fact the greatest of contemporary Russian actors. In order to be a genius an actor must be, so to speak, a woman: he must be able to give himself completely to his part. This is what Chekhov did. On the stage he did not exist as a man who firmly, quite manlike, asserts himself. On the stage there was either Khlestakov in Gogol’s *The Inspector General*, or Hamlet, or the comical Fraser in Berger’s *Sin Flood*,<sup>2</sup> or the touching old Kaleb in *The Cricket on the Hearth* based on Dicken’s story,<sup>3</sup> and everyone of these characters was absolutely unlike the other. But Mikhail Chekhov was not only the leading actor, he was the heart of the theater. And when he left Russia several years ago and stayed abroad to work, it seemed that the pulse of his theater would stop beating and that the theater would die of artistic anemia. But the wonderful regenerating capacity of a well-organized collective body helped in this case as well. Although not all at once. The Second Art Theater got over the loss, it did not perish, and it continues to occupy one of the leading positions in Moscow.

An even more demonstrative case is that of two opera houses—the “Mariinsky” in Leningrad and “The Bolshoi Opera” in Moscow. These two theaters, which up to 1917 were “Imperial” ones, lost their theatrical Emperor Chaliapin, but they had the strength to maintain their former high artistic level. This applies to the ballet casts of these theaters as well.

To resume, I should say that in the modern Russian theater “the auto-crazy” of separate great actors has been replaced by the “republic of actors,” and in most cases the theaters have gained because of it. I shall mention only two exceptions: “The Maly Theater” in Moscow and the “Alexandrinsky” in Leningrad. These two well-known dramatic theaters, both formerly “Imperial” also, had very good casts which depended not so much on unity as on separate brilliant units, and because of this they have now lost their former significance and become theaters of the eclectic type.

\* \* \*

The “republic of actors” certainly could not exist without a “president” who writes and directs them by a single artistic will, that is to say without a producer.

There are many capable and talented producers now in Russia, but the mathematics of art are paradoxical: the sum of these many producers is equal to two: Stanislavsky plus Meyerhold. Indeed, the work of these two men determines the new era of the Russian Theater, and these two well-known names

represent two opposite poles to which all the other producers' lines converge. It now seems impossible, but as a matter of fact there was a time when these two opposite poles, Stanislavsky and Meyerhold, met at one point. There was a time (before the war) when Meyerhold was an actor in Stanislavsky's theater... Still, did not Luther spring from the Catholic Church in order to become its most irreconcilable enemy? Thus Meyerhold came out of Stanislavsky's theater in order to become its artistic antagonist and to build his theatrical work on principles quite opposite to Stanislavsky's. Meyerhold, the illegitimate son of Stanislavsky, is a legitimate grandson of Gozzi, his theater is undoubtedly a theater of masks, it is above all a game, a game with the spectators, based on the unmasking of theatrical illusion. A game allowing every kind of anachronism, eccentricity, dissonance, things which are quite inconceivable in Stanislavsky's theater. As a rule, the spectator at one of Meyerhold's productions must not for a single moment forget that he is watching actors, who are only "acting." And as a rule in Stanislavsky's theater the spectator must not for a moment think that he is watching a play and not a slice of real life. Meyerhold calls Stanislavsky's work, without much respect, "looking through a keyhole into a stranger's house." Meyerhold's work seems like circus work to Stanislavsky. And indeed the word "circus" (with the + sign, of course) can often be heard during Meyerhold's lessons with his pupils. He builds his work on the exercise of the human body, on its development to the utmost limit—including acrobatics. Stanislavsky tries to obtain from his pupils the utmost development of their psychological abilities, including a complete transformation into persons who live in the given play, and it is quite comprehensible that during his lessons (at least in former times) he used a terminology taken from yoga. In short, Meyerhold takes the "material" of the theater as a basis, and Stanislavsky takes the "spirit."

It would seem that in a country where materialism is something like a state religion, Meyerhold would be certain of a longlasting and guaranteed success. But strange as it may seem, in recent years Meyerhold's position has proved much more difficult than Stanislavsky's. This will seem more comprehensible if one considers Meyerhold's biography as a producer. Well before the Revolution and Civil War he started his career as a theatrical rebel fighting against the dubious theater of Leonid Andreev. And 20-25 years later, in our days, he suddenly came face to face again with a dubious and sermonizing theater, although now with a different coloration. This meeting, in spite of the greatest good will and mutual sympathy, could not be amicable because of the deep, inrooted, organic differences between the two. A strong propagandistic pathos is incompatible with the pure Meyerholdian principle of the theater as a "game." This meeting could be successful in only one domain, that of high satire. But precisely in this domain there was a creative draught, no harvest in the repertory due to the frost of censorship. Meyerhold most often seeks refuge from all these contradictions in the fortresses of classical works, well protected from the political attacks of the over-marxed critics. Meyerhold, with his sixty years,

is still young, and he wants the classics to be as young on his stage. Therefore, without the slightest hesitation, he sews monkey glands into them. Without the slightest pity, he performs operations on them as cruel as those in H. G. Well's novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Luckily the patients of Doctor Meyerhold are much more obedient and cannot rise against him, although some of them, perhaps, have quite a legitimate right.

Of all the classics which Meyerhold has rejuvenated (he has produced the works of Ostrovsky, Gogol, Griboedov), perhaps only Gogol, whose genius is most closely related to Meyerhold, could thank him for the production of *The Inspector General*.<sup>4</sup> Meyerhold managed to turn this play, which had always been treated as an amusing comedy, into an unusual, almost terrifying spectacle. And the remarkable thing is that this was attained without changing the original text, unless one counts the introduction of several musical numbers, and the new divisions made in the acts of the play.

As might be expected, the most ardent followers of Meyerhold have turned out to be more Meyerholdian than Meyerhold himself, and they have been trying even more hazardous experiments with the classics. The Alexandrinsky Theater in Leningrad, for instance, not long ago produced a rejuvenated *Tartuffe*. The comedy takes place in super-modern surroundings: on board a transatlantic ship, in motor cars and even... in the gondola of an airship. The actors, naturally, are dressed in modern clothes, and to his astonishment the spectator sees before him, among other characters, an orthodox priest, a mulla, a rabbi, the Pope, Pilsudsky and MacDonald... Luckily these characters are silent and appear only during the pantomime intermezzos. Another, no less dangerous experiment was tried out at the Vakhtangov Theater in July of this year, namely the re-interpretation of Hamlet. We are told that for all these centuries everyone was mistaken—Hamlet is by no means a tragic hero, disappointed in life, he is a gay, life-loving, skeptical and cynical fellow rather remindful of Falstaff. Ophelia certainly could not have lost her reason over an unhappy love-affair, it is simply that she was returning home after some festive dinner and everything she says is not due to madness but under the influence of drink...

These anecdotal facts are an illustration of Meyerhold's influence on modern Russian producers: Meyerhold's method has until now been the dominant one. Stanislavsky laid the foundation for several excellent new theaters, he also trained a number of brilliant young actors, but strange as it may seem, he did not give us one single producer worthy of himself. Vakhtangov, who died at the beginning of the Revolution, was perhaps the only exception (he was the originator of two most wonderful productions: *Dybbuk*<sup>5</sup> in the Moscow Jewish Theater "Habima" and *Turandot*<sup>6</sup> in the Moscow Vakhtangov Theater).

And yet, in the last two or three years, while art in general has abandoned the extreme left positions, Stanislavsky has again come to the fore. The time is gone when the public, blinded by Futurism, Suprematism and Constructivism, accepted everything put before it. There are few snobs left today who have seen everything in their lifetime and seek something quite extraordinary, "épatant"

on the stage. The new, less sophisticated spectator demands above all from the theater illusions of real life, stronger and deeper impressions than even the most brilliant "acting." This explains the recent turn of the Russian theater audiences towards Stanislavsky and theaters related to his, such as The Second MKhAT and Vakhtangov's Theater. Last year this turn was confirmed, so to say, by official seal: Stanislavsky's theater was taken under the special patronage of the Kremlin, the "red director" of this theater (a Communist appointed by the government) was recalled and Stanislavsky became again the sole and all-powerful director-manager of this theater. By the way, the Bolshoi Opera Theater in Moscow has received the same grace.

This certainly does not mean that Meyerhold's importance in the Russian Theater has come to an end. He has left too deep an imprint in the formal life of the theater for it to disappear. This cannot happen also because the closest followers of Stanislavsky, such as Vakhtangov's Theater and The Second MKhAT, no longer employ Stanislavsky's methods in their pure form, but with a mixture of Meyerholdism. If I, a heretic, were allowed to use Marx's (or rather Hegel's) terminology, I would call Stanislavsky's work the "thesis" and Meyerhold's the "antithesis," and I believe that the near future belongs to the synthesis of both these influences and that this synthetic line will be the basis of Russian productions.

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And now the producer of this article returns to its first scene: Moscow, Theater Square, Hotel Metropole. And the unfinished reply of Cecil B. de Mille:

"Your actors and producers are the best in the whole world, but... where are your new plays worthy of them? In America we follow you with the greatest interest, we want to learn about your new life built along quite different lines and—to draw our own conclusions, but instead we are given ready-made conclusions, a sermon. This isn't of much interest to us, and I doubt if it's of any interest to you."

The American producer had a right to be doubtful on this score, for indeed, the repertory is now the weakest spot in the Russian theater. It seems that something quite inconceivable has taken place: it was much easier to move the tremendous weight of economics and industry than a seemingly light and ethereal substance—such as dramatics. But this seems inconceivable only at first glance, the whole matter lies in the simple laws of mechanics: the heavier and more solid a mass is, the greater the effect of a blow. It is easy to imagine the result of a blow on a gas cloud!

In Russia they have tried in recent years to conquer this law of mechanics and to force the gaslike cloud of dramatics to advance with the same speed as the rolling iron ball of industry. Of course, the effect has not been very cheerful for dramatics: the cloud has been dis-concentrated, dispersed, and the result has



been a number of watery plays à thèse, whose life was not of long duration. What new Russian plays, in fact, were successful and kept long on the posters? In Stanislavsky's theater, Vsevolod Ivanov's *Armored Train* has been shown for several seasons. This is a play based on the Civil War, its dramatic technique is not the best, still the producer managed to turn it into a good show.<sup>7</sup> In the same theater, Bulgakov's play *The Last Days of The Turbins* (based on the Civil War in the Ukraine) was shown very successfully and later forbidden by the censor.<sup>8</sup> And finally Kataev's play *The Squaring of the Circle*, a very well-written farce on the life of Soviet students.<sup>9</sup> In the Second Art Theater, *The Flea*, a play by the author of this article; is being shown for the sixth season. This play is an attempt to renew the Russian folk comedy.<sup>10</sup> This theater has also produced Afinogenov's play *The Strange Man*, a fortunate Soviet variation of Chekhov's plays.<sup>11</sup> The "mascotte" of the Vakhtangov Theater was Lavrenyov's psychological drama, again based on the rich theme of the Civil War: *Falling Apart*.<sup>12</sup> Two more plays should be mentioned: Trenyov's *Lyubov Yarovaya*<sup>13</sup> and Kirshon's *The Railway Lines Are Humming*.<sup>14</sup> Both these plays held the public's attention for a long time, but both did so mostly because of the novelty of the subject: *Lyubov Yarovaya* was the first play about the Civil War, and Kirshon's play was the first one to deal with a factory and factory life. And finally Erdman's *The Mandate*, which had a record run in Meyerhold's theater. This play was one of the few examples of a new high satire, for the development of which, as has been said above, the literary climate in Russia is not very favorable at present (*The Mandate* was shown 6-7 years ago).<sup>15</sup>

I have mentioned so far only the Moscow theaters, because these theaters are the real test for plays. Plays that have passed this test afterwards make a tour of all the important provincial theaters. Such was the case with all the above-mentioned plays. But it may be observed that among these plays there was only one that treated of current problems such as industrialization, the kolkhozes, etc. When Russian playwrights, spurred on by the official critics, hurriedly took these as yet unformed, everchanging matters, the result was something which can only be called a dramatic abortion: quite a number of hastily written, raw plays appeared. Like all abortions, they had disproportionately large heads, filled with the best ideology, and thin weak bodies, too weak to bear the weight of this ideology. Like all abortions, they needed to be artificially fed, the critics nourished them as much as possible, and still they perished very quickly. The failure of these plays did not lie in the mediocrity of their authors. Some playwrights who had shown their talent in other plays tried these themes, but the results were no better. For instance, the author of *The Squaring of the Circle*, Kataev, came forward with a play called *The Avant-Garde*, which was saved but for a short period by the excellent production of the Vakhtangov Theater. (Translated into German, it lasted for only 4-5 performances in Berlin.) The author of the very successful *Lyubov Yarovaya* wrote a very weak kolkhoz play *Yasnyi Log* (produced at the Maly Theater in Moscow, 1931). The rather talented writer Nikolai Nikitin gave a very weak

play *The Line of Fire*, concerning which the Soviet critics had to admit that in spite of the excellence of the ideology, the play was, from the point of view of art, a failure (Tairov's Theater, Moscow).<sup>16</sup> And so on. Of all these hasty and false works only Afinogenov's play *Fear* ought to be put aside. It had a great success, first in Leningrad and then in Moscow. This play has for its theme the same everlasting "complot" of the "vrediteli"—the "harmers," but there is also the everlasting ethical question of the rights of the Revolution to make use of terror. This is what guaranteed the play a long run.<sup>17</sup>

This tendency toward pure publicistic, "industrial" themes spread from the dramatic theater to the opera and ballet. During the 1930-1931 season, the Mariinsky Theater produced the ballet *The Bolt*. On the stage, of course, we were shown a factory, there was a dance of the workmen at the furnaces, a dance of the "vrediteli," a dance of the "kulaks," and a sort of dance "apotheosis"—dances of different parts of the Red Army, including Red Cavalrymen who galloped wildly... while sitting on chairs. The result was by no means an apotheosis, the first night of the ballet happened to be its last. The opera *Ice and Steel*, shown at the same theater, met with the same fate. At the same time the Moscow Bolshoi Opera Theater was showing an "industrial" opera *The Prophet* which would have been more aptly named "The Failure." If I am not mistaken, it was also taken off after the first performance. Stalin, who had assisted at the first production, gave an unfavorable opinion and the fate of this opera was sealed.

Perhaps not only this particular opera was doomed. The government finally took notice of the epidemic and took measures to ameliorate the theatrical repertory. It was at this moment that the Bolshoi Opera Theater and Stanislavsky's Theater received their new constitution. The critics were given new orders to start a campaign against "red khaltura"—against "red nonsense" in dramatic literature.<sup>18</sup> Several plays were removed from the list of *librorum prohibitorum*, these plays had little in common with the questions of the day but had much in common with genuine art. Because of an order from above, the ban on Bulgakov's play *The Last Days of the Turbins* was lifted. The formerly prohibited play by the same author, *Molière*,<sup>19</sup> and Erdman's *The Suicide*<sup>20</sup> were also allowed. The season of 1930-1931 was a season which revived classical plays on the stage, especially in the opera and ballet. The campaign against "red nonsense" is apparently a serious one, and will, let us hope, result in better conditions for the work of playwrights. The very talented young playwright Olesha has summed up the situation very well in one short phrase: "The writer must have time to think."

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Until now I have mentioned only the professional, acknowledged theater, which presently only continues the work started long before the Revolution. But there are several theatrical forms which had no pre-revolutionary ancestors.

They are the more interesting because, as far as I know, they have no equivalent in the European theater.

The inculcation of politics into everyday life and everybody's life in Russia gave birth to the "Living Newspaper." As the name itself shows, this is a theatrical "feuilleton," based partly on general political events and partly on more particular themes taken from the lives of different factories. This form of theater sprung from the workmen's amateur theater clubs at the beginning of the Revolution. The "Living Newspaper" is even now very often run by amateurs, but professional young actors are more and more joining them, they form small "living newspaper" casts. While having a permanent cast, these theaters do not have a permanent stage, and usually they make the rounds of the different factory club theaters. This branch of the theater is, of course, only a utilitarian, publicistic form. But then the "Living Newspaper" makes no pretensions to anything greater. The material for these "newspapers" is supplied by their own authors, whose names remain unknown. Until now no well-known author has tried to express himself in this theatrical form.

The so-called "TRAMs" (Theaters of the Working Youth) also sprang from the amateur workmen's clubs at the beginning of the Revolution.<sup>21</sup> Little by little they are turning into theaters of the professional type, all the while keeping their own plays and their own traditions. The casts of these theaters consist almost exclusively of young workmen who first discovered their histrionic talents on their own homemade stages. And if somewhere the "industrial" plays do not seem to sound a false note, it is in these "TRAM" theaters. For these actors grew up in industry, they know it thoroughly and its interests are of true value to them. It is interesting to note that the plays of these "TRAMs" remain within their own walls, none of them ever appear on the greater professional stages. Contrary to the professional theater, which is undoubtedly superior in Moscow to that of Leningrad, the "TRAMs" of the former capital are of a much greater artistic value than those of Moscow.

And now let us leave the four walls of the theater and come outside—to the theater under the open sky, the "theater of the square." Officially there is no such term as yet, perhaps it has never even appeared before this article, which is not extraordinary as there is really no such theater, there is only its embryo. What I mean by this "theater of the square" is the few experiments of mass spectacles made during the so-called "revolution festivals." And here again Leningrad has the better of Moscow. From the Moscow experiments of this sort, only one may perhaps be made use of someday, namely the tremendous and almost wild idea of a young musician who tried to regale the city with a symphony... played on the factory whistles. The "orchestra" had to give its concert after only one rehearsal; the experiment was not successful and has been forgotten for the time being. But many of the Petersburg theatrical audiences still remember the spectacle, whose stage was the enormous porches and staircase of the Petersburg Exchange. The play was some hastily written agitational piece, but the play mattered little, what mattered were the scale and

size of the theater. Instead of the gong at the beginning of the performance—a six-inch gun, instead of the footlights—searchlights, instead of scenery—tremendous white columns, with the silky blackness of the sky as a background. The crowds of many thousands on the shore of the Neva—formed the audience of the stalls, and those on the ships at the shore—the audience in the boxes. This was indeed a great theatrical spectacle, it was not a pity to have spent several hundred million to produce it (the most humble unit in those times was a million). Later on one had to learn to count in tens and hundreds, great expenses for such spectacles became impossible and the few experiments of this sort had to be done on a much smaller scale, and hence the result was not successful. But perhaps these failures are only the beginning of a new road, a road which will lead across the square to the theater of the future and which may lead us back to the long forgotten Greek *'αγορά*.<sup>22</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. Mikhail Chekhov, together with Boris Sushkevich, assumed leadership of the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater in 1922, after the death of Evgeny Vakhtangov. In 1924 the First Studio was renamed the Second MKhAT. Chekhov emigrated in 1928.

2. *The Flood* (Russian title: *Potop*) by Henning Berger was presented in the First Studio in December, 1916, directed by Vakhtangov.

3. *The Cricket on the Hearth* (Russian title: *Sverchok na pechi*), adapted by Sushkevich and directed by Leopold Sulerzhitsky, was the hit of the First Studio's 1914 season.

4. *Revizor* premiered on December 9, 1926, in the Meyerhold Theater.

5. *Dybbuk* by S. An-sky (pseudonym of Solomon Rappoport) was first produced in 1922. It has been played throughout the world with Vakhtangov's staging.

6. *Princess Turandot* by Carlo Gozzi was staged three months before Vakhtangov's death in 1922.

7. *Bronepoezd 14-69* by Vsevolod Ivanov, a dramatization of the story of the same name, was first produced in 1927. See *RLT* No. 2, 1972 for a translation of the story.

8. *Dni Turbinykh* by Mikhail Bulgakov, adapted from his novel *The White Guard* (*Belaya gvardiya*), premiered on Oct. 5, 1926. It was banned at various times and finally revived in 1932.

9. *Kvadratura kruga* by Valentin Kataev was first shown in 1925-1926.

10. *Blokha*, based on Nikolai Leskov's story *Levsha*, was directed by Alexei Diky. It premiered on Feb. 11, 1925.

11. *Chudak* by Alexander Afinogenov was produced by the Second MKhAT in 1929 and the State Dramatic Theater in 1930.

12. *Razlom*, usually translated as "The Break," by Boris Lavrenyov, was first produced by the Bolshoi Dramatic Theater in 1927.

13. *Lyubov Yarovaya* by Konstantin Trenyov premiered in the Maly Theater on Dec. 22, 1926. It ran for 200 performances there, and then was taken up by the Moscow Art Theater.

14. *Relsy gudyat* by Vladimir Kirshon was given in the Theater MGSPS and the Leningrad Academic Theater of Drama in 1928.

15. Nikolai Erdman's *Mandat*, which ran over 100 performances, premiered at the

Meyerhold Theater on April 20, 1925. It caused a political scandal. See the article on Erdman in *RLT* No. 2, 1972.

16. Nikitin's *Liniya ognya* was performed in Tairov's Kamernyi Theater and the Leningrad Bolshoi Dramatic Theater in 1931.

17. *Strakh* was first produced by the Moscow Art Theater in 1929. The word *vrediteli* is usually translated into English as "the wreckers"—meaning all those saboteurs, schemers and malingerers who endanger the Revolution.

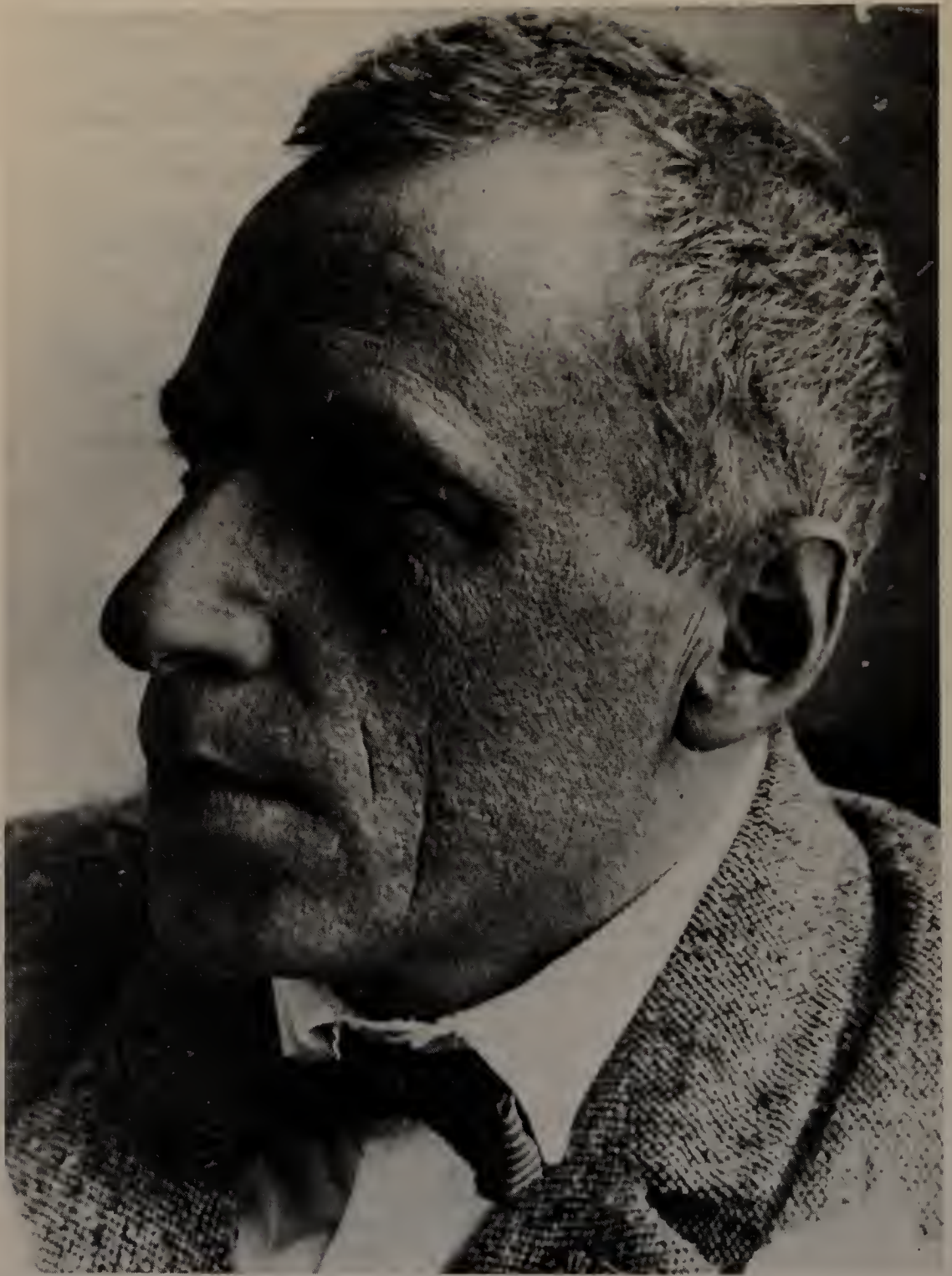
18. The word *khaltura* might better be rendered by the words "potboiling, clap-trap, bilge."

19. Permission for the production of *Molière* was granted in 1932, but the play was not staged until Feb. 15, 1936, at the Moscow Art Theater. It was blasted in the press and closed after seven performances.

20. Both the Moscow Art Theater and the Meyerhold Theater tried to get permission for the play *The Suicide (Samoubiitsa)*. After a private showing of excerpts in the latter theater in 1932, however, permission was refused. The play has never appeared in Russia. Versions have recently been published in Russian (*Novyi zhurnal* No. 112 & 113, 1973) and in English (*RLT*, No. 7, 1973).

21. TRAM = *teatr rabochei molodyozhi* ("Theater of the Working Youth").

22. *Agora*—the square or marketplace in an ancient Greek city.



Meyerhold, 1931?

alexander gladkov / MEYERHOLD SPEAKS: OBSERVATIONS ON  
DRAMATURGY AND STAGECRAFT\*

In the course of some two decades of Russian literature there were created three such completely remarkable and dissimilar theaters as the theaters of Pushkin, Gogol, and Lermontov. No other theatrical culture has known anything like it. One can add a fourth theater, that of Griboedov. It too is completely different from the other three. In these three or four facets, I see the structural outline of the entire Russian theater as it must be for centuries to come. This extraordinary phenomenon has nothing in common with the Shakespearean pleiad, for example. The saturation of Pushkin's, Gogol's, Lermontov's, and Griboedov's masterpieces is extraordinary in its content and stylistic intensity. What Ostrovsky expressed in a couple dozen plays, these great playwrights conveyed in one or two.

\*

Pushkin is the most astonishing playwright: in his plays nothing can be left out. When, for example, you read *The Stone Guest*, everything is clear. But you begin to play it and it seems that there's not enough text. That's because Pushkin, when he wrote, anticipated the future theater, not the "verbal" theater, but that one in which movement would supplement the word.

\*

Pushkin was not only a remarkable dramatist, but also a dramatist-director and the initiator of a new dramatic system. If we were to collect together all the observations about the theater of his day scattered throughout his letters and drafts of articles, then we would see the amazing consistency of his views. I have already for a long time been guided by them in the course of my work and in my plans.

\*

The most important thing we have to learn from Pushkin is that internal freedom which is essential in a creative act, and which he possessed. The worst things in art are timid primness, ridiculous stiffness, servility, the urge to guess some one taste and please it, the fear of abasing some high rank, the fear of insulting some lofty persons. If you haven't thrown off all that, then it's better not to attempt Pushkin.

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\*

The history of the staging of *Boris Godunov* is a history of many failures. How do you explain this? If we trace the history of the Russian theater during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, we see that the failures of great and remarkable dramatic works on the stage resulted mainly from the fact that these plays were written, as we now say, innovatively. That is, they were not in conformity with the stage techniques of the time, but with a desire to change those techniques and to attempt to create a new form of theatrical performance. The Russian theater quickly caught up with Chekhov's innovations, but so far it still hasn't been able to catch up with that most extraordinary innovator of the drama—Pushkin. Even today, our theatrical techniques stand much lower than Pushkin wanted them. His plays still seem puzzling to us: either too swift in their movement, or too compressed in their text. We haven't yet learned how to act them. But if we approach them as a kind of musical score for a theatrical production, then we will uncover their secret.

\*

The latest studies of *Boris Godunov* state that Pushkin did not provide for intermissions during the performance of his tragedy, just as in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* where there mustn't be a single break lest the thread be lost. That's almost the same, to give an easier example, as in my favorite prelude of Scriabin's where the legato line, beginning on the first page, extends in an arc to the very end of the second page. That means that the striking of a given chord must be done in such a way that the continuity of its sound, with the help either of the pedal or another technical trick, will be held to the end. Of course, that does not at all mean that within the unity of the action there will be no fragmentation, segments, and so forth. But they will be of a different nature. Shifting and breaking up the action under the condition that the main action is integral—that's one thing, but simply the alternation of episodes—that's another. In the second case, it is a kind of suite, a division into small one-act numbers.

\*

My credo is a simple and laconic theater language leading to complex associations. That's the way I would like to stage *Boris Godunov* and *Hamlet*.

\*

Theatrical traditions live a complex life throughout the centuries. They decay and seem to have died. But then suddenly they come to life and are



resurrected in a new way. Every theater is stylized. But there is stylization and stylization. It seems to me that the stylization of Mei Lan-fang or Carl Gozzi is closer to our age than the stylization of Ozerov's tragedies, or the Maly Theater "in the period of its decline."

\*

When I think over a play for a long time then the staging of it goes more quickly.

\*

The best of what I devise beforehand, rather than during rehearsal nevertheless always comes to me not sitting at my desk, so to speak, but in the presence of others, in the noise and movement when it seems you aren't thinking at all of work. One mustn't forget that the artist works constantly. Mayakovsky wrote beautifully about that in *How to Make Verses*, that thin little booklet which contains all his experience. When I get ready to write about directing I will strive to write just as briefly and succinctly.

\*

Don't be afraid of small interruptions in your work, only don't put it completely out of your mind during that time. Don't work at it, but just let it come to your mind now and then. I've noticed that after a break one often comes to rehearsal with something more than what one stopped with before the break. Work properly begun continues by itself within you, and all wisdom consists only in not hampering it.

\*

If all the scenes in a play are written with the same intensity, then the play's failure is guaranteed. The audience can't sustain such tension. The beginning must captivate and promise something. In the middle there must be one stunning effect. Before the finale a slightly lesser effect is needed, without tension. All the rest can be however you like. Extracts don't go over in the theater.

\*

My revision of *The Inspector General* about which there was so much talk was preceded by the most serious and extended meditation. In the first place, I ascertained that in Gogol's lifetime, *The Inspector General* took only two and one half hours to perform. As we know, Gogol was not satisfied with



E. Garin as Khlestakov in *The Inspector General*

the performance of his play. He found, to put it bluntly, that they were just fooling around. And indeed, when you think how such an avalanche of text could be played in two and one half hours, you understand that the performance must have been perfunctory. Furthermore, reading the final version of *The Inspector General* (the one which was played in Gogol's time), I constantly feel what in it is Gogol and what are the simplifications Gogol made on somebody's advice. I see that Gogol listened to everybody as happens when a dramatist wants desperately to have his play produced without delay. He had, for example, in one scene in the first version three characters, but only two remained. On consideration, I see that with three it was much more interesting. This was clearly a concession on Gogol's part. Of course, in the theater it's always more convenient to have fewer characters, and Gogol heeded this.

I didn't personally make up my own additions to *The Inspector General*, but took those texts which I considered stronger in the first variants than in the final one. It's impossible now to produce Gogol, Griboedov, or Lermontov without taking into account the pressure of censorship which bound their hands, or the backwardness of stagecraft at that time. We owe it to their memory to study all the variants and establish the very best one, guided by our taste which was formed by those writers themselves. But that's not as simple as the pseudo-academicians and guardians of the canonical texts think. For them it's easier. They can print in a volume of Gogol or Lermontov three variants at once: one in bold type and two others in fine print in the appendix. But we must make up one text, the best that can be acted without inflicting any losses on the author.

\*

In revolutionary times people live at an accelerated pace. Remember 1893-94 in France, remember our own 1917, completely unbounded and embracing whole decades. All the changes in these periods take place at the same breakneck speed. I'm told, "But look, last year you maintained thus and so." "Not last year," I answer, "but ten years ago according to my inner calendar."

\*

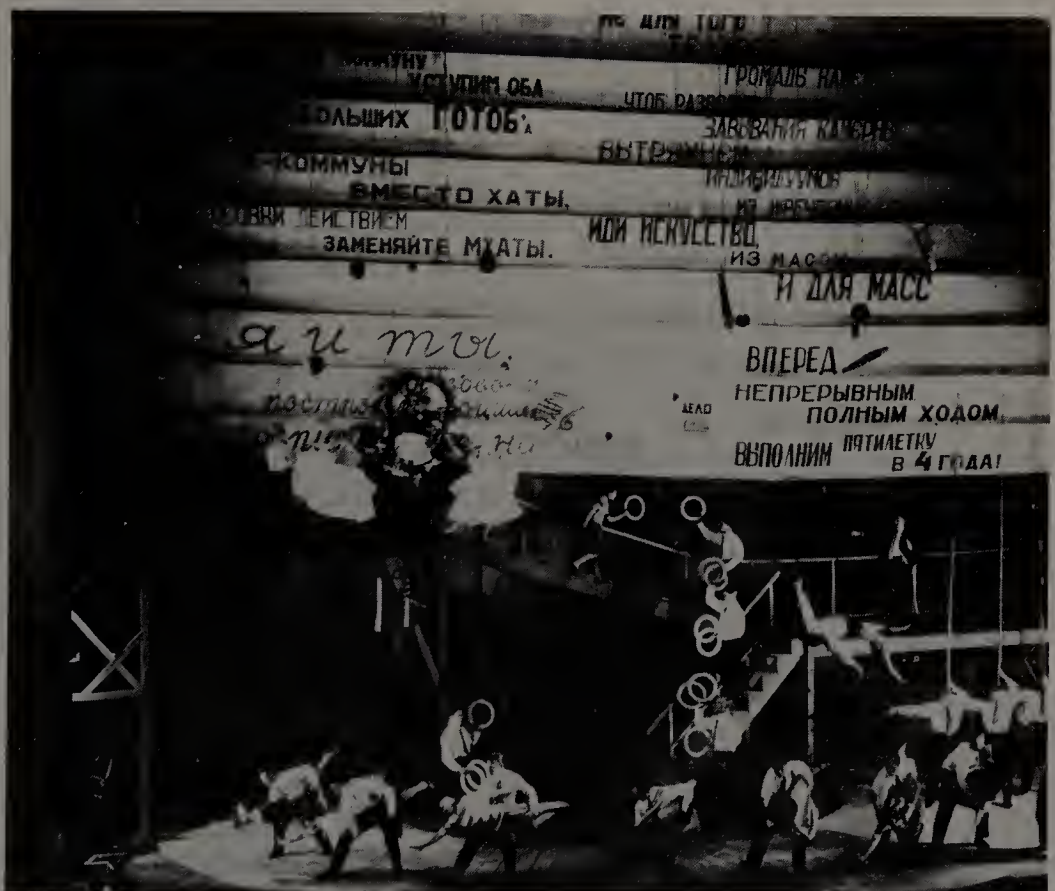
Each author must be staged differently—and not only in the style of the production, but also in the way it is rehearsed. When we asked Mayakovsky about the biographies of his characters, he got angry, shouted at us, and banged his walking stick. His plays demanded one type of approach, Olesha's plays another, Erdman's plays still another. We must be flexible in this; otherwise, in our theater all the authors will resemble the one who is our special favorite. There is such a theater where this always happens<sup>1</sup> ... but, silence. I'd rather not ruffle anybody's feathers! Even so, all my life I've never been able to stay

TEA  
ROYAL  
KOLAT  
ERITIF  
FIVE O'CLOCK TEA

GRAD  
CONT

Y  
M  
A





Scene from Mayakovsky's *The Bathhouse*.

out of polemics. I've had enough! I feel like working and not arguing!

\*

The funnier a comedy, the more seriously it must be played.

\*

Mayakovsky told me that while working on *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse*, he learned much from our productions of *The Inspector General*, *Woe from Wit* [renamed by Meyerhold *Woe to Wit*], and *The Warrant*. This is how the collaboration between the theater and the poet should be: both learn from each other. And in some ways Mayakovsky went further and gave us new challenges. In *The Bedbug* there are a number of extraordinary shifts from one episode to another in which we feel the best rhythmic modulations of Shakespeare.

\*

I love passionate situations in the theater and often create them for myself in life.

\*

By the time Selvinsky brought us *Commander of the Second Army*, a lot of plays about the Civil War had already been staged in the theaters, and almost all of them were yet another variation of *Lyubov Yarovaya*. But we didn't need a hundredth play about the breakup of the family under the influence of the class struggle. We wanted a deeper penetration into that amazing and heroic time. When I received *Commander of the Second Army*, I rejoiced. It seemed to me that I would come out of the repertory crisis without lowering my standards to the level of authors who follows the line of least resistance. I strived to draw into the theater dynamic poets who would bring to the stage in their plays the major problems of the time. Selvinsky presented in his play an almost philosophical problem (similar to Ibsen in his remarkable play, *The Pretenders*) about who has the right to be a leader. And that appealed to me. I always dreamed about the appearance of new dramatists who would consider the common masses ready for great, complex art, instead of those dramatists who imagined the level of that public a low one and, what's more, themselves descended to it.<sup>2</sup>

\*

If I manage to live a little longer, I am going to try to achieve by theatrical



M. I. Babanova as Stella in Fernand Crommelynck's *Le cocu magnifique*.

means what in literature is now called "internal monolog." I have some notions about that. No, I can't tell you anything—not yet. What's more, there are no suitable plays! And adaptations are always a palliative!

\*

Do you want to hear a strange confession? When I read the murder scene in *Crime and Punishment*, I always want Raskolnikov to succeed in escaping, not to get caught. You too? Therein lies the great gift of the novelist. And reading about the same happening in the paper, you, of course, want the criminal to be caught quickly. No, art's not at all a simple matter. It's a very ambiguous thing.

\*

When I watch a performance staged by the very youngest of my pupils my head begins to spin from the continual stage crossings and changes of *mise en scène*. And I ask myself in alarm, "Did I really teach them that?" And then I comfort myself, "No! Their youth and inexperience exaggerate my shortcomings, which they have mastered to a 'T' and then some." And after that I want to stage a performance even more calmly and with greater reserve. Thus I learn from my own pupils.

\*

I worked with Chaliapin only on the production of *Boris*. Of course, we immediately quarreled and never again sought to collaborate, although Yurev tried to reconcile us. But I was always a grateful admirer of his performances.<sup>3</sup>

\*

Few people know how willfully Chaliapin managed the score of *Boris Godunov*. In the "mad" scene he needed time for his extraordinary improvised acting: there he played an entire segment without singing. But the orchestral part was too short. Then he asked the conductor to repeat in this place the so-called "chimes" music. Those who heard and saw Chaliapin in that role must admit that the result was extraordinary. I don't think that Moussorgsky himself would have argued with it. But it goes without saying, even here some connoisseurs of the score turned up who were indignant. After our experiences with the classics, we were well acquainted with this particular species of book worm who could have been so well described by Anatole France. Once I heard *Boris* on the radio and I caught in the "mad" scene those same "chimes." That means they had become a tradition. This is what always happens. At first you are an arbitrary innovator, and then, a silver-haired founder of tradition.



When I was in France, I saw Chaliapin in the movie, *Don Quixote*. It was quite bad, but I blame the director, not Chaliapin. In the theater Chaliapin was always his own director. (That's why he liked "directors" of Sanin's type so much.) But in this case, obviously his lack of knowledge of cinema technique hampered him. I didn't recognize him. He was timid, inexpressive, sugary. And that from Chaliapin! If this film reaches us, I don't advise seeing it—you'll understand nothing of what the great actor and singer Chaliapin stood for in the theater.<sup>4</sup>

\*

I often wake at night in a cold sweat with the thought that I have become banal, that everything in life is going too well for me, that I will die under a thick quilt, that I have stopped being an inventor...

\*

In the 20s I fought with the Maly Theater, but in my student years I spent almost every evening in the gallery there. No, I think that the Maly Theater has changed more than I have. Though I, of course, am also no longer the same. In the mid-90s the ushers in the top balconies of the Maly Theater knew my friends and me so well by sight that even when we met in the public baths they would greet us. I adored Ermolova and Fedotova, Lensky and Muzil, and the elder Sadovskys. Before taking the liberty to condemn, one has first of all to know. And I ask myself, do all those who censure me and my productions know?<sup>5</sup>

\*

To fear mistakes to the point of panic means that you will never know achievement.

\*

Komissarzhevskaya was an astonishing actress. But they wanted her at the same time to be Joan of Arc. In fact, she didn't die of smallpox, but from the same thing Gogol died of, from anguish. The organism, tormented by anguish caused by an imbalance between strength of vocation and realizable artistic goals, absorbed the smallpox infection. You know, Gogol also had some kind of sickness with a long name, but was that really the point?

Komissarzhevskaya is remembered more for her dramatic roles, but she was also an excellent *Mirandolina*, and she played vaudeville remarkably well. She had great artistic *joie de vivre*, but at the same time no one needed it. She possessed a wealth of expression, and was musical in the highest sense. That is,



Meyerhold and Shostakovich, 1928

she not only sang well but also built her role musically. She had natural body coordination, a rare quality, generally speaking—with a lowering of tone, her hands drooped. Her technique as an actress wasn't craftsmanlike, but individual and therefore it seemed that she had no technique. The young people of my generation considered Garshin their favorite writer. That seems almost incomprehensible now. I even changed my non-Russian name to Vsevolod in his honor. Garshin carried within himself the music of his own time... I don't know why I suddenly remembered Garshin when I was speaking of Komissarzhevskaya. It must not be a coincidence.<sup>6</sup>

\*

I decided to give up acting when, during the staging of *Pelléas et Mélisande* with Komissarzhevskaya, in which I played Arkel, I realized how difficult it was to act and to produce at one and the same time. That's another reason why I think Chaplin is a genius.<sup>7</sup>

\*

Artistic skill is achieved when the "what" and the "how" come simultaneously.

\*

You ask, was there "naturalism" in the Art Theater's *The Seagull*, and you think you have asked me a "perrrrfidious question," because in it I played my favorite role with awe and trepidation.<sup>8</sup> Probably some elements of naturalism did occur, but that was unimportant because the main thing was the poetic nerve, the hidden poetry of Chekhov's prose which became theater thanks to the genius of Stanislavsky's stagecraft. Before Stanislavsky they acted only the plot of Chekhov's plays. But they forgot that with Chekhov the noise of rain outside the window, the clatter of a broken off bucket, the early morning through the shutters, the mist over the lake—all these are indissolubly connected with people's behavior. These things were a discovery then. "Naturalism" appeared when they became stock devices.

\*

I was never so hurt in all my life as I was the one time Stanislavsky became angry with me. That was before my departure from the Art Theater. It was all caused by the usual theater gossip. Someone hissed during the premiere of Nemirovich-Danchenko's play, *Dreams*. And at about the same time, I wrote a letter to A. P. Chekhov in which I spoke critically about the play. This became known in the theater (I have no idea how), my letter was con-

nected with the hissing, and Stanislavsky was told that I had organized the protest. It's absurd, but for some reason K. S. believed it. He stopped speaking to me. I wanted to talk it over with him, but he wouldn't see me. Later everything was straightened out and he became more friendly than ever, as if he felt guilty. It was then that I understood what Stanislavsky's regard meant to me.<sup>9</sup>

\*

You who know Stanislavsky only in his old age can't possibly even imagine what a powerful actor he was. If I have become somebody it is only because of the years I spent alongside him. Mark this well. If anyone thinks I enjoy it when someone speaks disrespectfully of Stanislavsky, he is wrong. I differed with him, but always deeply respected and loved him. He was a remarkable actor with a striking technique. After all, what we would call his professional attributes weren't too much of a help to him. In stature he was rather too tall, his voice was rather toneless, and there were shortcomings in his diction. He didn't even want to shave off his moustache because of a naive vanity. But all that was forgotten when he was acting. Sometimes I would return to my little room after acting in a performance with him or after a rehearsal and I wouldn't be able to fall asleep all night. In order to achieve something, first you have to learn to admire and to be astonished.

\*

The fact that Stanislavsky was ill during the last years of his life and rarely left his apartment in Leontevsky Lane was at the same time a great good fortune (away from the hustle and bustle of theatrical life, he was able to concentrate on his pedagogic experiments as well as his research) and a very great misfortune as well (he almost ceased his creative activities.) I am certain that if it hadn't been for his illness, Stanislavsky would have given us more extraordinary productions. I know this from personal experience, having seen what marvelous sketches he did for *Rigoletto*. Too old? But, after all, when Tolstoy wrote his masterpiece, *Hadji Murat*, he was certainly not any younger.

\*

More and more frequently it seems to me that the difference between Stanislavsky and me is mainly a matter of terminology. What he calls "the task" I call "the motif." But we are speaking of one and the same thing.

\*

Chekhov loved me. That is the pride of my life, one of my most precious

memories. He liked my letters. He was always advising me to take up writing and even sent notes of recommendation to the editorial office. I had a fair number of letters from him, about eight, but they all disappeared except one which I submitted to be printed. In the others there was more that was flattering to me and I was embarrassed to show them. When I left for the Crimea in 1919, I gave them to one of the Leningrad museums for safekeeping. But when I returned it turned out that the person to whom I had given them had died. I can't forgive myself for that. What I didn't take care of was preserved while what I worried over was lost. This often happens in life.

\*

The inexperience of a director is most often felt in the inattention to the clarity of exposition. If you don't "announce" the exposition with utmost clarity the spectator will understand nothing that follows, or he will still be only guessing when he should already be carried away.

\*

The commanding position in the theater is inevitably occupied by that member of the production who has the broadest cultural outlook, who knows what he wants and can lead the way. Sometimes it is the author, sometimes the director, sometimes an actor, sometimes an artist.

*Translated by Alma H. Law*

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#### AFTERWORD

The above observations are from the notebooks of the Soviet dramatist and critic Alexander Gladkov. Mr. Gladkov joined the Meyerhold Theater in 1934. For the next three years he held various positions in that theater, including researcher, teacher, and assistant director. Meyerhold quickly took a liking to the young Gladkov and a warm and lasting friendship developed between the two men. After Gladkov left the Meyerhold Theater in 1937, he continued to see Meyerhold frequently until Meyerhold's arrest and disappearance in 1939.

During their many hours together, Meyerhold shared with Gladkov much of his experience in the theater as well as his personal reminiscences of people he had known and worked with. Gladkov also spent countless hours at rehearsals observing Meyerhold in action. A journalist by training, Gladkov carefully recorded Meyerhold's remarks and observations in his notebooks. While these notebooks cannot replace the manual of stagecraft Meyerhold often talked about, but did not live long enough to write, they nevertheless provide an invaluable record of the work and personality of one of the greatest directors of our time.

Mr. Gladkov has published a number of excerpts from his notebooks in recent years. The following observations are taken from his articles, "Repliki Meierkholda," *Teatralnaya*

*zhizn'* (1960, No. 5) pp. 19-21 and "Meierkhod govorit," *Neva* (1966, No. 2), pp. 201-208. They are part of a forthcoming book of Meyerhold's observations and selected rehearsal notes in translation.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to Miss Rose Raskin for her invaluable assistance in translating these observations.

## NOTES

1. Meyerhold's remark is aimed at the Moscow Art Theater.

2. *Commander of the Second Army* was first performed in Kharkov on July 24, 1929. As was true of a number of playwrights who worked with Meyerhold, Ilya Selvinsky (1899-1968) was not at all happy with Meyerhold's interpretation of his play, though he admitted later that the production significantly influenced his subsequent works.

3. Meyerhold produced Moussorgsky's opera, *Boris Godunov* at the Marinsky Theater in Petersburg (premiere, January 6, 1911) using the settings Golovin had designed for the Paris production (see following note). The production was not a success. Chaliapin sang at only the first two performances. In 1917, Meyerhold flatly refused to work with Chaliapin on Dargomyzhsky's *The Stone Guest*.

4. The film, *Don Quixote* was made in 1932 by the German director, G. W. Pabst. Alexander Sanin (pseud. of Shenberg) (1869-1956) directed Chaliapin in the famous 1908 production of *Boris* for the "Russian Season" in Paris organized by Serge Diaghelev.

5. Maria Ermolova (1853-1928) was one of the outstanding tragediennes of the Russian theater. Stanislavsky considered her the greatest actress he had ever seen. Glinkeria Fedotova (1846-1925) was most famous for her portrayals of Ostrovsky's heroines at the Maly Theater. She retired from the stage in 1905 after an illness left her partially paralyzed, but continued her association with the Maly as an artistic adviser. Alexander Lensky (pseud. of Vervitsiotti) (1847-1908) was not only an outstanding actor but a highly respected teacher and theoretician of the theater as well. Nikolai Muzil (1839-1906) was a character actor famous for his interpretations of simpletons.

The Sadovsky family contributed three generations of actors to the Maly Theater. Meyerhold probably had in mind Mikhail Provovich (1847-1910) and his sister Olga Osipovna (1849-1919), the children of Prov Mikhailovich (1818-1872), founder of the acting dynasty.

6. Vera Komissarzhevskaya (1864-1910), hailed at the height of her career as "the Russian Duse," made her debut in 1891 as Betsy in Tolstoy's *The Fruits of Enlightenment*. She also played Nina in the ill-fated first production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. In 1904 Komissarzhevskaya established her own theater and in 1906 she invited Meyerhold to join her company. Meyerhold's experiments with static Symbolist drama ultimately led to a showdown between the two artists and Meyerhold's ouster the following year. In 1909 Komissarzhevskaya decided to retire from the stage and devote herself to teaching. She died of smallpox while on her farewell tour.

Meyerhold was christened Karl Theodore Kasimir. He changed his name in 1895 when he converted to the Orthodox faith and became a Russian national.

7. *Pelleas et Mélisande* (premiere October 10, 1907) was the production that led to the final break between Komissarzhevskaya and Meyerhold.

8. Meyerhold played the role of Konstantin Trepel'ev in the Moscow Art Theater's premiere performance of *The Seagull* on December 17, 1898.

9. *Dreams* had its premiere on December 21, 1901. In his letter to Chekhov, Meyerhold wrote, "Nemirovich-Danchenko's play has aroused the public's indignation. The author takes an indifferent attitude toward the hated (especially by the young) bourgeoisie. Variegated, colorful, but neither significant nor sincere. They recognized in

the author a pupil of Boborykin [a second-rate nineteenth century dramatist] and are of-  
fended in the name of their favorites—Chekhov and Hauptman.... So much work, so much  
money, and to what purpose?!” Meyerhold wasn’t alone in his opinion of *Dreams*. The  
critics also condemned it. And judging by his annotations of the director’s copy of the  
play, even Stanislavsky was hard put to draw any inspiration from it. This is probably  
why so much money was spent on its external trappings.

Khlebnikov and I were riding on the streetcar, sitting opposite each other. Khlebnikov was wearing a large fur coat with a fur collar, shawl and fur hat. While sitting, he leaned back somewhat, with slightly closed eyes and pursed lips. "Vitia! Right now you look just like an Old Believer," I said.

Instantly, without any hesitation, Khlebnikov asked: "What kind?"

I was taken aback. "I don't know, but just some kind of Old Believer."

"I ask because Old Believers wear beards, but I am clean-shaven."

At someone's home, apparently at Kulbin's, there was a conversation about the corruption of the Russian language by refugees. This was in Petersburg during the war. Shklovsky was orating about the Kievans who, according to him, were introducing their provincialism into Russian. When Khlebnikov became angry, he would shout words in a very high tenor. He cried out like a rooster: "Province comes from the Latin 'pro' and 'vincere,' which means to conquer. A province is a conquered country. In relation to Russian, the provinces are Petersburg, and not Kiev."

For Khlebnikov the words "Old Believer" and "province" and all other words of human speech were not conventional marks signifying something "approximately." For him each word blossomed splendidly, like a bushy tree, with all its meanings and resonances, with all its species-particular similarities and differences, with its synonyms and homonyms.

For the vast majority of people, words are incidental sound combinations to which people have "agreed" conventionally to attach one or another meaning.

Beyond this agreed-upon convention, given sound combinations are in no way distinguished from "meaningless" ones.

This is like people playing cards for chips; and as chips they "conventionally" set in motion any object: matches, nuts, buttons. Matches which light and matches "which are in circulation"; nuts which are eaten, and nuts "which are used as money"; buttons which are sown onto things, and nuts which can be given as change for matches and nuts.

What happened when I told Khlebnikov he looked like an Old Believer? Khlebnikov "vaguely" reminded me of "certain" images which I had seen somewhere of "certain" Old Russian people; and I designated "approximately" the complex of what I had seen and recalled by the words "Old Believer."

For Khlebnikov, however, the words Old Believer did not have an "approximate" meaning, but a large, diverse one, in which the notion of "beard" was undoubtedly included. Therefore the words "Old Believer" which I had uttered in no way embraced the phenomenon designated by it—the beardless Khlebnikov.

Moreover,—and this is the most important thing—in order to sense the



reality that the word did not embrace, it was necessary to sense the reality no less fully than the word. It was necessary to recall the beard not only in the complex of the notion of "Old Believer," but also in the complex of the "beardless" man whom we tried to designate by the word.

Khlebnikov knew not only the meaning of the word "province," but also the meaning of Petersburg and Kiev.

Khlebnikov was a man of vast knowledge and of the keenest sense of reality. What nonsense it is to speak of Khlebnikov as a man not of this world! He knew and sensed this world in all its subtleties, in all the nuances of its historical destiny and of the human psyche. Read him attentively and you will discover in his poetry, prose and letters a million extraordinary subtle, extraordinarily apt, true observations and details of a character very much of "this world."

When Khlebnikov "made up" words, he made them up so as to name a newly created phenomenon or a newly discovered variant of a phenomenon. Khlebnikov was never an esthete of the word. He never thought of a word outside of the object or fact it was supposed to designate.

When Khlebnikov wrote his "Incantation by Laughter," he was convinced that every word in it would find its place in the diversity of the real complex of "laughter."

Kruchenykh would say: "The word 'lily' has been used too much and has become worn out; I say *Euy* and the *original purity* of the word is restored." This is estheticism. No new phenomenon or subtlety of a phenomenon corresponds to the new word. The lily flower simply changes its name. It answered to "lily" and it will answer to *Euy*. And that's all. For Khlebnikov that was not enough. He imparted new realities along with new words. This was the whole point.

And the main thing is that Khlebnikov never "made up" anything, never "invented." He discovered. The inventor creates what does not exist. The discoverer gives us what had always existed. Therefore the creations of an inventor may not come into existence; they can prove to be stillborn. But discoveries—they always existed. The question of the possibility of their existence never even arises. Electricity was discovered. The electric lamp was invented. Geniuses discover, men of talent invent.

Khlebnikov did not make up words. He showed us aspects in language whose existence we did not even suspect.

Kirasanov takes two words and makes from them a third. And this third word does not correspond to any "third" reality. "I loverites" (*Liubliutiki*): Is this a new kind of "buttercups" (*liutiki*), or a new shade of love (*liubov'*)? Neither one nor the other. This is a "work of art," *objet d'art*.

They will say what then is "the word as such?" Namely, "as such." The word must without fail refer to a real thing, otherwise it is "none such."

To translate from one language into another does not mean to translate the words of one language in the words of another. It means retelling in the

words of one's own language the realities related in the words of the language of the foreigner. In order to translate well, one must know not only languages, but mainly the reality dealt with. Whatever a person's knowledge of languages, he will be unable to translate well a novel, say, about the lives of Negroes if he knows nothing about Negroes and their lives. The vast majority of blunders and curiosities with which translations are larded stem not from ignorance of the language, but from ignorance of the subject at hand.

Incidentally, "a Greek word meaning nothing" is a match which did not become a chip. But this of course is not a "word." A word cannot mean nothing.

"Trans-sense" is not "trans-sense speech." It is precisely a "trans-sense," non-lingual combination of distinct sounds of the organs of human speech.

But the moment that some trans-sense sound combination finds itself its reality, it becomes a word. Such was the case with the made-up word "*khlyshch*."

And conversely, if, for a new reality, an artificial word is made up by way of combining semantic pieces—all our Soviet stump-compound words are made up this way—then only those words survive which, overcoming their fragmentariness, acquire an integral phonation characteristic only of them. For example: *narkom*, *komsomolets*, *politruk*. They were hastily sewn together words shreds. They became full-fledged words.

In Mayakovsky's "About This," there is an astounding neologism (line 616). The theme of love responds continuously like an orgelpoint. In line 577, the theme of a journey to the north appears:

**Begut berega—za vidom vid**

**The shores race by—sight beyond sight**

And in line 609:

**Chto za zemlia? Kakoi éto krai?**

**Gren lap liublandiia?**

**What kind of land? What country is this?**

**Green lap luv-landia?**

For one instant two themes have intersected: the theme of love and the theme of journey. And the word "*liublandiia*" flashed like a spark. Yes, a word! Because the most real of realities is designated by it: the unknown of the whole poem, its final meaning.

But it would be a great vulgarity to extract the word "*liub-landiia*" from the context of the poem and enter it in a dictionary of Russian. "*Liub-landiia*"—the land of love. Why a vulgarity? Because the reality designated by the word "*liub-landiia*" is unique and irrepeatable; its only existence was in him, Mayakovsky, at the given moment of creation. One cannot generalize it. This word, which has flared up for an instant and illuminated this reality, cannot be made into an ordinary, current word. *Liub-landiia* is *not* the country of love.

With Mayakovsky there are many such unique poetic flashes and explosions. He is a lyric poet, and this lyricism of his is autobiographical. The history of his time is also part of his autobiography.

**Eto bylo s boitsami ili stranoi,  
ili v serdse bylo v moem.**

**It happened with the fighting men or the country,  
or it happened in my heart.**

This is a variant of the well-known formula of the great lyric Heinrich Heine: "The world split, and the crack passed through my heart."

But Khlebnikov was altogether different. He was in no way, not even in the slightest, a lyric poet.

This does not mean that Khlebnikov was not lyrically moved, that he was dry, callous and heartless. He was irascible. He was easily amused. He was often quite sad.

Khlebnikov, however, would not have thought of writing about this, about his emotions. He was secretive and shy. Moreover, he had a different attitude towards the word. The word for him was least of all "an expressive means," a servant of thought and feeling.

The word for Khlebnikov lived its own life rich in resonances and meanings. He would throw words on paper like stars in the sky and through them prophesied the fate of man and humanity.

What is the meaning of words? Not what they mean, but what they *can* mean. "In the full meaning of the word:" What is this "full meaning of the word?" It is the entire infinite diversity of the existent and possible meanings of the word. And the word in daily life, in everyday human affairs—this is the word in its "incomplete meaning," the word in which only an insignificant part of its meaning has currency, that part which is in practice necessary for "exchange" and for "expression."

But Khlebnikov wrote in the full meanings of words; and his words, full to the brim, stood next to each other without fusing, without agreeing, but like the worlds of the stars, existing by the laws of attraction and repulsion.

With Khlebnikov there are no combinations of words, but constellations of words. Khlebnikov is a star-counter poet (*poet-zvezdochet*).

"Stars, divination by stars, star-counter"—all this is "pictorial" and vague. I agree. But this is Khlebnikov. The stars, their life, their system, the laws of their movement are the unquestionable prototype of Khlebnikov's creative system. He talked a lot about the stars:

**The clear stars of the south aroused in me  
the Chaldean. ("Teacher and Pupil")**

**"... write down the days and hours of feelings  
as if they moved like the stars..."**

**(Letter to Kamensky)**

"... I have equations for the stars, equations for voice, equations for an idea, equations for birth and death." (Letter to V. V. Khlebnikova)

At this point it is appropriate to speak of Khlebnikov's mathematical calculations. But I want to say a bit more about Khlebnikov the poet.

For Khlebnikov, "the word in its full meaning" is not only all the meanings of the word, but also all its resonances, because every resonance for him is full of meaning. Each sound of human speech is intelligible. And Khlebnikov creates semantic constellations of words in M, V, S, K, which cause "practical" people to smile.

What do these "practical" people smile at? And why not smile when Khlebnikov wants to dupe them in the most naive way? Khlebnikov writes: "K begins either words about death—*kolot'* (stab), *koika* (hospital bed), *konets* (end), *kukla* (doll)—or words of deprivation of freedom—*kovat'* (forge), *kuznia* (blacksmith shop), *kol'tso* (ring), *kliuch* (key), *krug* (circle)—words denoting motionless things—*klad'* (load, baggage), *koloda* (log), *kamen'* (stone), *kot* (cat).

"Ha, ha, ha, And *kisel'* (gelatin) and *kuritsa* (chicken)? And *kolbasa* (sausage)? What is this? About death? Or deprivation of freedom? Or motionless things? Go on, don't try to fool me!"

But practical people laugh for nothing. Why should Khlebnikov bother with words which are *not* part of the constellation? Why should a poet bother with words which do not rhyme? These do rhyme! What business is it of Khlebnikov's that he did not include all words in K? And who needs this, this painstaking distribution of words in K according to their meaning? Was it this that Khlebnikov worked at? Idiots! Khlebnikov is not a cataloguer of words—he's a poet. Khlebnikov rhymed words according to sound and meaning. He wrote poems in K, M, S, V, the purest poetry, poetry of the greatest skill, in which words are combined not by the syllogisms of practical speech, but freely, in a self-contained way, according to their own laws "of the word as such."

A most remarkable book is the dictionary, the book of language. In it there is not only all that has been said and all that will be said, but also all that *can* be said. They don't need it; for them it is useless! The poor practical people: they will never read Khlebnikov!

*Translated by Vahan D. Barooshian*

We always speak of literature, the book and the writer. A culture attuned to writing and printing has trained us to think in terms of the printed word. We, the men of letters, only see the word; and for us the "word" always means "printed word." We often completely forget that the word in itself has nothing in common with the printed word—that it is a living, dynamic act which is formed by voice, articulation, and intonation and is also accompanied by gestures and mimicry. We think that "the writer *writes*," but that is not always the case, and in artistic literature it is often not the case. Several years ago German philologists (Sievers, Saran, and others) began to speak of the need for "acoustic" philology (*Ohrenphilologie*) instead of "visual" philology (*Augenphilologie*). This was an extremely fruitful idea, and analyses of this sort have already yielded interesting results in the investigation of verse. Verse, by its very nature, is a particular type of *sound composition* [*zvuchanie*], that is, it is conceived by the poet as pronounced sounds, and therefore the printed text of a poem is only a record, a sign. Such "sound" analysis, however, is just as fruitful in the investigation of literary prose, which may be based on oral *skaz*. The influence of *skaz* is often evident in syntactical turns of speech, in the choice of words and their arrangement, and even in composition itself.

We are accustomed to the elementary division of literature into oral and written. On the one hand, however, the narrator of the *bylina* [Russian epic tale] or the fairy tale generally stands apart from what he is narrating—these narrators are abstract; on the other hand (and this is especially interesting), elements of oral narration and of live, oral improvisation can still be discerned in written literature. A writer often imagines himself to be an oral narrator and by various devices tries to give his written language the illusion of *skaz*. There are, of course, literary forms that are specifically written forms, but these do not comprise all of literature (or more precisely, all of belles lettres [*slovesnost'*]), and traces of colloquial spoken language can be found even in these forms.

It is no accident that we have few contemporary novels of merit and that we cannot write novels the way Spielhagen, Zola, or the earlier English novelists did. It is as though we have lost the feel for the form of the novel and have forgotten the technique. The novel is a mixed genre, one specifically generated by a culture attuned to the written word. The novel is written, not jotted down, and it is written specifically to be read silently. The living word of the narrator is lost in this huge mass of written words—he has no voice. Protracted dialogues, extensive factual descriptions, complexity of plot—all of these make a novel a *book*.

Our Russian novel evolved in its own fashion and had a relatively short

period of development—only in the 1860s and 1870s. The novels of Dostoevsky are constructed by combining a passionate, personal tone with such dramatic devices as prolonged dialogue and conversation. Tolstoy's works are based on a diversity of psychological "concatenations" [*sceplenie*] and on biographical analysis (it is no coincidence that he began with *Childhood and Youth*). Turgenev's novels are mere short stories; there is never a visible plot which involves all his characters, even though there are usually only a few of them. It is easy to distinguish Liza and Lavretsky<sup>1</sup> from the other characters, who merely function as a background; therefore Turgenev can simply interrupt the plot and relate Lavretsky's history in detail in eight chapters. This is characteristic of Turgenev, for he always aspires to tell a story, and he always addresses himself to a listener. Turgenev, one reminiscence informs us, "had the gift of the word and spoke willingly and fluently. It seems he would rather narrate than converse." Dialogue is the weak point in his novels. He is the oral narrator in *A Sportsman's Sketches*, and this is his actual tone. His tales are really told, and on the face of it they are even constructed on the illusion that they are true oral narratives heard at first hand—for example, *First Love*, *The Story of Father Aleksey*, *Hamlet of the Shchigrovsky Region*, and *Living Relic*.

Essentially, a fairy tale is always an improvisation. Its narrative structure is only a scheme and the recording of it simply a separate fact. But these primitive features are preserved in a written short story as well. A short story writer usually, by means of various devices, strives to give the impression that a story is being told at first hand, that it is being improvised. After all, the artist, by nature, is always an improviser. A culture geared to the written and printed word forces him to choose, to reinforce, and to rework his material; but this only makes him try all the harder to preserve at least the illusion that his is freely improvising. When this illusion is maintained while at the same time severity of poetic form is achieved, one has the joyful impression of the artist's power, the impression of free play. This is how *Eugene Onegin* was made—the naturalness of tone, together with the rhythmic constraint of the language, convey the impression of the highest level of free improvisation. Is that not indeed the reason why Pushkin also created Belkin? Because he needed, even if only as a fictitious persona, the particular tone of a narrator. Belinsky, from the elevated vantage point of his theory, did not like *The Tales of Belkin*, but even he noted "the art of narrating (conter)" and admitted that "a family, having gathered on a boring and long winter evening by the fireplace, would read them with pleasure and even with enjoyment." It is also noteworthy that Pushkin took care to identify Belkin's informants; it is as if Pushkin wished to strengthen the illusion of a first-hand *skaz* by tracing the stories back from the writer to an oral narrator: *The Postmaster* was related by a titular councillor, *The Shot* by a lieutenant-colonel, *The Undertaker* by a steward, *The Snow Storm* and *Mistress into Maid* by a girl. It is also no coincidence that the old housekeeper gained Belkin's confidence through her "art in telling stories." This same housekeeper, as the introduction notes, then

pasted over the windows of a wing of the house with the first part of his unfinished novel. She was right—Belkin would never have finished it, and even if he had—the novel would probably not have been successful.

Gogol is an oral narrator of a special sort—one who employs mimicry, gestures, and grimaces. He does not simply relate, he enacts and declaims. It is significant that he began by writing fairy tales and placed them in the mouth of Rudy Panko.<sup>2</sup> But it was he himself who created special forms, *skaz* with exclamations and “mots” of every sort.

Leskov, who is still underestimated, was another born narrator. Novels did not come easy to him, but stories such as *The Sealed Angel* and *On the Edge of the World* are models of high literary artistry. And again it is significant that both are presented as actual stories narrated by specific persons. In this sense, Leskov’s direct pupil is Remizov,<sup>3</sup> who always told stories and forced one to *listen*. His written language is constructed according to the laws of oral discourse; that is, it preserves voice and intonation... Often he makes known the origin of his stories—sometimes with characteristic details: “told by the old lady Anna from the village of Podvore,” or “an Olenets peasant woman told this at the 1914 harvest.” Remizov studied to great advantage the narrative art of folk fairy tales and ancient Russian narratives. The battle between bookishness and the living word can be seen in this older Russian writing. In this respect, Archpriest Avvakum,<sup>4</sup> whose style I think strongly influenced Leskov, is unusually interesting.

One could cite many examples. The written language is not always beneficial to the literary artist. The real artist carries within him the primitive but organic forces of living oral narration. This return to the living word is characteristic of our insane, but at the same time creative era. On the one hand, we have Remizov, who is returning us to the fairy tale, on the other Andrey Bely,<sup>5</sup> who destroys conventional written syntax and even resorts to purely external devices (special punctuation and so on) to preserve in his written language all the gradations of oral *skaz*. Philology must also take cognizance of these developments. New trails are being blazed here, both for criticism and for the investigation of literary prose—an area on which as yet little light has been shed.

*Translated by Martin P. Rice*

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#### NOTES

1. The main figures in Turgenev’s novel, *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (editor).

2. Rudy Panko is the fictional editor of Gogol’s first successful collection of stories *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, 1831-32 (editor).

3. Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov (1877-1957), a twentieth-century prose writer known for his highly stylized and eccentric humor and satire. Remizov’s linguistic inno-

vations had considerable influence on many early Soviet writers (editor).

4. Archpriest Avvakum (ca. 1621-82), leader of the Russian religious sect of Old Believers. He is known in literary history for his *Life* (1672-75), which, in addition to being the first lengthy autobiography in Russian literature, was distinguished for its colloquial, straightforward language that was not at all in keeping with the stilted rhetorical style of most of the Church literature of the time (editor).

5. Andrey Bely (pseudonym for B. N. Bugaev, 1880-1934), a leading Symbolist prose writer and poet, noted, among other things, for his highly complex and original style (editor).



Stylistics has grown like a wild weed on the border between linguistics and the history of literature. Many have investigated style, but only those who have studied the philosophy of language, the esthetics of the word, and the history of literary language have specifically cultivated stylistics as a particular science. As a result, methodological principles of linguistic study have become prominent in stylistics. But these methodological principles conflict with a number of points of view held by literary historians and theoreticians. Thus, almost every stylistic problem balances on a tightrope which stretches between literary disciplines and linguistics. This divergence has rarely proved fruitful. Methodological instability was evident in unclear formulations of problems, in confused methods of research, and in the failure to arrive at definite solutions. The problem of *skaz* is an instructive case. It deals with the functions of the narrator in the composition of the short story and the novel. These genres are not always special forms of the author's artistic, written account of the world of phenomena, created by his intellectual intuition and substantiated by him externally as an object of esthetic consciousness, independently of the personal standards of the narrator. On the contrary, plot dynamics are often refracted in their entirety or in their separate parts through the prism of consciousness and the stylistic design of an intermediary narrator (medium). When this is the case, the author's artistic world is presented not as an objective reproduction in words, but as a creative reflection from the surface of the narrator's subjective perception, or even as a transfiguration in a sequence of unusual, mirrored reflections. It is precisely this question of the narrator's role in the process of artistic-literary creation that has been the object of special studies by O. Walzel, Käte Friedemann, Bracher, Goldstein, Leib, Forstreuter, and other Western investigators;<sup>2</sup> among us there are B. M. Eikhenbaum, I. A. Gruzdev, A. Veksler, M. A. Rybnikova, M. A. Petrovsky, and others.

Problems concerning linguistic forms have also arisen in connection with the concept of the narrator. It seems that the writer does not always write, but sometimes only jots down, as it were, oral conversations and in this way creates the illusion of a *live* improvisation. This is how the problem of "*skaz*" originated. It was posed as one of the problems of narrative technique. Naturally the *skaz* narrator is obliged to use forms of language not as it is written but as it is spoken. His image leaves its imprint on the verbal fabric and thus enables one to perceive the element of oral *skaz*. In this scholarly approach of the literary historians, questions of plot composition and of the architectonics of artistic images were woven together with problems of purely verbal structure to form a net in which the threads of a stylistic analysis were lost, transformed into unsystematic fragments of indefinite statements. The

very term "*skaz*," which appeared to be a synonym for a sort of dimly perceived "spoken language," became a handy label which absolved the investigator from further observations.

From linguistics, however, came the motivation to formulate the question of *skaz* on another, purely verbal plane. Literary historians were troubled by "acoustic philology" (*Ohrenphilologie*)—a byproduct of dialectology. There was a need among literary historians to apply acoustic analysis not only to verse (where the feature of "sounding," quite apparent to everyone, above all impelled investigators to go from "visual" [*Augenphilologie*] to acoustic philology), but also to the domain of literary prose. In the history of Russian studies in modern literature, it was B. M. Eikhenbaum who first urged that this be done. In his article "The Illusion of *Skaz*," however, Eikhenbaum wastes his enthusiasm in the conviction that the writer must be listened to as well as read; that in a short story and even in a novel "the written language is sometimes constructed according to the laws of the spoken language, preserving its voice and rhythms." Turgenev, Pushkin, Gogol, Leskov, Remizov, archpriest Avvakum, and Andrey Bely all parade past as representatives "of the organic forces of living narration." Thus the term "*skaz*" begins to function as a synonym for "the living word," as a symbol of oral speech, "of the illusion of free improvisation" in the verbal composition of a literary work. The fog was not dispelled; it grew more dense. (After all, the "living word" has long been heard in dialogue too.)

But in the article "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' is Made," Eikhenbaum, without giving any clearer exposition of the general notion of *skaz*, elaborates on the stylistic definition of one of the types of comic *skaz*—"reproductive" *skaz*. Gogol's "Overcoat" demonstrates its typical form. Reproductive *skaz*—as distinct from "narrative" *skaz*, which is perceived as flowing speech interspersed with jokes and semantic puns—"has a tendency not only to speak, but, with mimicry and articulation, to reproduce words." It is natural that acoustic philology overlaps here with other areas. Therefore, Eikhenbaum examines the verbal fabric of "The Overcoat" not on a semantic plane, but only from the standpoint of its "mimetic-articulatory power" and its sound [*zvukovoe*] impact. He did not study the structure of "the *skaz*" in the actual sense, but only its "phonetics." He sketched the intonational scheme of "The Overcoat." Eikhenbaum's work is of indisputable value in its penetrating description of the mimetic-declamatory facet of one of the forms of comic *skaz*. But his study did not clarify the concept of *skaz* itself in all its magnitude, and consequently some skeptical questions may be posed: are articulatory reproduction and acoustical interpretation primary and general features for the perception of *skaz* which is fixed in written form? *Skaz* is, after all, rooted in the verbal-semantic picture of a literary work that is destined not only for dramatic recitation and declamatory stage delivery, but that has its own objective nature for everyone. "Acoustic philology," after all, is binding only on its adherents. But writers and readers are not all proponents of "acoustic philology." They are simply people to whom

the text of a short story, its linguistic casing, appears to be a complex conglomerate of esthetic correlations made up of syncretic verbal apperceptions of objects. This objective nature of artistic prose, in its phenomenological essence, is the same for everybody. But when the objective nature of artistic prose is approached by a proponent of a motor-acoustical type of inner speech on a level of "aural philology," that feature of delivery, that is, of artistic-vocal performance, deforms the objective structure of the literary work both creatively and individually. One must formulate the concept of "*skaz*" not on the basis of "acoustic philology" but on the basis of a "syncretic philology" which takes into account all those constructive, lingual elements that lie in the verbal composition of a short story. But one must be grateful to the adherents of acoustical philology for putting the problem of *skaz* on a purely stylistic plane. Even here, however, the problem was immediately further confused by a general question concerning reflections of the living, oral language in narrative prose and by a series of scholarly literary questions concerning the compositional functions of the narrator. But the problem of *skaz*, if approached from these two points of view, breaks down into methodologically unconnected fragments. At the same time, however, both of these views doubtlessly meet at some point in a stylistic analysis of *skaz*.

When the problem of the narrator's role crops up in stylistics, the situation is clear. It is clear when the discussion deals with the infusion of a verbal stream into the channel of a single linguistic consciousness, and it is clear when it is necessary to relate the semantic ligature of the narration to an individual figure who has a particular everyday psychological and social make-up. Problems concerning the functions of the narrator are semantic problems for the field of stylistics. It is a question of the potential verisimilitude of lexical peculiarities, of relating the meanings of symbols to the person and milieu to which the *skaz* is adjusted. A stylistic interpretation of the narrator's functions does not coincide with the interpretation made by literary historians, either in method or in objectives. But even if *skaz* can be freed easily from the literary limitations imposed on narrators of various genres, it is still easier to become involved in the broad area of oral, living speech which is not supported by any scientific definitions. Indeed, if, while elaborating the notion of *skaz*, one proceeds from the notion that the spoken language is its basis, then an unexpected metamorphosis results: the living, spoken language occurs where there is no *skaz*; where *skaz* is obvious, it turns out that there are uncommonly few specific elements of spoken language. But linguistic thunder rumbles above all these contradictions: almost all spoken language, unless merely limited to short replies, contains forms of the written language.

It is clearly useless to apply the notion of oral speech as our raw material without any preliminary processing. And a definition of *skaz* as a literary text which is oriented toward oral speech is insufficient. This is defining one unknown in terms of another. The observation that there is a colloquial speech element at the foundation of a *skaz* composition is of no help either. Elements

of the colloquial language and of live "narrative intonations" are easily found in such literary forms as notes, memoirs, and diaries. *The Diary of a Madman* by Gogol, *The Diary of a Superfluous Man* by Turgenev, Gorbunov's *Dvorecky's Diary*, Veresaev's *Without a Road*, Shklovsky's *Sentimental Journey*, Ropshin's (B. Savinkov's) *The Horse as Crow*, and A. Tolstoy's *Manuscript Found Under a Bed*<sup>3</sup> swarm with them. But this does not make these genres *skaz*. On the other hand, speech that the artist says was created as though spoken, that is, as a *skaz* (for example Prince Myshkin's narration about Marya and the children in Dostoevsky's *Idiot* or Turgenev's short story "The Jew") contains no specific forms of the spoken language whatsoever. Thus *skaz* turns out to be possible without any linguistic orientation toward the living, colloquial spoken language.

The contradictions in defining *skaz* as an orientation toward narrative, oral speech become even more complex when one considers further reflections of oral speech in artistic prose. Hardly anyone would call Chekhov's *Lecture on the Harm of Tobacco*, Andrey Bely's prologue to *St. Petersburg*, Dostoevsky's court speeches in *The Brothers Karamazov*, etc. forms of "skaz." It is clear that if the term "skaz" is understood as a synonym for oral speech, it is better not to use it. The fewer synonyms there are in scientific terminology, the more valuable and understandable that terminology is. It is more expedient to consider how we can differentiate forms and functions of the artistic use of "oral speech." But it is precisely then that we see the necessity of comprehending *skaz* as an artistic correspondence to one of the forms of oral, monological speech.

Oral speech is not simply pronounced, it also has its own organized structural forms. In literary works these organized forms of oral speech (which become part of the written language and themselves include elements of the written language) are radically transformed. But literary works often depart from these forms. Many specifically distinct linguistic, artistic speech constructions arise and are perceived against the background of parallel stylistic sequences in the everyday [spoken] language.

And *skaz* is the existence of individual, artistic constructions which have correspondences in the linguistic system. *Skaz* is a distinctive, combined form of artistic language that is perceived against the background of related monological formations, common in social oral communication. *Skaz* is an artistic construction taken to the second power, since it forms an esthetic superstructure of linguistic constructions (monologues) which in themselves embody principles of compositional-artistic design and of stylistic selectivity.

Indeed, it is known that the dialogue is the most utilized form of social-lingual instruction. Investigators of folk dialects have often pointed out this fact. (Professors E. F. Budde<sup>4</sup> and L. V. Shcherba<sup>5</sup> have written on this subject in Russia.) Therefore, the structure of dialogic speech is even now the object which linguists attentively observe. One might recall the work of Leo Spitzer and L. P. Yakubinsky. But the monologue presents a more complex form, for it is not the conditioning factor of language as the property of a collective,

but a product created by an individual, although there are usually some general norms of monological speech in the stylistic system of a dialect. L. V. Shcherba in his dissertation on the East Sorbian dialect wrote the following about monologues: "Each monologue presents, in essence, a rudimentary form of the common language: on the one hand, traditional elements are always included in it, but on the other, insofar as the monologue is repeated, even though only in part by others, it demonstrates the influence on society of a more vivid individual who is gifted in monologizing." And further he represents the monologue as a conservative speech form, reflecting the norms of the language. But it seems to me that the thesis concerning the conservative character of the monologue must be modified and freed of contradictions. Of course for dialectal study, direct forms of dialogue speech are more important. It is easier to demonstrate that in a dialogue elements of the sociolinguistic system are immediately manifested. The grammatical structure of a dialect and its lexical inventory are dynamically reflected in dialogue, the closest correspondence to the forms of the everyday tenor of life. In a monologue, however, the norms of stylistic appraisal, the element of conscious choice of expressions and the forms of their association, the weighing of the semantic nuances and the emotional flavor of words are in sharper focus.<sup>6</sup>

L. P. Yakubinsky has also mentioned this in his article "On Dialogical Speech" (*Russkaya rech'*, I, p. 144): "It is precisely the element of a rather complex arrangement of lingual material that plays a great role and that places aspects of language into the bright field of consciousness where it is much easier to focus one's attention on them. A monologue not only implies that a means of expression is adequate for a given psychic condition; it emphasizes that the arrangement, the composition of the units of speech, is independent. Here speech relationships become determinants and sources of emotions which arise from their stimulation in the consciousness." A monologue is a special stylistic form of structured speech. One must therefore question not its linguistic, but its stylistic neologisms. True, where aspects of cultural-social lingual intercourse are subtle and complex (as for example among the educated classes), monological speech seems particularly often to be the gate through which new words—words from other languages, dialects, and jargons—enter the language. But more often, the monologue, while remaining within the limits of the lexical-grammatical system of a given dialect, creates stylistic functions for various syntactic schemes. The free command of the forms of monological speech is an art, although, as in every art, it can become stereotyped in particular cases. Of course, art must be made from dialogue too, but a selection of conversants is needed for this. But for a monologue the only creative force required is individual originality.

The aspects of monological speech are varied and depend on stratifications and on forms of social reciprocity. Linguistics, however, has not yet begun to investigate monological speech. There is therefore no classification of monological forms by genre. One must exclude all those forms of monological speech

in daily life which are not attached to the common norms of familial-domestic habit—as, for example, lectures, reports, and so on. One must ignore the varieties of written monological speech as well, especially since many such forms exclude for all practical purposes elements of verbal play and free verbal constructions; these belong to the realm of “administration.”

In the area of immediate, everyday speaking, one can distinguish four types of monological speech: the monologue in a convincing tone—a primitive form of oratorical speech; the lyrical monologue—a lingual form of emotional ulceration; the dramatic monologue—a complex aspect of speech in which the language of words appears only as an accompaniment to other systems of psychic expressions—the language of mimicry, gestures, plastic movements, and so forth; and, finally, the communicative monologue.

The division of these forms of monological speech is determined not so much by thematics as by variations of linguistic functions. Indeed, affective language, language as the expression of emotions, has its own syntactic forms and even its own semantics, and these are determined not by gnosiological linguistic norms, but by its own particular “music,” by its own expressive attributes, and by the direction of its “sensual tone.” And this is what determines the originality of monological constructions of the affective type.

Language in its imperative, resolute, convincing function has often attracted the interest of scholars because of its peculiar variety.

The dramatic monologue is closest of all to dialogue, to the direct connection of sentence units with mimetic-gesticulational communication and with body movements. If monological speech, as opposed to dialogue, is, in general, characterized by an orientation toward verbal composition, through the weakening of mimetic and pantomimic accompaniment, then the dramatic monologue is essentially a form of tense dialogue which omits cues and is based on the principles of dialogic speech, presenting, as it were, a combined series of individual lines spoken by one party to a dialogue.

And finally, a communicative monologue depends to a greater degree on the logical, “to the point” verbal sequences of the language. Depending, however, on whether words appear as nuclei of logical concepts in their abstract-cognitive function, and whether they are subjected in their dynamics primarily to forms of logical correspondences, or whether, while developing an entertaining narrative “fable,” they coincide in their development with the dynamics of the sequence of essential points, two varieties of communicative monologue can be distinguished: the monologue as a discourse, as a primitive form of “learned” language; and the narrative monologue. One must consider this latter [monologue] when one attempts to clarify the concept of *skaz*.

Both in lexical composition and in combining words in syntactical sequences, the language of the narrative monologue has as its goal the forms of the written language. This is understandable: dialogic forms are only partly mixed in the structure of a monologue, which ranges far beyond the limits of any extended cue. Intonations, lexical features, and syntactical frameworks

are more complex in the monologue than in the dialogue, but they are more multiform and more "artificial," as well. One could maintain, it seems, that a significant part of the intonational variations and forms of word order in a narrative monologue (especially among literary, educated people) is of bookish or, generally speaking, of secondary origin; that is, it is created by adapting to a system of oral recitation either syntactical constructions of the written language or any other constructions which are bound to mnemonic signs of complex speech formations. Of course, one must proceed with all due caution here. The smoother the monologue, the more rounded and flowing the movement of its sentences, and the less it reflects the direct struggle between the verbal and conceptual spheres of its speech, the more the elements of a "bookish" reasoning are present, the more the forms of the literary-written language penetrate by various channels even into the most remote dialectal spheres.

But the tendency toward a rapprochement between the written language and monologues is not wholly realized in recitation (even in so far as literary language is concerned). After all, even experienced "artful" narrators sometimes interrupt the verbal chain, have difficulty finding sentences adequate to the presentation, fill pauses with a whole gamut of inarticulate sounds or empty words such as: "so to say," "you know," "hmm-yes," "them," "and so," etc., and deviate in one way or other from a logically-straightforward movement of verbal sequences. In addition, the story's linguistic fabric may be broken by the narrator's stream of emotional commentaries—by direct address to the listeners, and by a series of sonorous interjections. In general, the more vivid the narrator's agitation and the more vivid his highly emotional relationship to his subject matter is, the further removed his monologue is from the logical constraint of written syntax and lexical elements of "bookish" language. Therefore the monologue of drunks, even of drunks who have a perfect command of the literary language, are far from the norm. Various individual anomalies of the narrator, disorders of speech functions (for example stuttering, aphasia, etc.) which prevent the performance from achieving what it intends to can also make it impossible to realize the norms of written speech. Thus in the system of the literary language, narrative monologues are surrounded by a complex chain of heterogeneous motivations which tend to cause digressions from the norms of the common, literary-bookish language to proceed in the direction of direct expressions of individual speaking. These monologues present a type of language which is fluent and which oscillates between two poles: the complicated, logi-cized, monological constructions of the bookish language, and the diversity of expressive statements in the narrative remarks of normal dialogue.

A narrative monologue is possible not only on the basis of literary speech, but also within the framework of any dialect. And here the borders between monological forms of the written, literary language and the variations of oral speech are even more sharply delineated. A ladder of gradual ascents is constructed from the forms of common language to popular-dialectal vocabulary, and even to conventional formations of colloquial and bookish jargon: for

example ecclesiastic. But even when based on other dialects, the narrative monologue preserves the character of an "artificial," "artistic" structure. It rarely finds room within the confines of the living, dialogical language of a dialect. It always retains elements of tradition and whimsical forms of a multilingual mixture. Professor N. M. Karinsky (in his description of the dialects of the Bronnitsky region) has noted the role of "wordly-wise people" as professional narrator-talkers, through whom fragments of literary speech in distorted form come into circulation among the lower classes. Their speech is something like that of the passerby in L. Tolstoy's play "*Ot nee vse kachestva*." The narrative monologues of these "worldly-wise people" are characterized by peculiar interpretations of literary, especially foreign expressions, by mixed forms of syntax, by lack of agreement between syntactical movement and lexical inflection, and in general by a complex amalgam of varied-dialectical elements—living and artificially created, placed in a fictitious frame of literary, stylistic design imitating educated people.

There is no need to enumerate all possible combinations in narrative monologues with a dialectal tint. A conscious blending of various linguistic spheres is the characteristic feature of their construction. Elements of bookish speech, artificial formations based on them, individual expressions of etymological humor, a motley syntactical pattern of complex combinations, a multitude of stratifications of ethnographic dialectology—all of these can overlap in the style of any narrator who has had contact with many dialectal spheres of speech—directly or through others.

The narrative monologue and its variations are a complex problem of "dialectological stylistics." The solution of this problem cannot help but shed light on the question of *skaz*.

*Skaz* is a self-willed literary, artistic orientation toward an oral monologue of the narrative type; it is an artistic imitation of monological speech which contains a narrative plot and is constructed, as it were, as if it were being directly spoken. It is quite clear that "*skaz*" need not consist exclusively of specific elements of the living spoken language, but can even exclude them almost entirely (especially if its verbal structure lies wholly within the system of the literary language). *Skaz* assumes, however, a known dialectal differentiation, that is, a known stratum of society to which it will seem to be more oral recitation than printed literature. But indeed for some social circles the orientation of oral speech to written is characteristic. Dostoevsky has spoken of this in *The Diary of a Writer*: "Someone assured us that now if some critic would like a drink, he would not say: 'Bring me some water,' but would probably say something like this: 'Bring me that essential element of moistening which would serve for the softening of the harder elements which have formed themselves in my stomach.' This joke contains a grain of truth."<sup>7</sup>

Thus *skaz* forms make it possible to blend together in a whimsical way various dialectal spheres and various genres of written speech; and this is the reason for the stylistic acuity of the *skaz* question. If *skaz* itself—by its external



structure—does not wholly fall into patterns and syntactic schemes of oral speech, then there must be signals which give the reader the impression that what he is reading was not created as a work in the written language but as a recitation using the spoken language. And this impression does, after all, determine how the meanings of words are perceived. It is clear to everyone that the semantics of recited speech, to a significant degree, are conditioned by factors that lie outside the verbal sequence. In those cases where language is constructed as written, that is, without any imitation of a speaking situation, there is characteristically a striving to accommodate a whole gamut of meanings in the objective nature of the word. In speech that is heard, however, there are accompanying impressions at work that are conditioned not only by the perception of the narrator's mimetic-pronunciational devices, but also by certain emotional reverberations from his image, from the environment, and from other external conditions; these concomitant impressions considerably influence the general semantic flavor of speech. And they may be used as factors of an artistic transformation of the symbolism of words.<sup>8</sup>

In speech which is not heard, but which must be only a presentation of the recited—on demand of the writer—there are further possibilities for esthetic play within these accompanying impressions.

Indeed, while imagining that the language is being spoken, the reader must be mentally transported to the speaking situation and must reproduce its details by himself. While destroying the expectations of the reader, while playing with his reader's impatient urge to go along the straight path of reproduction—the traces of which he finds in separate sentences—while unexpectedly directing his reader's impressions into a new channel, the artist may force the reader, as it were, to change over from one sphere of speech to another and to involve impetuously the whole verbal fabric of the work in his new perceptions. The illusion is created that the speech is changing over from one plane to another, vacillating until that time when, at some signal, it finally fastens itself to a definite plane.<sup>9</sup>

The possibilities for artistic play by creating the illusion of *skaz* are broadened when speech moves into the so-called extra-literary sphere, beyond the borders of common language. Then the external situation alone does not determine how the verbal forms must be understood. It is, rather, as if a collision of the various planes of lingual perception itself takes place. *Skaz* is constructed by calculating subjectively the apperception of people of a known circle (as, for example, the speeches of Rudy Panko in Gogol are calculated on the apperceptions of close acquaintances, the remote people of the Mirgorod settlement), but with an objective aim—to adopt itself to the perception of a neutral reader. Upon this discrepancy, this lack of convergence of two planes of perception—the alleged and the real—are founded the keen comical effects of linguistic efficacy.

It is easy to imagine a literary work which is created as written speech but makes use of dialectal material, that is, in essence, material which lacks the

stable stylistic forms which written construction possesses. Examples of this are Nikolay Uspensky's imitations of a peasant newspaper, L. Leonov's *Notes of Kovyakin*, and so forth.<sup>10</sup> In these instances speech is perceived as an artistic text, composed of alien lingual materials. And only then are objective correspondences of verbal combinations evaluated in connection with their object significance, as an imprint of some foreign artistic image, far removed from literary-lingual usage. The singularity of the linguistic constructions is of course startling as an original esthetic game. But still the semantic facet of this singularity is commented upon, for it is a facet of language realized outside of my direct participation, though intended for my contemplation. It is another matter when the writer deals with the reader "unceremoniously" as with "his brother-in-law or Godfather," and begins to imitate monological speech for him in a kind of "familiar-neighborly," "boondock," or "officialese" jargon (as in the early short stories of F. Dostoevsky, Grigorovich,<sup>11</sup> and so forth). An especially keen perception of such *skaz* occurs when the author, as a person, addresses the reader directly as an interlocutor who is placed in conditions of a completely alien linguistic pattern. M. Zoshchenko<sup>12</sup> does this in the story "A Terrible Night" (*Kovsh*, I) where the author, having put on an anonymous lingual mask, prescribes as a norm for the reader forms of speech which the reader must fearfully disown.

These deliberations suggest the following conclusion: artistic prose, which is declared to be speech and which is created on the basis of the spoken language, is distinguished from objectively given written speech by the nature of its linguistic interpretation. Authorial indications of the conditions that accompany the *skaz* are therefore necessary if one is to perceive fully the *skaz*'s semantics. After all, when the narrator models his speech "on the written language," that is, when he employs the literary forms but has complete command of them in the spoken language, it is difficult to recognize "*skaz*" stylistically, especially if, after the passage of considerable time, there are no direct indications as to the situation, the narrator, and the listeners. So it is in Turgenev's short stories, "Andrey Kolosov," "Three Portraits," and others. But it would be erroneous to think that *skaz* exclusively serves "extra-stylistic" aims here and that since it does not concentrate the reader's attention on itself by its linguistic construction, it is only needed as a mirror to reflect the psychological image of the narrator through a prism of consciousness which refracts the plot dynamics. The *skaz* form made it possible for the author to reject the elevated phraseology of a sentimental, romantic narrative style and to adapt only separate elements of this style to both the intellectual-colloquial language and the naturalistic manner of portrayal, divested, of course, of all "obscene," "vulgar" tendencies. What was a new form of artistic construction of *skaz* in Turgenev's epoch has now become the norm of written literary speech.

But one may also conceive of *skaz* forms in which the artist does not need to imitate the peculiarities of oral-monological construction, but only to employ in an esthetic way notions which accompany speaking. In other words, what

the writer requires is not the linguistic structure of *skaz*, but only its atmosphere. There arise special forms of *skaz* illusions that may have various stylistic functions, although they are also adapted to the service of extra-linguistic compositional factors, that is, to factors of purely literary order. Dostoevsky clearly testifies to this in the author's remarks to "A Faint Heart" where, alluding to the literary "improvement" of the husband's "raw and unfinished" monological speech beside his dead wife, he declares that the author needed only the "psychological" flavor of the speech. But *skaz* may even fulfill extra-stylistic functions—for example, thematic ones. Such "elevated" *skaz* is found in Gorky, for example, in the short stories "Makar Chudra," "Old Lady Izergil" and others, where, with the aid of *skaz*, the figures of vagabonds and other exotic subjects are colored with cheap cosmetics.

But while aiming at narrative monologue, *skaz* is distinguished from it not only by the individual, artistic complexity of its structure, which takes on the age-old experience of the culture, the oral language into the written. *Skaz* strives to give the illusion that it is merging with the oral narrative monologue, while the oral monologue moves in the opposite direction. The "signals" by which *skaz* is recognized therefore do not have to be included in the author's "remarks," but may be put directly into its linguistic structure. The problem of "signals" is in need of special research.

*Skaz* may rely on the use of those elements of speech that are recognized as anomalies. Deviations from the norms of monological speech become the source of comic effects. The movement of verbal sequences which are not held in check by logical manipulation but instead display leaps and abrupt halts, irksome repetitions of one and the same words, continual slips of the tongue, faulty structures that imitate various forms of speech-function derangements—all these are employed as material for the esthetic game. Against the background of normal monological speech, such constructions give the impression of "linguistic pathology." If the situation and the psychological image of the narrator, however, are not surrounded by a hail of tragic emotions, then the linguistic pathology dissolves into a comical game with verbal abnormalities. One cannot help but see just such a stylistic aspiration in Gogol's organization of the *skaz* of the "foolish old man," Rudy Panko, and his boondock pals.

In general, everything that in real life may be perceived as halting speech, as a defect of speaking, may be reflected in artistic *skaz* as a comic device—and, at the same time—as a signal of "*skaz* construction." But the stylistic functions of *skaz* include not only the comingling of bookish forms with reflections of living speech, not only the mixing of syntactical schemes of bookish and colloquial speech and the lexical regroupings of various strata of the literary language. *Skaz* makes treasures of living and dead words available to the artist. He can freely arrange his inventory of folk dialects, jargons, and various genres of the written language; he can create every possible displacement, such as folk-etymologies, and from all this variegated material he can compose nonrealistic compositional constructions, that is, monologues that are set in indefinite linguistic frames of one general idea or another concerning the social and psycho-

logical coloration of the narrator, who is created by the artist. Of course this introduction of "noncanonized," extra-literary linguistic forms into the conservative dogmas of narrative prose could be realized with the help of dialogue. But dialogue is more strongly constrained by the bonds of life's probabilities. And, besides, dialogue does not create anew the whole world, it only creates people, since their utterances are mostly perceived as a linguistic characteristic and an accompaniment of actions. Even if the object dynamics can be exposed in dialogue, they are nevertheless broken down into several (at least two) psychological levels. There is no unified artistic world here; there are not even total reflections of its parts; there are only fragments. The feature of free verbal play, behind which new outlines of the tangible, artistic world are carefully drawn, can emerge more clearly in *skaz*, for here the narrative plot, evolving in the alien atmosphere of the conditioned monologue, becomes overgrown by a whole thicket of verbal-object conceptions which are alien to literary language. And *skaz* usually absorbs dialogue, or, in any case, struggles with it. When, "like bees in a deserted hive the dead words" of canonized literary-artistic prose begin "to smell bad," then writers, with the help of strange verbal material, begin to create new worlds. Even objects follow the words into new types of constructions. *Skaz* forms are instrumental in creating not only new forms of verbal combinations, which are clearly perceived against the background of the destruction of familiar semantic relationships, but also new methods of the world artistically. For in the short story there is always an object sequence which shimmers through the verbal fiber and moves behind it. And the forms of this sequence are connected with the verbal composition. The more whimsical its outline, the more mixed and diverse are the forms of varied speech blendings in the "*skaz*." The world (which at the same time is alleged from the standpoint of various dialects) from which, by the creative will of the artist, a single stylistic system construed, is a world of complex, stratified reflections; it is not an "object" world that is directly perceptible behind the word, but a world in the light of inner poetic forms. The author drags along with him a chain of alien linguistic consciousnesses, a series of narrators who combine new systems of *skaz* which are taken from bookish, archaic elements—as in Leskov's *Sealed Angel*—or from colloquial-dialectical elements—as in the short stories of L. Leonov, Babel, Ognev, etc.<sup>13</sup>

It will not be possible for me to establish here a classification of *skaz* forms, although such a classification would clarify in detail the very concept of "*skaz*." My aim is to introduce the question of *skaz* into the general channel of stylistics, since it has worn itself to shreds in its aimless wanderings along dark paths.

In those epochs when the forms of written, literary, artistic speech experience a revolution, it is *skaz* which helps language to break with the past. Indeed *skaz* is psychologically limited only when it is attached to the image of a person or his designated representative, that is, to a verbal label. Then to some extent the illusion of an everyday situation is also created, even if object

accessories of the illusion are not indicated. The amplitude of lexical oscillations grows narrow. The stylistic motion leads a secluded life within the narrow confines of a linguistic consciousness that is dominated by the conditions of the social mode of life that is to be presented. Meanwhile *skaz*, preceding from the author's "I," is free. The writer's "I" is not a name but a pronoun. Consequently, one can conceal under it whatever one wants to. It is able to conceal forms of speech appropriated from constructions of various bookish genres and from *skaz*-dialectal elements. An integral psychology is also a superfluous burden for the writer. The writer's broad right to transform has always been acknowledged. In the literary masquerade the writer can freely change stylistic masks within a single artistic work. To be able to do this he needs only a large and heterogeneous linguistic workshop. Such an artist, a reformer of the literary language, transforms his work into a motley garment, woven from variations of different written "*skaz*" forms, from "declamatory-oratorical" speech, and even from the introduction of verse or forms close to it. It is natural that the element of *skaz* becomes the main reservoir from which new aspects of literary speech are drawn. The conservatism of the written literary language is overcome by infusing into it living, varied dialectal elements and their individual, artificial imitations through the means of *skaz*, the transmissive instance between the artistic element of oral creation and the stable tradition of literary stylistic canon. Just as the genres of written speech, in their various social-practical functions, are renewed by contact with forms of oral, monological speech, which is composed of various dialects, so also do specific, artificial, written forms await the influx of new stylistic constructions and phraseology from "*skaz*." In this context the path that Gogol followed in his development is curious. Gradually freeing himself from the remote environment and the narrative masks of the Rudy Panko type, he began to combine complexly written *skaz* and oratorical forms of monologue with dialogue ("The Overcoat," *Dead Souls*). Here the author gradually raised Rudy Panko's *skaz* device to the level of literary-artistic prose, peculiarly deforming and combining it with other stylistic elements. Zoshchenko, who prepared his literary dough with Gogol's yeast and Averchenko's<sup>14</sup> flour, traveled a parallel but easier road. He drowned the author in Sinebryukhov's language ("The Terrible Hand").

The stylistic aspirations of Andrey Bely, Remizov, Pilnyak, Evgeny Zamyatyn, K. Fedin,<sup>15</sup> and others now trace for us the various stages and forms of this process by which literary-artistic construction is rejuvenated by a touch of *skaz*. Often they do not have *skaz*, but a narrative prose "flavored" with *skaz*; sharp, unexpected deviations from the multifarious, exclusively written constructions to the plane of narrative oral monologue. It is a crucible in which ancient synthesized forms of literary narration are blended with various aspects of oral monological speech, a crucible which presages the development of new forms of written, literary, artistic speech. This is the last ascent of *skaz*, and from here we can see that prose will be liberated from those professional colorations that are given in pure forms of *skaz*. When the current epoch of literary

"Shandyism" passes, there will arise a new structure of objectively given artistic speech which will preserve the radiance of creative individualism and embody norms of the common language.

*Translated by Martin P. Rice*

#### NOTES

1. This report was read at the annual open meeting of the Department of Literary Arts on November 29, 1925.
2. H. Bracher, *Rahmenzählung und Verwandtes bei G. Keller, C. F. Meyer und Th. Storm* (Leipzig, 1924), K. Friedemann, *Die Rolle des Erzählers in der Epik* (Leipzig, 1910), M. Goldstein, *Die Technik der zyklischen Rahmenerzählungen Deutschlands von Goethe bis Hoffmann*, Dissertation (Berlin, 1924). K. Forstreuter, *Die Deutsche Icherzählung* (Berlin, 1924). This last book gives further bibliographic references.
3. Ivan F. Gorbunov (1831-1896). Writer and actor. Gorbunov was a master platform performer and printed his repertoire of stories. His tales were distinguished by their dialectal character and stylistic representation of various strata of Russian society. V. V. Veresaev (pseudonym for Smidowicz, 1867-1945). Well-known writer, critic, and translator. V. Ropshin (pseudonym for B. V. Savnikov, 1879-1925). Russian revolutionary figure and terrorist. Minister of War under the Kerensky Provisional Government and author of several novels, fictional accounts of his revolutionary activities (translator).
4. Evt. Budde, *Toward A History of Great Russian Dialects [K istorii velikoruskikh govorov]* (Kazan, 1896). Appendix I: "Our peasants conduct no long speeches; one finds almost no monologues among them."
5. L. V. Shcherba, *The East Sorbian Dialect [Vostochno-luzhitskoe narechie]* (St. Petersburg, 1915).
6. Concerning this, see my article "On the Tasks of Stylistics" [*"O zadachakh stilistiki"*], *Russian Speech [Russkaia rech']*, I (1923).
7. *The Diary of a Writer. Critical Articles [Dnevnik pisatelja. Kriticheskie stat'i]*, Vol. IX, Pt. I. Published by Marks, 1895, p. 59.
8. See G. Shpet, *Esthetic Fragments [Esteticheskie fragmenty]*, Vol. III (Moscow, 1923).
9. See my book: *Stylistic Sketches. The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova [Stilisticheskie nabroski. Poeziia Anny Akhmatovoi]* (Leningrad, 1925).
10. Nikolay V. Uspensky (1837-1889). Cousin of the Russian realist, Gleb Uspensky. Nikolay's sketches of peasant life were noted for folk dialect and dialogues (translator).
11. Dmitry V. Grigorovich (1822-1899). Russian prose writer noted for his realistic, sympathetic, early portrayal of peasant life in his stories (translator).
12. Mikhail M. Zoshchenko (1895-1958). Famous Soviet satirist and humorist, particularly known for his *skaz*-style dialect and jargon (translator).
13. N. Ognev (pseudonym for Mikhail G. Rozanov, 1888-1938). Early twentieth-century story writer and novelist (translator).
14. Arkady T. Averchenko (1881-1925). Early twentieth-century humorist and satirist (translator).
15. Boris Pilnyak (pseudonym for B. A. Vogau, 1894-1937?); Evgeny I. Zamyatin (1884-1937); Konstantin A. Fedin (b. 1892). Pilnyak and Zamyatin are especially known for their *skaz*-style stories. Fedin, after writing the avant-garde novel, *Cities and Years*, became a writer of realistic novels (translator).





Alexei Kapitonovich Gastev, 1882-1941



Kathleen Lewis &  
Harry Weber

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ZAMYATIN'S *WE*, THE  
PROLETARIAN POETS,  
AND BOGDANOV'S  
*RED STAR*

Zamyatin's brilliant novel *We* continues to exert a lasting fascination. There have been useful studies on the patterns of imagery in the novel, on the use of Dostoevskian themes, on Biblical myths, and on the work as political statement.<sup>1</sup> Source studies have pointed to the works of Tsiolkovsky, and H. G. Wells as antecedents. Jerome K. Jerome's "The New Utopia," in particular, has recently been cited as a direct source for certain details in the book.<sup>2</sup> Soviet reactions to the novel are nearly non-existent; whatever commentary can be found deals with the book's political aspects. For example, Gorky is on record as saying that "*We* is hopelessly bad, a completely sterile thing." And Voronsky's extensive essay terms the novel "a lampoon. . . not concerned with communism," adding that "Everything here is untrue." His opinion was essentially repeated by M. Kuznetsov in *New World* in 1963.<sup>3</sup>

This article addresses itself to one vital aspect of the novel which the authors believe has been neglected: the relationship of this novel to the literary milieu of the years immediately following the Revolution, specifically the proletarian poets and Bogdanov's novel *Red Star* (*Krasnaia Zvezda*). We believe that Zamyatin parodied the excesses of the proletarian poets through ridicule of their

characteristic language and ubiquitous themes. Furthermore, Zamyatin underscores the parody by borrowing the hero and a number of key plot situations from *Red Star* (1908), written by A. A. Bogdanov, chief theoretician of the Proletkult.

The most outspoken expression of Zamyatin's negative attitude toward the proletarian poets is to be found in his essay "Paradise" (1921),<sup>4</sup> in which he inveighs against their meaningless use of hyperbole, inhumane glorification of the instruments of war, intolerance and arrogance, and the urge toward "monophonism" in the new state. Many passages in the novel are identical in tone to verses quoted in Zamyatin's essay as exemplary of the bad taste or ineffective hyperbole of the new poets. Further, a close reading of the novel reveals clear echoes of specific themes, poetic cliches, and imagery then current in the endeavors of the proletarians.

### I: *We* and the Proletarian Poets

The most important proletarian poets were V. D. Alexandrovsky, M. P. Gerasimov, A. K. Gastev, V. T. Kirillov, V. V. Knyazev and S. A. Obradovich, who occupied a very prominent position in early Soviet cultural life. Their official organization, the Proletkult, was founded by A. A. Bogdanov (Malinovsky), theoretician on art and the artist, in 1917, and was supported by Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar of Education.

The Proletkult saw as its task the creation and encouragement of new literary and cultural cadres from the ranks of the workers and founded its famous "litstudios" for that purpose. It developed a widespread net of "urban, provincial, district, regional, and factory proletkults, which aimed at leadership, not only of literature, but of all branches of proletarian art. Special sections dealt with the theater, painting, music, workers' clubs, etc. . . in 1919 about 80,000 people took part in the work of the studios."<sup>5</sup>

Directives and progress reports were given in nearly twenty Proletkult journals, such as *The Forge (Gorn)*, *The Smithy (Kuznitsa)*, *(Proletarian Culture, Factory Whistles (Gudki), Create! (Tvori!)*, *Coming Days (Griadushchee)* and the local proletarian organs. The works of the proletarian poets were frequently read at the meetings of the local Proletkult groups. For example, a 1921 Petrograd Proletkult review of its activities reports public readings from the works

„Пролетарии всех стран соединяйтесь“

# КУЗНИЦА



Cover of *The Smithy*

of Gastev and Kirillov on May 1, 1918; and the Moscow Proletkult report for 1919-1921 speaks of performances by a speaking choir of Kirillov's "We" and the works of Alexandrovsky.<sup>6</sup>

The very title of Zamyatin's *We* is, as E. J. Brown notes, an ironic reference to the glorification of collectivism by the proletarian poets.<sup>7</sup> Kirillov, Gerasimov, Alexandrovsky, and Kraisky wrote poems entitled "We," and the word occurs as part of the title in the verse of Malyshkin, Malakhov, Samobytnik, and Maznin, as well as in several of Gastev's poems—"We Grow from Iron," "We Are Together," "We Have Encroached," and "We Are Everywhere."<sup>8</sup> All of this accords with Bogdanov's view of the function of art as "the most powerful weapon for the organization of collective forces. . . The former artist saw in his work the expression of his individuality; the new artist will understand and will feel that in him and through him a great whole is creating—the collective."<sup>9</sup> And so in Record 1 of *We* D-503 promises to transcribe "only the things I see, the things I think, or, to be more exact, the things we think." Zoshchenko's remark about his own art comes to mind: "The fact is that I am a proletarian writer. Or rather, I am parodying with my things that imaginary, but genuine proletarian writer. . ."<sup>10</sup> Zoshchenko's erstwhile teacher Zamyatin may well have invented this idea, embodying it in the figure of the mathematician-turned-writer composing paeans to the utopian future which sound suspiciously like the literary products appearing daily in the new Soviet state of 1917-1920. The overall tone of the novel is one of parody, and a closer look at language, themes, and imagery will bear out this view.

Zamyatin was extremely careful to use suitable diction and speech proper to the milieu which he was describing, as his essay "On Language" (1919-20) indicates. Propagandistic rhetoric is common in the works of the proletarian poets:

**Orchestras—louder, banners—higher,  
Glorify the Great Workers' Union,  
Glorify the legions of world fighters,  
The army of blue soiled shirts.**

**Long live the First of May!  
May the last ices vanish!!**

Let the whistle blow! Tell the whole world  
That we will all die or return with victory!  
"Get up, arise, working people!  
Your mortal enemy is at the gates!"<sup>11</sup>

This propagandistic and didactic language is echoed in *We*, in such lines as "Long live the Well-Doer!!!" (*We*, Record 1, 4), and the "poetry" of the State Poets.<sup>12</sup> Demian Bedny is perhaps the clearest representative of "agit-poetry" and, as Lvov-Rogachevsky says, "In 1920 it might seem that all literature had become Demian Bedny-like." Paperny describes Bedny's poetry as dealing with "the most everyday themes—a trait, as we shall see, which is particularly important for the literature of those years."<sup>13</sup> Camilla Gray indicates that artists during this period participated in public agit-displays on hygiene, or even on such topics as "how to breathe."<sup>14</sup> This mundane, practical, and edifying subject matter is clearly mocked in *We*, especially in the titles of literary works: the versified "Mathematical Norms," "Thorns," "Daily Odes to the Well-Doer," "Flowers of Court Sentences," "the immortal tragedy 'Those Who Come Late to Work'," and "the popular book, 'Stanzas on Sex Hygiene!'" (*We*, Record 12, 65).

Zamyatin also deals with the concept of poetic inspiration. Bogdanov himself had once written that "In the sphere of artistic creation the old culture is characterized by the vagueness and unconsciousness of its methods ('inspiration,' etc.)."<sup>15</sup> In *We* (Record 4) the lecturer tells his listeners that their ancestors "could create only by bringing themselves to attacks of inspiration, an extinct form of epilepsy," and contrasts this condition with the superior method of cranking out three sonatas an hour on the newly-invented musicometer. One suspects that it was this mechanical quality which led Trotsky to complain: "But weak and, what is more, illiterate poems do not make up proletarian poetry, because they do not make up poetry at all."<sup>16</sup> In Record 12, D-503 tells us that "in the same manner, we domesticated and harnessed the wild element of poetry. Now poetry is no longer the unpardonable whistling of nightingales, but a State Service! Poetry is a commodity" (65). We know from Zamyatin's own article "I Am Afraid" (1921) that this idea is antithetical to his own that the poet must be a dreamer and a madman. (*SH*, 57).

Zamyatin's article "Paradise" is useful here, too, because it displays a satirical tone which is also apparent in *We*. In the

article Zamyatin speaks of a return to the state of paradise—lack of freedom—and says, “There shall be no more polyphony or dissonances. There shall be only majestic, monumental, all-encompassing unanimity . . . And so, it is clearly on this granite foundation of monophony that the new Russian literature and the new poetry are being created . . .” After quoting examples from the proletarian poets he continues, “. . . hymns are the natural, logical, basic form of paradisiac poetry . . . And the same label prevails as had once prevailed in relation to Ialdebaoth and the High Personages of earth: We, Ours, All-Blessed, All-Merciful” (*SH*, 61). In *We*, R-13 takes up the same themes (Record 11): “The Well-Doer, the Machine, the Cube, the Gas Bell, the Guardians—all these are good. All this is magnificent, beautiful, noble, lofty, crystalline, pure . . . how about a little paradisiacal poem like that, eh?” (*My*, 56). The capitalized titles, the similar metaphors (Paradise, hymns), and similarity of diction (“majestic,” “paradisiac”) show the close relationship between the two passages. Another passage in *We*, the description of the Day of Unanimity—“Even if one supposes the impossible, i.e., some kind of dissonance amid our usual monophony . . .” (*We*, 119)—also indicates the same satiric tone that is openly displayed in “Paradise” and directed specifically against the proletarian poets.

*We* deals in large part with four clusters of motifs: technology, the individual vs. the collective, the “mystery” of labor, and cosmism. Virtually all the proletarian poems of this period deal with these same motifs, and they vary primarily only in the proportion which each motif occupies in each poem. The most satisfying example of a nearly obsessive use of all of these themes is the work of Alexei Gastev (1882-1941), a figure whom Lunacharsky called “perhaps the most outstandingly gifted proletarian poet” and Pletnev termed “the pioneer of proletarian poetry.”<sup>17</sup> Gastev’s most popular work, “Shockwork Poetry,” (1918) “was sold out in a short time, it was constantly quoted, referred to, republished.”<sup>18</sup> There were six editions in all by 1926. Pertsov also notes that his poems, including the popular “We Grow from Iron,” “Factory,” “Whistles,” “Rails,” and “Tower,” were printed in 1918-19.<sup>19</sup> Viktor Nekrasov recalls that as a schoolboy in 1923, the literary studies for the fifth “group” consisted only of Radishchev’s “Journey from Petersburg to Moscow” and Gastev’s “Shockwork Poetry.”<sup>20</sup> What is most striking is not Gastev’s poetry, however, it is his view of the world of the future, which is

as bizarre as some of the elements of Zamyatin's *We*. In a statement on proletarian culture written in 1919, Gastev speaks of human psychology:

The mechanization, not only of gestures, not only of production methods, but of everyday thinking, coupled with extreme rationality, normalizes to a striking degree the psychology of the proletariat. It is this very feature which gives the proletarian psychology a striking anonymity, which allows one to qualify the individual proletarian unit as A, B, C or as 325.075 and 0, etc. . . The manifestations of such a mechanized collectivism are so alien to personality, so anonymous, that the movement of these collective-complexes approaches the movement of things so that it seems that there is no longer an individual human being, but even, normalized steps, faces without expression, a soul without lyricism, emotion measured not by a cry or a laugh, but by manometer and taxometer . . . In this psychology, from one end of the world to the other, flow potent massive streams, creating one world head in place of millions of heads. This tendency will next imperceptibly render individual thinking impossible, and thought will become the objective psychic process of a whole class, with systems of psychological switches and locks.<sup>21</sup>

Gastev's enthusiastic interest in production processes led him naturally to the works of Frederick W. Taylor, the American efficiency expert, and in the same article for *Proletarian Culture*, quoted above, the poet attempted a "taylorized" chart of four kinds of workers in the metal-working industry (pp. 38-41). Lunacharsky wrote that Gastev "is heralding the beginning of an epoch of pure technology and, following Taylor's footsteps, is introducing the idea of subordinating people to mechanisms, of the mechanization of man."<sup>22</sup> In the twenties, Gastev was made the director of the Central Institute of Labor (TsIT). Ernst Toller's bemused account of his visit to Gastev's training workshops in 1926 is worthy of any scene in *We*, for Gastev literally practices the mechanization of human beings.<sup>23</sup>

This mentality is reproduced by Zamyatin in *We*. D-503 expresses his admiration for Taylor early in the novel, and his thoughts are sometimes reminiscent of Gastev: "Up to now my brain was a chronometrically tested, sparkling mechanism . . ." (*We*, Record 7, 31). Zamyatin develops the same idea in the parable of the Three Forgiven Ones: "for hours they repeated those motions which they had been used to making during certain

hours of the day and were a requirement of their organism" (*We*, Record 34, 168).

One of the clearest cases of parody of proletarian poetry in *We* involves the proletarians cliché-ridden images of metal, factory, and forge. The motif is monotonously common:

We are of iron, or steel...

*Мы из железа, Из стали...*

.....The hammers sing:  
Here from morning to night  
The smiths forge happiness.

*..... Молотки поют:  
Счастье здесь с утра до ночи  
Кузнецы куют.*

Long ages forged  
the steel strength of his steps.

*Его шагов стальную силу  
Ковали долгие века.*

Boldly in "The Smithy" we forge  
Our will, thoughts, feelings:  
Collectively we create  
Proletarian art.

*Смело в "Кузнице" куем  
Нашу волю, мысли, чувства:  
Пролетарское искусство  
Коллективно создаем.*

Beside the forge, lit by a bright-shining fire  
I forge with a hammer a piece of white-hot steel...  
In this world, in this world, you alone created all,  
Untiringly day and night you forged and forged and forged...<sup>24</sup>

*Возле горна, освещенный яркблещущим огнем  
Я кую отрезок стали раскаленной молотком.  
В этом мире ты один все создавал,  
Неустанно днем и ночью все ковал, ковал, ковал...*

Kirillov apotheosized the "divine" mission of iron in his poem "Zheleznyi Messiia" (1918). But, even more than his fellow poets, it was Gastev who was drawn to metallic images. His poems speak of "iron" choirs, "forged" space, "iron" blood, the "steel" will of labor, and "steel, forged will."<sup>25</sup> Gastev's overuse of such imagery was even parodied by a fellow proletarian poet, Kiselev, who accused him of weighing down his contemporaries with his "iron iambs" and ended, "Oh, how heavy are these iron days!"<sup>26</sup>

Zamyatin wryly refers to this stock of images in his essay "New Russian Prose" (1923) by saying that in "The Smithy" and "Forge" several poets had been "hammered out" ("vykovalos"). In *We*, D-503 hears just such an "iron" poem about Prometheus: "(he) harnessed fire to steel machine,/ And enchained [zakoval] chaos with the Law." D-503 continues: "Everything is new, steel:



a steel sun, steel trees, steel people. . . One could not have chosen more instructive and beautiful images" (*We*, Record 9, 43). This is a clear case of parody of proletarian poetry. It is particularly reminiscent of Sadovev's "conquering dark chaos,/ We rule the world collectively" and Gastev's "Boldly I called to battle dark once-terrible, evil elements: I conquered, tamed, enchained [*zakoval*] them."<sup>27</sup>

Two other favorite images of the proletarians were the railroad engine and the wheel. Gastev, for example, entitled one work "Express" and lines such as the following are common:

**The insatiable running of wheels is our banner...**

**. . . our train rushes on . . .**

**The express rushes on . . .**

**. . .the train, bending its back rushing headlong. . .**<sup>28</sup>

In *We*, D-503 writes in Record 3: "The Tables transformed each one of us, actually, into a six-wheeled steel hero of a great poem" (13). This is clarified by Zamyatin's remarks elsewhere. In a letter to Yury Annenkov in 1921, he told him in essence about *We*: "People are greased with machine grease."<sup>29</sup> Again, in "I Am Afraid" he chided, "The proletarian writers and poets are diligently trying to be aviators astride a locomotive. The locomotive huffs and puffs sincerely and assiduously, but it does not look as if it can rise aloft" (*SH*, 56). Thus the reference in *We* seems clearly related to the use of an engine as a major motif in proletarian poetry.

Gastev's "manifesto" of 1919, and Lyashko's statement of 1922, claim the primacy of the collective over the individual, and the image of the one versus the "millions" constantly recurs: "Millions of voices sang these songs to me,/ Millions of blue-shirted, strong, bold smiths."<sup>30</sup> These mass activities are particularly striking in Gastev's "Factory Whistles" ("Gudki"), one of his most popular works, cited in 1918 by Bogdanov as a superior example of proletarian art:

**When the morning factory whistles blow in the worker's districts,  
It is no call to bondage. It is the song of the future.  
Once we worked in miserable workshops and began  
work in the morning at different times.**

But now, at eight in the morning, the whistles  
    sound for the whole million.  
Now minute for minute we begin together.  
The whole million takes the hammer at the very same instant.  
Our first blows sound together.  
Of what do the factory whistles sing?  
They are the morning hymn of unity.<sup>31</sup>

This prose poem is closely paralleled by a passage in *We*, in which the ideas of the "million," or the "million-armed" body, and insistence on perfect simultaneity recur:

Each morning, with six-wheeled precision, at the very same hour, at the very same minute, we, millions, arise as one. At the very same hour, millions as one, we begin work—millions as one we finish it. And merging into a single, million-armed body, at the very same second, designated by the Tables, we raise the spoons to our mouths, and at the very same second we go out for a walk and go to the auditorium, to the hall of Taylor exercises, and go to sleep. (*We*, Record 3, 17).

Gastev elevates labor to the status of a divine ritual—"But silence—a sacred moment: we put on our working shirts" ("Miracles of Labor")<sup>32</sup>—and his "hymns" to labor find counterparts in the novel's "hymn of the United State" and the "solemn liturgy for the United State" (Record 9, 42).

Proletarian poems are not only hymns, but also triumphal marches:

In advance we rejoice and trumpet  
And we'll begin work with a march of victory...  
  
With a victory march we'll drill into the clouds  
of the dark day...<sup>33</sup>

Zamyatin makes much of this in *We*: "The pipes of the Music Factory thundered out harmoniously a March—the same daily March" (Record 7, 34). This March recurs frequently:

As always, the music factory was playing the March of the United State with all its pipes. With measured steps, by fours, exaltedly keeping time, the numbers walked—hundreds, thousands of numbers, in light-blue unifs, with gold badges on the chest—the State number of each, male or female. (Record 2, 8).

This passage parodies the victory march, the anonymous masses, the sameness, and particularly the music of machinery which is omnipresent in the verse of the proletarian poets:

**iron scales, choirs of iron rumbling. . .**

**the steel round-song of machines. . .**

**by the machine singing songs. . .**

**From the Iron Mont Blanc there came to our working masses the poem raised by us...the exalted cry of the machine, the triumphant song of forged metal.<sup>34</sup>**

The concept of "cosmism," or conquering the universe and spreading the revolution to other planets and the stars, was developed primarily by the proletarian poets of the Smithy group. Gastev had anticipated them with such lines as:

**Ever try to forge and forge, ever try to raise and push  
heavy steel rails into the endless, unknown, mute  
atmospheres to neighboring, still unknown, strange planets.**

**. . .they will enchain and girdle the universe with swift,  
strong rails of will.**

**through the air came a burning poem of metal, a voice  
was heard, coming from earth through the beams  
past the clouds to the stars.**

This theme is continued by the Smithy poets:

**We'll boldly fly up into the sky  
Like a thunder-roaring comet  
We'll slice through Milky Ways.**

**Cosmic millions,  
We will plunge ourselves into the old world constellations.  
In the white star-clusters of Orion  
We'll light the fire of insurrection.**

**(Gerasimov, "We shall conquer, the power is simmering," 1918)**

and

**And now we come out in orderly ranks,  
Victoriously greeting the heights.**

Participants in a great change...  
And with the songs of the proletariat  
The paths of the universe will be decked.  
Fellow-singers, make haste  
To shape the factory rumble into a hymn.  
(Rodov, "Proletarian Poets," 1920)<sup>35</sup>

Trotsky wrote sarcastically of the Smithy: "The idea here is that one should feel the entire world as a unity and oneself as an active part of that unity, with the prospect of commanding in the future not only the earth, but the entire cosmos. All this, of course, is very splendid, and terribly big. We came from Kursk and Kaluga, we have conquered all Russia recently, and now we are going on towards world revolution. But are we to stop at the boundaries of 'planetism'!"<sup>36</sup>

The opening page of *We* is filled with the same theme: "One thousand years ago your heroic ancestors subjected the whole earth to the power of the United State. A still more glorious task is before you: the integration of the infinite equation of the Cosmos by the use of the glass, electric, fire-breathing *Integral*" (*We*, Record 1, 3). This passage is surely nothing less than a parody of the proletarian's idea of cosmic revolution, given an "objective correlative" in *We* in the projected flight of an actual spacecraft.

Zamyatin draws still another parallel to the proletarian poetry in his depictions of the building of the *Integral*. There is great similarity between the Taylorized precision of Gastev's factories and the construction of the spacecraft:

Gastev:

The factory... completely full of its steel, invincible pride, threatens the elements of earth... sky... universe and it is hard to understand, where machine is and where man. We have merged with our iron comrades, we have reached an accord with them, together we have created a new spirit of movement...<sup>37</sup>

*We*:

I saw how the people below bent, unbent, turned around according to the Taylor system evenly and swiftly, in time, like the levers of one huge machine... I saw how the transparent-glass monster-cranes rolled slowly along the glass rails, and, just like the people, obediently turned, bent, thrust their loads inward, into the bowels of the *Integral*. And it was all one: humanized machines, mechanized people. It was the greatest, most stirring beauty, harmony, music... (*We*, Record 15, 73).

The "monster" machines appear both in *Gastev* and in *We*.<sup>38</sup> Machines are humanized in both—the *Integral* "meditates" on its future (Record 15) and *Gastev's* "Express" "wants" to melt small souls to create one large one (*PP*, 170). Two other passages in *We* parallel those in "We Grow from Iron":

**Gastev:**

...Girders and angle bars. . .  
Bend to the right and left.  
The rafters in the domes, like  
a giant's shoulders, hold the  
whole iron building.

... Балки и угольники...  
Загибаются справа и слева.  
Соединяются стропилами в  
куполах и, как плечи великана,  
держат всю железную постройку.

I merged with the iron of the  
building.  
I rose.  
I push my shoulders against the  
rafters, the upper beams, the  
roof.  
My feet are still on the earth,  
but my head is above the build-  
ing...  
An iron echo covered my words,  
the whole building trembles with  
impatience...<sup>39</sup>

Я слился с железом постройки.  
Поднялся.  
Выпираю плечами стропила,  
верхние балки, крышу.  
Ноги мои еще на земле, но  
голова выше здания.  
Железное эхо покрыло мои  
слова, вся постройка дрожит  
нетерпением...

**We**

obviously, the balls of the regula-  
tors rotated, cranks, glittering,  
bent to the right and left: the beam  
proudly shook its shoulders. . .  
(Record 2, 7)

самозабвенно, кружились шары  
регуляторов, мотыли, сверкая,  
сгибалось вправо и влево; гордо  
покачивал плечами балансир. . .

And it seemed to me that not  
past generations, but I myself  
had won a victory over the old  
god and the old life, that I myself  
had created all this. I felt like a  
tower: I was afraid to move my  
elbow, lest the walls, the cupola,  
and the machines should fall to  
pieces. (Record 2, 7).

Итак: будто не целые поколения  
а я—именно я—победил старого  
Бога и старую жизнь, именно я  
создал все это, и я как башня, я  
боюсь двинуть локтем, чтобы не  
посыпались стены, купол, ма-  
шины...

In these lines one also finds an echo of Gutsevich's line "In this world, in this world, you alone created all." A few lines before those quoted above from *We*, Zamyatin's "you rise ever higher into the dizzy blue" parallels Vasily Kazin's "I rise into the blue heights."<sup>40</sup>

Finally, one might also point to the ending of *We* and its note of assurance: "And I hope we shall prevail. More than that. I am sure we shall prevail. Because reason must prevail." Gastev is equally self-assured at the conclusion of "We Grow from Iron": "We shall prevail!"

In *We* Zamyatin holds up to ridicule an entire complex of ideas which are intimately connected with the poetry of the proletarians: its emphasis on collectivism, the mechanization of humans, cosmism, the apotheosis of labor and the glorification of the State. And the pages of *We* also resound with the incessant din of the motifs of metals, forges and locomotives. Zamyatin's essays show clearly that he was a close reader of the poems produced by this group of poets, and his re-creation of their religious tone and use of their industrial images point persuasively to the proletarians as the targets of some of the satirical shafts of the novel.

## II: *We* and Bogdanov's *Red Star* (*Krasnaia Zvezda*)

Several years ago E. J. Brown made note of the general connection between *We* and the proletarian writers, although he made no extensive analysis of this connection. Collins, too, notes this, and suggests that "*We* may be regarded as a satire on Wellsian utopia" to some degree.<sup>41</sup> There is no doubt that some of the urban setting and tone of the novel were surely suggested by Wells. The first part of this article has tried to show the many links between *We* and the language and themes of the proletarians. But evidence also suggests that both the hero D-503 and the overall parameters of the novel were inspired by another proletarian work, A. A. Bogdanov's utopian novel *Red Star* (1908). The details, themes and images common to both novels are too numerous to be accidental. Zamyatin mentions Bogdanov's novel in his 1922 article on H. G. Wells as one of the very few examples of science fiction in the Russian tradition.<sup>42</sup> His disclaimer that it "has more journalistic than literary value" may have been intended to forestall suspicions of any connections between his

and Bogdanov's novels. Bogdanov's second utopian novel *Engineer Menni* (1912) also has some relevance to *We*.<sup>43</sup>

*Red Star*, in brief, concerns the visit of an Earthling to the more advanced civilization of Mars. The hero, 27-year-old Leonid, is invited to join an "expedition" by a Martian working in disguise in the ranks of the Russian revolutionaries under the conspiratorial name of Menni. The purpose of Leonid's inclusion in the crew of the expedition is to serve as the liaison between the two worlds, to bring them closer together. The trip is marred by one event: an accident in the laboratory of the spacecraft during the journey to Mars pierces the skin of the craft, and a master chemist, Letta, sacrifices his life to save Leonid's. This incident earns Leonid the hatred of Sterni, Mars' leading mathematician, who deplores the loss of such a brilliantly-trained mind for the sake of an apparently inferior one. For in spite of his scientific training, Leonid finds himself unable to comprehend many of the technical achievements which the Martians have made. A series of scenes acquaint Leonid and the reader with the world of the future some 300 years hence: a tour of the *eteronef*, or spacecraft, Menni's Martian home, a factory, a children's home, an art museum, and a hospital. Leonid becomes involved in a love triangle and falls ill in the fruitless attempt to retrain his Earthly mind to function in the Martian world. He becomes seriously unbalanced when he learns by chance of Sterni's proposal to exterminate Earth's population, in order to prepare the planet for its colonization by Mars. In a fit of rage Leonid kills the mathematician and is returned to Earth in a kind of coma. He remembers nothing of the return trip and regains consciousness in a hospital in the far north of Russia. But in the last few pages of the novel Leonid escapes from hospital and goes to the "Mountain region," where "serious events have now begun" (Preface). At the end of the novel the hospital director, Dr. Verner, is sending Leonid's notes to "litterateur Mirsky" so that they may be published. Verner himself has abandoned his hospital to search for Leonid. In the doctor's opinion, "the object of (Leonid's) flight is an attempt at indirect suicide. It is the result of that same mental illness. . ."

There are many important parallels between the experiences of Leonid in *Red Star* and D-503 in *We*. Consider first Leonid's character and intellect. Bogdanov portrays Leonid as a scientist interested in the problem of the structure of matter,

and a man of letters who writes for the children's journals (7). Zamyatin depicts D-503 as both engineer and inchoate man of letters. During the trip to Mars, Menni (who turns out to be the captain of the *eteronef*) explains why Leonid was chosen for this assignment: it was necessary to find someone in "your country where life is moving most energetically and vividly, where people are forced more than elsewhere to look to the future. . . We needed a man whose nature contained as much as possible of health and flexibility, talent for rational labor, as few personal ties on Earth as possible, as little individualism as possible. Our physiologists and psychologists reckoned that the transition from the conditions of life of your society, sharply fragmented by a constant internal struggle, to the conditions of our organized, 'socialist' (as you would say), society, that this transition would be very harsh and hard for an individual human and would demand a particularly propitious organization" (29-30).

Zamyatin begins his novel in almost identical fashion, with D-503 as the seemingly perfect product of his conditioning in a highly organized society, an individual with a minimum of individual traits and desires. This proves to be true, for in spite of temporary aberrations, D-503's ultimate inability to overcome the effects of his conditioning, i.e., his "other self," is a parallel to Leonid's discovery later in the novel that he is unable to accustom himself to the Martian way of life.

The complex love relationships are extremely important in both novels. In the first chapter of *Red Star* Leonid tells of his Terrestrial relationship to an Anna Nikolaevna, and of their disagreement on "the subject of love and marriage. Whereas Anna wished one true faithful marriage, (Leonid) even held that polygamy as a principle is higher than monogamy, since it is able to provide people with both a greater richness of personal life and a greater diversity of combinations in the sphere of inheritance. . . (and) that the future here must bring a profound reformation" (8-9).

Eventually Leonid undergoes a transformation. When his inability to master Martian mathematics literally sickens him, a Martian doctor, Netti (also a member of the expedition to Earth), attends him. Neither name nor dress are reliable indices of sex, according to the novel, but Leonid had always felt a special attraction to Netti. When Netti admits, then, that she is,



in fact, a woman, "Lightning flashed before my eyes and everything around me darkened, and my heart literally stopped beating. . . In a second, like a madman, I crushed Netti in my embraces and kissed her hands, her face, her large, deep eyes, greenish-blue as the sky of her planet" (89). Netti, in turn, feels Leonid's "despotism, his egoism, his desperate thirst for happiness—everything was in your (sic) caresses" (89).

Their passionate affair is short-lived. Netti is sent to Venus on another extended interplanetary expedition, and Leonid is left behind in the company of Enno, a young astronomer-poet whom he first met on the *eteronef*. Enno, it turns out, is also a woman who has long been in love with Leonid, and she is only too happy to spend with him the "long winter evenings together in scientific studies, conversations and sometimes in walks in the environs" (97-98). Enno relates that she has once been Menni's wife and had passionately wished a child from him, but that Menni was unable to father a child. As time passes, "as it were, of itself, without an onrush (of passion) or without struggle, our intimacy led us to a love affair. . . (Enno) simply decided not to have children by me" (99).

Shortly afterwards, in speaking with Netti's mother Nella (a matron in the Children's Home), Leonid learns that Netti formerly had been the wife of both Letta and Sterni simultaneously. He is profoundly disturbed: "But where does my troubled puzzlement come from and the senseless pain which makes me want either to scream or to laugh? Or am I unable to *feel* exactly as I *think*? It seems so. And what of my relations with Enno? Where is my logic there? And just what am I, myself? What a stupid situation!" (103). Leonid meditates on these feelings which seem to arise "under the influence of the moment and of spontaneous forces of the past which always lurk in the depths of the human soul. . ." (104). Later in the novel, after the murder of Sterni (104), Leonid's "I" disappears completely. Leonid and Enno must part, and Enno promises Leonid no other personal entanglements.

These passages are quite sufficient to indicate the close parallels between the members of the love triangles in both novels. D/Leonid's passionate, stormy love for I/Netti is opposed to the calmer, comfortable arrangement with O/Enno. Since some attention has been given in the scholarship to the significance of the letter names,<sup>44</sup> perhaps it is not too farfetched to point out that Zamyatin may have acknowledged his source by using the

last letter of the names of each of Bogdanov's characters for the "names" of his own, and by arranging them in a similar love triangle in *We*: Netti-Leonid-Enno = I - D - O. Zamyatin surely wished to use the Latin letter "I" rather than the cyrillic "i"; however, in order to underscore the mathematical significance of  $i$  as the symbol for the square root of -1, just as the "D" and "O" represent important mathematical concepts, as Shane has pointed out.<sup>45</sup> Zamyatin left some of the details intact; for example, like Leonid, D-503 has an irrepressible passion for I-330 and desires exclusive sexual privileges. On the other hand, Enno's desire for a child from Menni has been modified slightly to O's desire for a child by D, a change which eliminates a counterpart for the figure of Menni in Zamyatin's novel. Zamyatin has also reproduced Leonid and Enno's "scientific studies" in *We* (Records 4 and 8) by having D and O engage in chit-chat about geometrical figures and constructively solving mathematical problems during the personal hour.

*We* makes much of the importance of the concept of irrationality to D-503 and the trauma he suffered as a boy when he was introduced to the square root of minus 1. Leonid was similarly traumatized as a child by a French mathematics book which tortured him because he "did not have that logical discipline and practice of scientific cogitation. . ." (93). However, he did understand the concepts of "limit" and "derivative" so difficult for his fellow-students. In *We*, D-503 functions best when hedged about by limitations. As the records in *We* advance, D's feelings of personal ownership of I grow apace, and his original amusement at the bizarre and atavistic ideas of "my" and "mine" is displaced by a terrifying and immediate realization of their existence. A parallel discussion can be found in *Red Star*, not in connection with Leonid's love affairs, but at the Children's Home. In the midst of general play, one of the little Martian girls takes a toy boat and runs away with it. Nella, the Directress, says: "Well, look there, at the strength of the past... It would seem that we have complete communism; we almost never have to deny the children anything. Where does this feeling of personal property come from? But here a child comes and declares: "my" boat, "I myself" did it. And this happens very often... Nothing can be done. It is a general law of life: the development of the organism repeats on a small scale the development of the species; the development of the individual likewise repeats the develop-

ment of society." Nella suggests that perhaps the training of the children in history by means of illustrated lectures (obligatory for the city dwellers in *We*) may be responsible. For the lectures show a world which "awakens with its pictures of struggle and violence vague echoes in the atavistic depths of childish instincts" (63).

Nella emphasizes the general "Martian" value system of the enormous faith in the collective and group life. She refuses to consider the possibility of a reduction of the birthrate, because it is a betrayal of the faith in collective achievement. If that faith disappears, "The sense of life of each of us will also be lost, because in each of us, little cells of the great organism, there lives the whole, and each lives by means of this whole." Indeed, each individual wishes to "fuse with this whole, to completely dissolve in it his consciousness and to grasp it with his consciousness" (73). These ideas are recreated in Records 2 and 7 in *We*: "I see myself as a part of an enormous, vigorous, united body," (32) as well as the "million-armed body" referred to earlier in this essay, in Record 3. And we recall how common the theme is in all the proletarian poets.

Both Leonid and D-503 suffer from hallucinations. As Leonid's intensive and unproductive hours of study lead him to nervous exhaustion, he begins to have both visual and acoustical hallucinations. He has a vision of Anna Nikolaevna which parallels I-330's appearance to D-503 in Record 18. The difference is minor: Anna Nikolaevna "dissolves in the air" (85), while D-503 screams and awakens himself.

Zamyatin seems to have transferred a number of details of Martian civilization to his utopian city. Two of the adjectives characterizing Martian life and nature, "clear" ("iasnyi") and "transparent" ("prozrachnyi"), are also used as D-503's leitmotifs. The material from which Martian clothing is made is transparent, at least until dyed; much of the body of the *eteronef* is glass; the Martian factory has a glass ceiling and networks of glass parquets supported by iron beams (53); Letta's casket is transparent (48). Martian houses all have a blue-tinted glass roof, which, as in *We*, gives their cities, when seen from an approaching spacecraft, the configuration of blue spots on the Martian topography. Martians in this fashion relax with their friends in bluish light, chosen specifically (like the dwellings in *We*) because of the tranquilizing effect of blue light on living organisms (50). We see that

Zamyatin has taken many of these details and has made a much more consistent use of them in his anti-utopia than Bogdanov did. Some alterations are obvious. Menni, for example, lives in a small, individual, two-story house, while all the inhabitants of Zamyatin's city live in communal Crystal Palaces, whose glass, transparent cages stretch in all directions. The light effect—filtered, quieting, even sunlight—is like that in Bogdanov's Martian parlors. The bird's eye view of Zamyatin's city buildings, the blocks of bluish ice, seems closely related to the Martian cities (Record 21) just described: "The icy blue relief map of the city" (Record 34, 184). Zamyatin seems to have borrowed this detail, but has transformed its meaning by subordinating it to his pattern of images (including ice, blue, and squares) which signify entropy.

Zamyatin's utopians are feeding on petroleum food, a detail which may have been suggested by Bogdanov's novel. Since a food crisis impends, the Martians institute a crash program to produce a food substitute from albumen, and eventually they attempt to manufacture albumen from inorganic material (72 and 123).

The first section of this essay has pointed out the frequency with which the proletarian poets treated lyrically the theme of the machine. Bogdanov, too, informs Martian technology with esthetic qualities: at the factory the machines "cut, sawed, planed, drilled the huge pieces of iron, aluminum, nickel, and copper. The levers, like gigantic steel hands, moved evenly and smoothly... The very sound of the machines, when the ear became somewhat used to it, began to seem almost melodic..." (54). Compare this with the beautiful passage in *We* which prefaces D-503's meditations on the beauty of the dance as "unfree movement." Like Bogdanov, Zamyatin personifies the various machines, which are working "with closed eyes, in self-forgetfulness," "bending," "moving their shoulders," and "squatting" (*We*, Record 2, 7).

As for the workers themselves, "In the expression of their faces was no tense concern, but only calm attention" (54). We recall that in *We*, D-503 contentedly records that during the daily march, "our faces are unclouded by the insanity of thoughts" (Record 2, 7). "More intangible and invisible from the side were those threads which connected the tender brain of people with the indestructible organs of the mechanism" (*Red Star*, 54-55). Zamyatin also ties humans together with threads: based on his perception of "threads" D-503 suspects relations

between I and S, between I and R-13. But then Zamyatin unexpectedly uses the metaphor to reveal a negative aspect of the political hierarchy in the City. He transforms the idea into the grotesque image of the spider web in which they all have been caught and are awaiting the arrival of the spider, the Well-Doer, on the Day of Unanimity (*We*, Record 24, 121).

D-503 is the spokesman for the principle of rationality, a principle which the novel ultimately rejects. Bogdanov, however makes it the basic axis of the Martian civilization. For example, suicide is permitted because there is no rational reason why it should not be permitted. And so a special room is provided for this purpose for those who have become incurably ill. Force, as a principle, is also permitted. Leonid asks for specifics, but the answer is given with only one example: "What rational being would reject violence, for example, for self-defense?" (76).

Leonid finds these values further elucidated in the exhibits at the art museum, and he perceives that the esthetic standards expressed there are part of the everyday life in the utopian future. Life and art become one. He sees that the early works of the past express harmony. Art works of the "transitional epochs" express plosion, passion, disturbing struggle; the art of the socialist epoch expresses "harmonious movement, the calm manifestation of strength, of movement alien to the morbidity of effort, striving free of worry, a lively activity permeated with the consciousness of its well-proportioned unity and its unsurpassable rationality" (68).

Leonid also discovers that on Mars monuments are no longer erected in honor of people; rather they are commissioned to commemorate great events such as the first attempt to reach the Earth; the elimination of a fatal epidemic disease, or the discovery of the breakdown and synthesis of all the chemical elements (70). This reminds us of the occasions on which poetry is composed and recited in *We*: R-13's poeticization of the Death Sentence (Record 8, 40).

Bogdanov's second novel *Engineer Menni* (1912), allegedly a sequel to *Red Star*, has far less relevance to *We* than its predecessor. We are told in the introduction that Leonid is once more "with them," and that his translation from the Martian into Russian of a historical novel was mysteriously delivered to Leonid's old friend, Dr. Verner. *Engineer Menni* illustrates the transition of the economic and social system from capitalism

to socialism predicted earlier by the famous Martian economist Ksarma. It is essentially a pedestrian novel about the construction of the famed Martian canals. But Bogdanov's external futuristic frame seems, so far as we have been able to determine, truly original. Zamyatin borrowed Bogdanov's idea to say that his "author" D-503 was writing for his ancestors—i.e., the Russians of the 1920s.

The plot development of both Bogdanov's and Zamyatin's novels seem basically parallel: they concern the futile efforts of a man to retrain his mind. Bogdanov's hero is an idealistic socialist who finds that he is not equipped intellectually or emotionally to cope with the demands of a more advanced culture. Yet even Bogdanov does not present a complete utopia, for things still "happen" there: the struggle with nature continues; a food crisis is imminent; and there is disagreement about how to live in a pluralistic universe, about whether to coexist peacefully or exterminate one's planetary neighbors. Leonid becomes profoundly sick and betrays his own principles of logic in the intense jealousy he feels both in his relationship with Netti and in his murder of Sterni. At the end we are told specifically that the Doctor suspects that he is seeking death in the form of "indirect suicide" in the battles in the "Mountain region." Leonid is betrayed by his humanity, by his Earthly value system and his Earthly nature.

*We* is essentially a restatement of this plot. D-503 is an enthusiastic supporter of the United State, which has yet to "perfect" itself. The personal hours must yet be eliminated, and, on the cosmic front, the Earthlings must face the possibility that they may have to lead recalcitrant Venutians and Martians to happiness by force. As D's value system is progressively shattered by his excrudescent individualism (his urgent and specific desire for I-330), he also agonizes over the possibility that he is seriously ill. The theme of suicide is met repeatedly throughout *We*; and at the end we see that in the sacrifice of his fancy, D-503 has, indeed, killed the most human part of himself and has been reduced to a mechanism.

The differences in the treatment of the same motifs are very important. The love triangle in *We* is much more satisfying as an esthetic device than it is in *Red Star*. In Bogdanov's novel the love theme functions to show Leonid's human traits, but it is not integrated with the other themes of the novel—e.g., Leonid's intellectual deficiencies, or the murder of Sterni. Zamyatin, however, used the love theme to trigger the initial temptation to betray

the United State, as the catalyst for D's illness, and finally, in his indifference to the torture and execution of I-330, as an index of the degree to which D has ceased to function as a human being.

Bogdanov's novel suffers from the didact's need to show the details of the future society with its technological wonders. Its rambling discussions of philosophical ideas are unrelated to Leonid's mission to Mars or to his personal crisis. The episodes are therefore only casually related, arranged in interchangeable order. Zamyatin, on the other hand, incorporates all his borrowings successfully in the play of themes arranged as polar opposites (fertility-sterility, poly-monotonicity, sickness-health, passion-rationality, eccentricity-regularity). The result is that the main themes of *We* and the central plot situation are all tightly interwoven and characterize the main protagonists consistently.

But what kind of "hero" did Zamyatin intend in D-503? We suggest that Zamyatin set himself the task of satirizing proletarian verse whose revolutionary lyricism lent itself to parody through its extremism, and the lyrical proletarian "I's" who strive to deprive themselves poetically of their individuality. He mocked the former with some bad doggerel (Record 12, 63), and the latter by concocting the *persona* of a futuristic "proletarian" scientist and writer. Tonally, D-503 is as much an exponent of the United State as the lyrical "we" is of the proletarian poems of 1917-20. As Frank has convincingly shown, this device was practised earlier by Dostoevsky in *Notes from the Underground*, where the Underground Man is the satirical representation of the "men of the sixties."<sup>46</sup> Dostoevsky's satire is doubly devastating because the Underground Man is personally such a sick human being that his claiming that he shared the advanced views of the younger generation had to be insufferably insulting to the nihilists. Zamyatin has done the same thing in *We*. He has taken the ideas of the proletarians, including Bogdanov's, to their extreme, in order to dramatize their implications of dehumanization. Zoshchenko's parody of the *persona* of a proletarian writer might well have applied to D-503: "I am parodying in my works that imaginary, but genuine proletarian writer. . . I am only parodying. I am temporarily substituting for the proletarian writer."<sup>47</sup>

Zamyatin's satire is made particularly salient by the choice of Bogdanov's own hero Leonid as D-503's prototype. Zamyatin created D-503 out of the language, themes, and ideology made

familiar by the proletarian poets and Bogdanov in the first years of the Soviet period. It seems that Zamyatin's particular targets in this work are Gastev and Bogdanov.

Some readings of *We* tend to dwell exclusively on its bleak, anti-utopian vision of the future. But, although there is no doubt of the philosophical gravity of the work, this essay has tried to show the validity of another, generally neglected reading. *We* is a topical novel which grew consistently and naturally out of the literary models and practices predominating in the immediate post-Revolutionary period.

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#### NOTES

1. Some of the best and most extensive discussions of these issues are the following: on imagery: Carl Proffer, "Notes on the Imagery in Zamyatin's *We*," *Slavic and East European Journal*, VII, No. 3 (1963), 269-73; on Dostoevsky's influence: Robert L. Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature* (The Hague, 1958), 150-57; Richard A. Gregg, "Two Adams and Eve in the Crystal Palace: Dostoevsky, the Bible and *We*," *Slavic Review*, XXIV, No. 4 (1965), 680-87; on Biblical themes: Gregg's article just noted, and James Billington's brief discussion in *The Icon and the Axe* (New York, 1966), 509-11; as political statement: D. Richards, "Four Utopias," *Slavonic and East European Review*, XL (1961), 220-28.

2. E. J. Brown mentions Tsiolkovskii's and Wells' popularity in Russia at this time in *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* (New York, 1963), 74, and Elizabeth Stenbock-Fermor treats the matter of Jerome K. Jerome in "A Neglected Source of Zamyatin's Novel *We*," *The Russian Review*, 32, No. 2 (April, 1973), 187-89.

3. M. Gorkii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, XXX (M. 1955), 156: "And Zamyatin is too intelligent for an artist and should not allow his reason to direct his talent to satire. *We* is hopelessly bad, a completely sterile thing." A. Voronskii, *Na styke* (M-P/Ann Arbor, 1923/1968): "But (*We*) is not a utopia; it is an artistic pamphlet in the present, and at the same time an attempt at a prognosis of the future. . . To write an artistic parody and depict communism as some kind of super-barracks under a glass cover is nothing new" (70-71). M. Kuznetsov, "Socialist Realism and Modernism," ("Sotsialisticheskii realizm i modernizm"), *Novyi mir*, (Aug., 1963), 230-33.

4. Quotations from Zamyatin's critical articles are taken from Mirra Ginsburg's translation, *A Soviet Heretic* (Chicago, 1970). References hereafter are abbreviated *SH* with page number added. English quotations from the novel are taken from the Zilboorg translation and are denoted by "*We*," followed by Record number and page number. Minor changes have been made in the Zilboorg translation when it was felt that a more literal translation was necessary. Quotations from the Russian text are based on the Inter-Language Literary Associates edition (New York, 1967), denoted as "*My*," followed by pagination.

5. *Proletarskie poety pervykh let sovetskoi epokhi*, ed. Z. S. Papernyi, (L. 1959), 21. This is a basic anthology for the poems of this period. Subsequent citations are given by *PP* and page numbers.

6. *Sovetskii teatr, dokumenty i materialy: Russkii sovetskii teatr, 1917-21*, ed. A. Z. Iufit (L. 1968), 336-38.



7. Brown, op. cit., pp. 75, 77. Brown makes the same point in his "Zamjatin and English Literature," *American Contributions to the Fifth Congress of Slavists* (The Hague, 1963), 35.

8. Other such poems to be found in Papernyi's anthology are: B. D. Aleksandrovskii's "My" (1921); "My umeem vse perenosit'..." (1921); M. P. Gerasimov's "My vse voz'mem, my vse poznaem..." (1917), "My pobedim, klokochet sila..." (1918); V. T. Kirillov's "My" (1917); A.P. Kraiski's "My—odno" (1918); I.S. Loginov's "My—pervye raskaty groma..." (1919); F. S. Shkulev's "My. Proletarskie poety" (1922). Many additional examples may be found in the proletarian journals *Kuznitsa* and *Gorn*.

9. This was Bogdanov's formal resolution "Proletariat i iskusstvo," passed on September 20, 1918 at the First All-Russian Conference of Proletarian Cultural-Educational Organizations. See *Literaturnye manifesty*, Vol. I, ed. N. L. Brodskii (M./München, 1929/1969), 130.

10. Mikhail Zoshchenko, "O Sebe, o kritikakh i o svoei rabote," in *Mastera sovremennoi literatury; Mikhail Zoshchenko, Stat'i i materialy* (L. 1928), 12.

11. Kirillov, "Pervomaiskii gimn," *PP*, 232; Kniazev, "Pesnia o ledokhode," *PP*, 266; Bednyi, "Revolutsionnyi gudok," *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, 18.

12. This is a common theme in the early period of the regime. Camilla Gray's *The Great Experiment* (New York, 1962) shows a photograph of an Agit-Instructional train on which can be read: "Da zdravstvuet edinaia mirovaia trudovaia sem'ia" (p. 160).

13. V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, *Ocherki proletarskoi literatury* (M. 1926), 168. The second quote is *PP*, 6.

14. Gray, 217.

15. A. A. Bogdanov, in *Literaturnye manifesty*: "Proletariat i iskusstvo," 130, and "Puti proletarskogo tvorchestva," 139-40.

16. Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor, 1968), 202.

17. A. V. Lunacharskii, "Ocherki russkoi literatury revoliutsionnogo vremeni," from R. Shcherbina, ed., "A. V. Lunacharskii: Neizdannye materialy," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Vol. 82 (M. 1970), 235. For Pletnev, see *Gorn*, No. 4 (1919), 30.

18. L'vov-Rogachevskii, 128.

19. V. Pertsov, "Sovremenniki," *Novyi LEF*, SP 91, III, No. 8-9 (1927), 78.

20. Viktor Nekrasov, "V zhizni i pismakh" (M. 1971), 7.

21. A. Gastev, "O Tendentsiakh proletarskoi kul'tury," in *Literaturnye manifesty*, 132-33. This article first appeared in *Proletarskaia kul'tura*, Nos. 9-10.

22. Lunacharskii, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 235.

23. Ernst Toller, *Quer durch*, Chapter 8: "ZIT," 121-24.

24. Aleksandrovskii, "Vzvalivai bol'she na nashi spiny," (1918), *PP*, 79; Berdnikov, "Kuznetsy kuiut" (1918), *PP*, 142; Gerasimov, "Truba kak posokh ispolina" (1917), *PP*, 190; N. Degtiarov, "Kuznetsy," *Kuznitsa*, No. 1 (1920), 8; Gutsevich, "Shum zavoda," *Gorn*, Nos. 2-3 (1919), 7.

25. See *PP*, 233. The last two phrases are Gastev's "Bashnia" (1913-17), *PP*, 152, and "Rel'sy" (1913), *PP*, 154.

26. See the parody in Alexander Kaun, *Soviet Poets and Poetry* (Berkeley, 1943), 137, "Zhelezo, zhelezo, zhelezo." Russian version in L'vov-Rogachevskii, p. 132.

27. For Sadov'ev, see Kaun, p. 140; for Gastev, see *PP*, 154.

28. Gastev, "Ekspress" (1913-17), *PP*, 161-72; Gastev, "Oratoru" (1917-19), *PP*, 176; Gastev, "My vmeste" (1913-17), *PP*, 160; Obradovich, "Iz okna vagona," *Gorn*, No. 4 (1919), 12; Nepaev, "Rassvet," *Kuznitsa*, No. 2 (1920), 7.

29. Quoted in Iurii Annenkov, *Dnevnik moikh vstrech*, Vol. I (New York, 1966), 258.

30. V. Kirillov, "Ia podslushal eti pesni blizkikh radostnykh vekov," (1917), *PP*, 227.

31. *PP*, 149.

32. *PP*, 179.
33. Gastev, "Kran" (1913-17), *PP*, 157; Aleksandrovskii, "Vzvalivai bol'she na nashi spiny" (1918), *PP*, 80.
34. Gastev, "Bashnia" (1913-17), *PP*, 152; "My vmeste" (1913-17), *PP*, 160; Aleksandrovskii, "V zakate," *Gorn*, Nos. 2-3 (1919), 11; Gastev, "Nash prazdnik" (1913-17), *PP*, 175. It is startling to run across the Musical Tower in actuality, or nearly so. In an article entitled "Gudki," headed by Gastev's poem, *Gorn*, No. 9 (1923), Avraamov tells of actual whistle symphonies and gives directions for constructing a steam whistle which will perform the *Internationale*. Whether or not Zamyatin knew of similar activities, it seems possible that Gastev provided the impetus for both the steam whistle and the Musical Factory in *We*. In fact, Avraamov suggests that if the apparatus is still in good condition after the concert, it can be used very often, even for daily whistles to and from work. He also tells of a vast "symphony" involving steamships, engines, artillery and cannon, which was carried out on May Day in Baku in 1922, and of earlier attempts in the same vein. The Day of Unanimity in *We* with its patriotic pageantry may be a satire of these grandiose May 1 celebrations.
35. The first three examples are from *PP*, 155; the fourth, Gerasimov, *PP*, 197; and the fifth, Semen-Rodov, "Proletarskie poety," *Kuznitsa*, No. 1 (1920), 5.
36. Trotsky, 210.
37. Gastev, "My vmeste," *PP*, 160.
38. Gastev, "Bashnia," 151, "Kran," 156, and "Ekspress," 162. In *My* the "chudovishche" appears in Record 15, 73 and Record 31, 155.
39. *PP*, 148.
40. A. Gutsevich, "Shum zavoda," *Gorn*, No. 2-3 (1919), 7; and Kazin, "Da zdravstvuet V. I. Lenin," *Kuznitsa*, No. 1 (1920), 4.
41. Christopher Collins, *Evgenij Zamjatin*, (The Hague-Paris, 1973), 45.
42. Zamyatin, *SH*, 290.
43. The texts used are A. Bogdanov, *Krasnaia zvezda*, Izd. Petrogradskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Krasnoarmeiskikh Deputatov, (1918) and *Inzhener Menni*, Knigoizdatel'stvo Moskovskii rabochii (1922), 5th ed. Page numbers are given in parentheses after the quotations. The translations are my own (H.W.).
44. See the Gregg article referred to in footnote 1.
45. Alex M. Shane, *The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), 161.
46. Joseph Frank, "Nihilism and *Notes from the Underground*," *Sewanee Review*, LXIX (1961), 4, 12.
47. Zoshchenko, 12.

R. F. Cooke

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IMAGE AND SYMBOL IN  
KHLEBNIKOV'S  
*NIGHT SEARCH*

Khlebnikov's long poem "Night Search" was written in the approaching winter of 1921 when Khlebnikov, ill and hungry (he was in fact suffering from chronic malnutrition), was working for the Bolsheviks as a night watchman in Piatagorsk. This was a time for him of feverish creativity. A time when, having witnessed all the trials and tribulations of the revolutionary period, and having been flung back into this chaos from his relatively happy wanderings in Persia, he had a chance to assess and artistically interpret the turmoil of revolt and retribution.

"Night Search" was first published in 1928 in volume one of the *Collected Works* edited by Nikolai Stepanov.<sup>1</sup> In the subsequent editions of Khlebnikov's verse published in the Soviet Union the poem has been omitted entirely, and so it is hardly surprising that it has suffered a certain amount of critical neglect. A few pages are devoted to an examination of the poem by V. Pertsov in an article in *Questions of Literature*,<sup>2</sup> which was later revised and included in his book *Poets and Prose Writers of Great Years*.<sup>3</sup> While recognizing the conflicts of the hero, the old sailor, Pertsov regards the poem as showing the necessity for revolutionary vigilance and as portraying the revolutionary

sailors as sincere humanists who could not but help resorting to violence and terror: conclusions which may be reached but which can certainly be disputed. Perhaps the most startling thing about criticism of the poem amongst Stepanov's many writings is the lack of it. In his introductory article<sup>4</sup> to the *Collected Works* of Khlebnikov the poem is only mentioned once, and then with reference to a rhythmical feature. In Pertsov's book,<sup>5</sup> which contains an excellent chapter on Khlebnikov, the poem is again only mentioned once, and then, again without sustained comment. The poem is referred to more often in a three page article in *Star*,<sup>6</sup> in 1972, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Khlebnikov's death, but criticism is restrained to Khlebnikov's vision of the revolution as a whole, a subject which in fact Stepanov often mentions in his writings, but always, it seems, without extended reference to "Night Search." One comment on the poem, however, does exist in an article published in the *Annali* of the Institute universitario orientale of the University of Naples.<sup>7</sup> Here, echoing Pertsov, Stepanov just states that the tragic and merciless struggle in the poem showed "the supreme truth of a revolution which was justified by the resistance of the forces which were hostile to it."

The main criticism of the poem in the west still remains in Professor Markov's pioneering study *The Longer Poems of Velimir Khlebnikov*<sup>8</sup> in which each of Khlebnikov's *poemy* is subjected to a few pages of criticism.

Recently, in Yugoslavia, there appeared a short article comparing the poem to Blok's "The Twelve."<sup>9</sup> Such a comparison certainly offers a very rich scope for criticism and the article does in fact raise several interesting points.

"Night Search" is undoubtedly one of Khlebnikov's best poems and there are many poetic features in it which merit discussion, ranging from word use, rhythm and rhyme, to problems of narration and genre. Many such features intertwine in an intricate mosaic of form and content. However, one of the most significant elements of the poem is the role and function of image and symbol.

Let us first relate the main scope of the poem's action on the realistic plane.

A group of Red sailors search an apartment occupied by a family suspected of having White connections. Two White soldiers are found and executed on the spot. Two women, the

wife and mother of one of the dead soldiers, Vladimir, are spared. The sailors then smash up and loot the premises, hurling a piano out of the window. They demand that the women prepare them food whilst they have a drinking bout. The Red sailors thus occupied, the two women lock them in the apartment and set it on fire.<sup>10</sup> It seems likely that the sailors will be killed in the fire. We leave them contemplating the choice of either shooting themselves, or choking and burning to death.

The relating of the above events is a resume of the poem's plot on a realistic plane of action, but in fact the narration of this concrete activity takes up only a minor part of the poem's 686 lines. The greater part is consumed by the philosophical musings of the poem's main protagonist, the leader of the raiding sailors. The actual events of the poem, the capturing and shooting of the White soldier Vladimir, achieve their major significance in that it is these happenings which impel the old sailor to embark upon his lengthy soliloquies.

The most frequently used image in this poem is that of the sea. To point out the main features of this image it will suffice to quote from Markov's excellent study, *The Longer Poems of Velimir Khlebnikov*:

The theme of the sea. . . is louder in this poem than elsewhere. Metonymically, the sea denotes the sailors (*Ty nas, more, ne moroch'*); symbolically, it stands for the Revolution (*more Pugacheva*); metaphorically, it represents freedom, anarchy and wild abandon (*Ch'tob shumelo more, more razlivannoe; Sdelaem zdes' more*).<sup>11</sup>

Markov then also notes that this image of the sea in turn "is apt to breed other metaphors."<sup>12</sup> Such a progeneration of images is crucial when one is tentatively searching for some signs of "symbolic kinships," for when similar imagery starts to recur in different contexts we begin to consider the images and that which they represent not in the terms of themselves alone, but in the "texture of their relationships."<sup>13</sup>

In "Night Search" the sailors execute a White soldier Vladimir. When his wife discovers the body her hair turns white from grief and shock. This action of the real plane is presented with a catachrestic development of the ubiquitous sea image. When the soldiers first catch sight of this young woman the poem reads:

And what kind of a wonder is this:     *А это что за диво:*  
She seems a mere seventeen,           *И будто семнадцать лет,*  
Yet her hair's—like snow!               *А волосы—снег!*  
(162-164)14

This is followed a few lines later by the exclamation:

The sea brings with it snow.           *Море приносит с собою снег.*  
(167)

And, relating back to the same incident, much further on in the poem we can also read:

We, the wind, have brought her snow.  
The wind of the sea.  
The sea, oh the sea!  
(406-408)

*Мы, вечер, принесли ей снег.*  
*Ветер моря.*  
*Море так море!*

The raging sea of Revolution, also metonymically representing the sailors, is now equated with other elements of the revolutionary storm. It is also seen as bringing the wind and the snow of the Revolution which has whitened the hair of the young widow of Vladimir.

Markov is perfectly correct in his view of the role of the sea, but what he does not go on to say is that this role changes with the progression of the poem and that, although the sea may metonymically denote the sailors, what is of fundamental importance is the relationship between the sailors and the image of the sea in all its various meanings. It is precisely in the texture of such a relationship between the vehicle and tenor of an image construct that a symbolic system may be found to arise: and it is in this type of relationship between the hero of the poem, the old Red sailor, and the image of the sea, that a sub-textual system seems to find its origins.

The other sailors in the poem are basically "flat" characters and remain true to the image of the sea of Revolution ("more Pugacheva"—the sea of Pugachov), and the sea of anarchy and wild abandon, the sea of carousal and drink ("more razlivannoe"—drink

galore). They have no conflicts that what they are doing is not justified; the mass uprising is an act of retribution. The sea which had been held back for so long has broken down the barriers and come to exact its revenge. The oppressed masses are carrying out a social and political Revolution, but it is also a chance to get drunk, to rob, loot, and to enjoy themselves.

However, the relationship between this important image of the sea, and the old sailor is not so straightforward, and, as the poem progresses, a tension rises between the two which is reflected in the use of further image relationships and which may be interpreted in a sub-textual manner.

Up until the death of Vladimir, the old sailor manifests the same relationship with the sea as his comrades. He can exclaim:

Seamen, swoop, seamen, swoop!  
Hey, sea, swoop! Swoop like an eagle!  
(71-72)

*Братва, налетай, братва, налетай!  
Эй, море, налетай! Налетай орлом!*

It is he himself who orders the luckless Vladimir to undress and then shoots him. But the fearlessness and courage with which this White soldier faces his execution brings to the fore in the old soldier's consciousness an inner conflict which is reflected not only on a real plane in the poem, of conversation and monologue, but also on the plane of image and symbol!. The old sailor suddenly discovers in himself a desire for mercy and compassion which the image of the sea does not convey. The "White beast" ("belyi zver") whom he has just killed becomes for him a "golubchik." He even spares the women of the house, of whom the other sailors wish to dispose. In fact he actually tries to comfort Vladimir's widow with the words:

Don't cry, my lass,                      *Не плачь, сестрица,*  
This is no place for landlubbers.      *Здесь не место вольным.*  
(237-238)

He even refers to these "White beasts" in human terms, going as far as to relate them to the womenfolk that he, too, has left behind in his village. He releases them with the words:

Go your way in peace, woman,  
Along your own path.

(242-243)

*Иди себе спокойно, человек,  
Своей дорогой.*

He does occasionally lapse back into harmony with the image of the sea, as can be seen in the following lines when he joins the rest of his crew in their destructive revolutionary violence.

—Nicely seamen.  
Ours is the sea's affair:  
Smash and destroy!  
Smash and annihilate!  
Break, shatter.  
Pillage and plunder,  
You peasants of the sea!

*—Ловко моряки.  
Наше дело морское:  
Бей и руши!  
Бей и круши!  
Ломите, ломайте.  
Грабьте и грабьте,  
Морские лапти!*

But, nonetheless, after the murder of Vladimir, the old sailor's relationship with the sea and storm of Revolution is riddled with ambiguities. He must now proclaim:

So the sea's becoming stormy.  
(394)

*Аж море в непогоду.*

An image which echoes on a symbolic plane the revealing statement made to his comrades a few lines earlier:

Fellows, don't fool around  
By a coffin, in front of death.  
(388-389)

*Ребята, не балуйтесь  
У гроба, у смерти.*

The hardened revolutionary executioner is feeling pangs of remorse and guilt. The image of the sea now appears to be not entirely in sympathy with the newly found feelings of humanity that the old sailor experiences. The sea-storm no longer represents the elements to which he belongs. And although he can cry:

With us is the sea!  
With us is the sea!  
(412-413)

*С нами море!  
С нами море!*

He must also admit that:



We pass by, like death  
And grief.  
(410-411)

*Мы пройдем, как смерть  
И горе.*

And that:

And there really is someone now  
To hanker after for the mistress widow  
With the grey hair.  
(403-405)

*—И точно, есть о ком  
Скучать той барышне вдове  
С седыми волосами.*

The sea is now bringing to him some of the foul weather it brought to the now white-haired young widow of Vladimir.

A substantial part of the poem is taken up by the old sailor's harangue against the image of Christ; a conflict which mirrors externally the sailor's own inner dilemma, and which consequently reaches the proportions of a symbolic relationship.

The sailor begins to drink with the rest of his comrades. Filled with misgivings about the act of murder he has just accomplished he begins to reconstruct it in his mind and to relate the events over again as if trying to assess their full implications. It is in this frame of mind that he begins to address himself to the icon in the corner of the room. At first he regards God as an enemy who will not come from out of his "trench" and do battle. But later he commences to disparage this Christ/God figure by comparing him with a young girl.

In the sailor's mind Christ becomes nothing more than a village maiden who picks flowers and admires her reflection in a pool. He describes how he would try to win her, bringing her more flowers and some perfume, and, sprucing himself for the occasion, he even depicts how he would finally try to seduce her. Even orgies in the grave after death are envisaged.

The old sailor's position towards this "maiden" is thus one of ambivalence. Christ is no longer purely an enemy who is mocked and scorned by his antagonist, for, in the comparison of Christ with a maiden, the sailor begins to address his enemy with genuine terms of love and affection. He wishes to woo and to

court this maiden-Christ.

The duality which this imagery suggests in fact reveals an ambiguity which lies at the very basis of the old sailor's initial desire to do battle with Christ. He is in fact attracted to his opponent because he actually desires to be destroyed by him. Indeed, he wishes to struggle with Christ in order that Christ might *kill* him and that he himself might be given the opportunity to face up to death with the same courage as the White soldier Vladimir. In his death the soldier Vladimir has thus attained for the old sailor the status of an image and a symbol. He represents for him both victim and conqueror and he sees him as a conqueror precisely because he was a victim. The old sailor is attracted by the courage and fortitude of the person whom he has murdered. Similarly, he is attracted by the disparaging "maiden" image of Christ with whom he must also do battle. He wishes to emulate the White soldier Vladimir in a battle with Christ and symbolically defeat Christ in death.

This concept of victory in death finds an obvious parallel in the crucifixion of Christ, and, as both Vladimir and Christ figure as battle partners against the old sailor, the symbolic relationship between Vladimir and Christ is further enhanced.

The name Vladimir may also, perhaps, be considered as strengthening this relationship; for Vladimir was the name of the first saint of Russia, and the Prince who in fact introduced Christianity into Russia. (A fact of which Khlebnikov was more than well aware). Thus, on a symbolic plane, we may be entitled to note that Vladimir is here seen suffering a second death when the period of Russian Christianity has come to an end and the period of Communist paganism is about to begin.

Although there is always the danger of taking symbolic relationships too far, Markov does use the phrase "Nietzschean combat"<sup>15</sup> when referring to the old sailor's battle with Christ, and, indeed, there does appear to be something of this nature present in the poem. The old sailor does, after all, initially represent a Revolution that wishes to dispose of Christ and it is perhaps relevant, in this context, to point to the image with which the sailor describes himself and the execution of Vladimir. He says:

I burst into his life and killed,  
Like some sombre deity of night.  
(605-606)

*Я в жизнь его ворвался и убил,  
Как темное ночное божество.*

This idea of the sailor as a sombre divinity, come with the Revolution to replace the light of Christ would be fine if he was indeed a superman of Zarathustra's caliber, but, unfortunately for him, he bears the traces of a thousand years of Christian heritage. Via the interpretation of images within the poem it becomes evident that the old Sea-Wolf is suffering from a similar, though less well-articulated problem as Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov. He is an atheist who believes in God. He may indeed attack and desecrate the name of Christ, but his Revolution, his sea, is a sea riddled with Christian values. His courage in the face of death at the end of the poem may indeed reflect the calmness of a superman in battle with God; but it is ambiguous, for it also reflects the old sailor's wish to emulate the strength of Christian humility with which Vladimir died. Religious imagery in the poem demonstrates that his Revolution against religion is in fact regarded in religious terms. He gives the death of Vladimir a "people's blessing" ("narodnoe blago"), and he regards himself and his men as "sacred killers" ("ubiitsy sviatye").

There are certain image constructs in the poem which have a particular significance. These images function independently but there exists between them, "in the texture of their relationships" a "symbolic kinship." They are all images which have a relevance to the struggle of the sailor's consciousness with revolutionary reality. The reflection of this struggle, and its metaphysical implications, appears to be the primary factor in this poem which contributes towards a sub-textual formation.

The sailors find in the apartment which they are searching a piano. One of them plays it for awhile and then, as their inebriation increases, it is smashed and hurled from the window. The noise of the drunken comrades and their piano playing is described by the old sailor as follows:

And there'll be a roar and thunder and song...  
And a lament,  
As if a puppy  
Quietly whines beneath a fence.  
A puppy forgotten by all.  
And the ferocious crash of cannons suddenly arises,  
And someone's laughter, someone's chuckle subaqueous and  
mermaid-like.

(289-295)

*И рокот будет и гром и пение...  
И жалоба,  
Как будто тихо  
Скулит под забором щенок.  
Щенок забытый всеми.  
И пушек грохот грозный вдруг подымается,  
И чей-то хохот, чей-то смех подводный и русалочий.*

From the first two lines it is immediately apparent that although the sailor in company with his comrades of the sea of Pugachov, and the sea of drink, demands "the roar, thunder and song" ("rokot, grom i penie"), he also joins to the list the strange addition of "and a complaint" ("i zhaloba"). His internal conflict is thus also registered in this image of the piano's sound. He recognizes the "complaint" that can accompany the sea of drink and Revolution. The drunken celebrations at the success of the search have now suddenly assumed the form of a *zhalobnaia pesnia* (a funeral lament). The old sailor is not only celebrating the death of Vladimir, he is mourning it as well.

In the ensuing lines we are given a more precise description of the sounds produced. It would seem that the lament is represented by the whining of the forgotten puppy, and the drunken celebrations are equated first to the sounds of exploding cannons and then to the laughter of a "rusalka," a mermaid or a water-nymph. The cannons obviously express the violent exhilaration of the revolutionary conflict, which seems very much a part of the sea of Pugachov. The image of the mermaid is perhaps a little more unusual. However, the sea of carousal and drink is probably indicated in this sensual mermaid-like laughter; undoubtedly a drunken orgy seems to be the sort of celebration most of the sailors had in mind.

Nevertheless, there is much more to these images than just the contrasting sounds of a funeral lament and a drunken celebration, for these images are not only polar opposites of each other but also contain such polar opposites, of attraction and destruction, of desire and despair, within themselves. The old sailor's inner conflict stretches to diverse dualities. The lament which the sailor hears must surely be connected with the dead Vladimir; it is his death of which the sailor is reminded in the sound of the whining puppy, which, forgotten by everyone, arouses in him a feeling of pity and compassion. But yet it is precisely because of this that the sailor must smash the piano:

The old crate of puppy wails,  
Onto the road  
Out of the window!

(331-333)

*Этот ящик, где воет цуцик,  
На мостовую  
За окно!*

The lament causes him to feel compassion, a compassion which is accompanied by the urge to destroy. He feels he must overcome this compassion, and he in fact hurls the piano out of the window. But the compassion he feels towards Vladimir's relatives is not resolved in this way: he spares them and hence he himself is destroyed.

The image of the drunken celebration, the mermaid-like laughter, also contains within it similar contradictory elements. The sailors are metonymically represented by the sea, therefore the image of a mermaid or water-nymph is particularly apt. As with the image of the puppy, to which the sailor felt attraction through compassion but also wished to destroy, so the image of the mermaid contains within itself a significant polarization. For the mariner, the mermaid is the most beautiful yet the most disastrous of creatures to encounter. The sight of a mermaid was reputed to be a sure sign of shipwreck. She would lure the mariners to their deaths by enticing them underwater. The mermaid of the sea is thus a classic example of the combination of attraction and destruction.

The old sailor is lured by the sound of the puppy and the laughter of the mermaid. Both seem to oppose each other in that one is lament and the other celebration, but both contain within their attraction the seeds of the sailor's destruction.

The fact that the mermaid image appears again strengthens the possibility of a symbolic relationship, for the next time the image appears, it is used to describe none other than Christ himself. It occurs as an extension of the maiden-God-Christ figure, when the old sailor exclaims:

—A mermaid  
With misty powerful eyes,  
Down the hatch!

(645-647)

—*Русалка*  
*С туманными могучими глазами,*  
*Пей горькую!*

Thus both the poles of sound, which the sailor hears, become tinted with religious overtones. There is the laughter of the mermaid-Christ image and the whining of the puppy, which

is representative of the dead Vladimir, who in turn is also symbolically related with Christ.

The old sailor is involved in a sea of Revolution which is going to wash away a religious heritage in which he is also inextricably entangled. He contains within himself two irreconcilable poles of conflict. His sea of Pugachov heralds a mermaid who is Christ. His acts of murder are considered as being blessed and sacred, yet the very person he kills shares a symbolic relationship with the image of Christ.

The joyous roar of the Revolution's cannons may suddenly arise but the old sailor suddenly discovers that he has misgivings about the justice of the death that his sea of Revolt is bringing.

Another image of significance in the poem is the mirror which the old sailor discovers and smashes because he fears to contemplate his own reflection. As he says:

**Mirrors can be cruel at times. They  
Gaze stubbornly,  
And there's no need for judges here—  
We're better off with darkness!  
(259-262)**

*Порой жестоки зеркала. Они  
Упорно смотрят,  
И судей здесь не надо—  
Поболее потемок!*

The sailor, who judges and condemns Vladimir, fears to be judged himself. When he looks into the mirror he does not particularly like the reflection that he sees. He recognizes in the mirror the inner conflict that has begun to disturb him, just as he did in the sounds of the piano. Like the sounds of the piano, the mirror attracts him. Upon finding it he exclaims:

**As there's a mirror, I'll have a shave. —Раз зеркало, я буду бриться!  
And there's lots of time. И время есть.  
(244-245)**

But in the end he fears the judgment of his own gaze. Like the piano, the mirror is smashed. The attraction brings with it destruction. The sailor opts for the darkness of Revolution; not

only is the mirror destroyed, but, symbolically enough, the old sailor cuts himself in the process of its destruction.

Another important image in the poem is the representation of the crucifix upon the old sailor's chest. As in the image of the piano this crucifix is presented periphrastically: that is, nowhere in the poem are the words "piano" and "crucifix" actually used.

Periphrasis may perhaps be regarded as simply a roundabout way of saying something, a way of describing an object or idea without actually naming it, and hence the evocation of an image may not appear to be a necessary adjunct. Nevertheless, in the poems of Khlebnikov, images are almost invariably connected with the use of this device and one is led to believe that this refusal to name an object directly is often principally utilized for the specific purpose of producing an image.

What in fact happens, when an object is presented periphrastically, is that the attention of the reader is taken away from the actual object itself, and, if the periphrasis is used in conjunction with the development of imagery, the attention is transferred, and is centered mainly upon the images which this object brings into being. This device was used very often by Khlebnikov and the insistence in "Night Search" of calling the piano anything but a piano is indicative of this technique. The piano and the sounds of the piano are presented in a host of images, yet the piano is never actually named. Although our attention is finally centered upon the images produced rather than the object itself, our attention is initially attracted to the object precisely because of its periphrastic representation. It automatically stands out from the other more orthodoxly depicted objects in the poem, and hence appears to the reader as immediately attracting significance.

Such is also the presentation of the icon in the poem which is continually referred to, not as an icon, but as "God." We thus have the image of God's actual presence in the room rather than the concrete existence of the icon, and hence, we are not too surprised when the image is realized and God intervenes in the poem and actually speaks.

Such is also the presentation of the crucifix. This crucifix is periphrastically described as being tattooed upon the old sailor's chest. Neither the fact that what is depicted is a tattoo, nor the

fact that what is tattooed is a crucifix, is directly conveyed to us, yet this, surely, only adds to its significance. It shows on both a realistic and a symbolic plane the imprint on the sailor of Russia's past Christian heritage. This imprint is a literal one; the sailor's crucifix is not something which he can just take off from around his neck and cast into the sea of Revolution. It is firmly etched upon his body, and he can clearly do nothing to detach it either in symbolic or realistic terms.

The passage reads as follows, (the corner that the old sailor refers to is the icon corner):

There's god in the corner—  
And on my chest the other  
In a crown of thorns,  
Riveted to the board, he's made,  
Engraved  
In blue powder on the skin—  
A custom of the seas.

(507-513)

*Вон бог в углу—  
И на груди другой  
В терну колючем,  
Прикованный к доске, он сделан,  
Вытравлен  
Порохом синим на коже—  
Обычай морей.*

It is perhaps of note that the word *doska* (board), which here denotes the cross, is the same word as that used for the keyboard of the piano (*doshcheka*), which, as has already been indicated, produces sounds, the images of which can be associated with significant religious connotations. It can also be noted that this word is often used to describe an icon, which is in fact precisely what the old sailor addresses when he converses with God.<sup>16</sup> Both the icon, the keyboard, and the crucifix appear to be boards upon which the outlines of the sailor's inner conflict are drawn.

The crucifix is, on a real plane, a normal image of Christian devotion and there is no reason to suspect that the case is not so with the old sailor. However, as with the other images in this poem, it seems also to betray a complex ambiguity. It is quite probable that on a symbolic plane the crucifix is not just a simple sign of devotion. (A hint of this must surely be seen in the fact that the thing is tattooed). What seems relevant here is that the image of the crucified Christ is also an image of the death of Christ, and what is more, an image of victory in death, a concept so important to the old sailor in his view of the execution of Vladimir. It therefore, yet again, reflects the two poles of attraction and destruction. The attraction of the Christian faith, of which it is a sign of devotion, and the destruction of Christ



reflected in the sea of Revolution, which has arrived to destroy the faith. The tattoo is portrayed as "a custom of the seas"; it is a custom of the sailors to wear tattoos, and it is a custom of the sea of Revolution to dispose of the Christian heritage. The word "vytravlen" can not only mean "tattooed," but also "exterminated." The old sailor, as a representative of the Revolution, has "crucified" Vladimir, and this is the cross which he must bear.

The "night search" for renegade Whites is transformed on a symbolic plane into a search of the sailor's own soul. The sailor desperately seeks the answers to contradictions which in the end can only be reconciled in death. There is no way out. The mirror "stubbornly" ("uporno") glares at him: the keys of the piano follow each other "stubbornly" ("uporno") like night after day: and Christ gazes down at him from the icon "in a stubborn cold" ("v upornom kholode").

At first there are no seagulls over this sea of Revolution (253), but now the eyes of Christ pierce the sailor's soul:

**Like two large sea-birds, deep-blue and dark,  
Into the storm, two stormy petrels, heralds of the tempest.  
(569-570)**

*Как две морские птицы большие, синие и темные,  
В бурю, два буревестника, глашатая грозы.*

The storm of the sailor's soul mirrors the storm of the Revolution. The birds of the sea have returned to attack the old sailor from above the waves. God, as a mermaid, and who speaks "in the language of the fish" ("iz rybiei rechi"), is luring him to destruction beneath the waves.

There thus appears in this poem a complex mosaic of inter-related imagery. Images, which in "the texture of their relationships" acquire symbolic proportions and endow the poem with a coherent sub-textual formation. This sub-textual level adds a great deal to the superficial plot of revolutionary reality. The poem "Night Search" is not just simply about a band of Red Sailors who enter and search a White apartment. The image constructs in the poem reveal another plot; a plot which explains and expounds the actions of the real plane, and transforms the events of physical reality into events of metaphysical complexity.

Perhaps it would be fitting to give this old sailor an epitaph

from an earlier poem of Khlebnikov, a poem entitled "The Sea" ("More"), in which there are two lines that read:

The winds and the sea are in discord  
They will drive us to misfortune.<sup>17</sup>

Ветра с морем нелады  
Доведут нас до беды.

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#### NOTES

1. V. V. Khlebnikov, *Sobranie proizvedenii* Vols. I-V, pod obshchei redaktsiei Iu. Tynianova i N. Stepanova, (L. 1928-1933).

2. V. Pertsov, "O Velimire Khlebnikove," *Voprosy literatury*, No. 7 (1966), 46-71.

3. V. Pertsov, *Poety i prozaiki velikikh let*, (M. 1969), 210-248.

4. N. Stepanov, "Tvorchestvo Velimira Khlebnikova," in V. V. Khlebnikov, *Sobranie proizvedenii*, op. cit., Vol. 1, 33-64.

5. N. Stepanov, *Poety i prozaiki*, (M. 1968), 321-358.

6. N. Stepanov, "O Velimire Khlebnikove," *Zvezda*, No. 6, (1972), 183-186.

7. N. Stepanov, "Velimir Khlebnikov," *Istituto universitario orientale, Annali*, Sezione slava. X (Napoli, 1967), 171-199.

8. V. Markov, *The Longer Poems of Velimir Khlebnikov* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962).

9. M. Jovanovic, "Khlebnikov i Blok; jedno poredenje," *Knjizevne novine*, No. 418 (July, 1972), 7.

10. It is not made explicit in the text of the poem whether the old woman or women lock themselves in with the sailors and thus burn to death, or actually escape the blaze, locking the door from the outside. The parenthetical "appearing" ("pokazyvaias"), referring to the old woman at the end of the poem may indeed indicate the former.

11. Markov, 183.

12. Markov, 183.

13. C.f. Burke, quoted in Ed. Alex Preminger, *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, 1965), 367.

14. The text used is taken from the *Sobranie proizvedenii*, op. cit., Vol. I. All the five volumes of this edition, along with other published, and previously unpublished, works of Khlebnikov have been reprinted as V. V. Khlebnikov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Munich, 1968-72). The figures in parentheses after each quotation refer to line numbers.

15. Markov, 181.

16. *Doska* is of course also the word used by Khlebnikov to refer to his mathematical calculations on the laws of time. The full title he used was "Doski sud'by" ("The Boards of Fate"), Cf. Velimir Khlebnikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. III, 467-521.

17. V.V. Khlebnikov, *Sobranie proizvedenii*, op. cit., Vol. 111, 189.

T. Nikolskaya

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**RUSSIAN WRITERS IN  
GEORGIA IN 1917-1921**

Tiflis literary life in the years 1917-1921 was rich and stormy. A variety of literary groups and unions formed and quickly disintegrated. There were numerous lectures, debates, "evenings of poetry and music," literary discussions. Together with the Blue Horns group of Georgian poets, Russian writers and poets who happened to be in Tiflis for one reason or another played an active part in all these undertakings.<sup>1</sup> Many of them were marooned in the Georgian capital for a few years and began to collaborate in the local press, to start newspapers, magazines and even publishing houses, which were for the most part short-lived.

The basic literary groups which were formed by Russian poets in the Georgian capital in these years were the literary friendship Alpha-Lira, founded by the poetess T. Vechorka, Gorodetsky's Guild of Poets, Armor, headed by Yu. Degen, The Academy of Verse, headed by the poet and doctor of mathematics G.A. Kharazov. These groups more or less gravitated to Acmeism. Among the Futurist groups should be noted The Syndicate of Futurists under the directorship of Kruchenykh and the group 41°, which was joined by Kruchenykh, I. Zdanevich, I. Tereentiev. Apart from these groups which formed very distinctive

features, there was a whole series of literary salons in Tiflis; as G. Eristov recalls:

One of them, the Bronze Cauldron, used to meet at the house of Sofia Nikolaevna Melikova in her comfortable "tower" (on the top floor of a tall building in Olginskaya Street). Apart from the hostess the young talented Andrei Rappoport, Boris Agapov, the Kantian and mystic Grigory Bammel (later a Marxist philosopher), the talented poetess Tatyana Poyarkova, the poet-pantheist in the Tyutchev spirit General Alexander Kulebyakin and others took active part in this circle. The second circle used to meet at the house of the hospitable princess Yelizaveta Davydovna Eristova. Here the future Imagist Rurik Ivnev, the poet Balagin, Linsky, the talented Vakhtang Eristov and others could be found.<sup>2</sup>

People would also meet at the flat of Gorodetsky and his wife N. A. Bel-Kon Lyubomirskaya, at the houses of the poet S. Rafalovich and the Georgian publicist A. Q'ancheli.

Another form of literary life was the cafes, some of which had a distinct program and made attempts to create a chamber theater, a literary-artistic cabaret on the model of the Petrograd Stray Dog and Comedians' Doss. The most interesting of them were the Argonauts' Boat, the Peacock's Tail and later Chimerion; the idiosyncratic club the Fantastic Little Inn stood apart. This sort of gathering was widespread in the early years of the revolution in a number of other cities, e.g., in Moscow—The Poetic Cafe Domino, Pegas's Stable—and in the south of Russia. This sort of cafe was especially cultivated by Georgian poets of the Blue Horns group whose enthusiasm for the poetry of the French Symbolists extended to their everyday life.

Finally, poetic evenings and debates on literary and artistic themes became widely popular; they were held in the hall of the Conservatoire, which had a large auditorium. It must be said that in those years stage readings were widespread in Russia too; because of the book famine, this was almost the only way that writers could communicate with their public. Unlike Moscow and Petrograd, Tiflis in 1917-1921 produced a relatively large number of literary journals, although all of them ceased to exist after a few numbers because of the rise in the price of paper, of printing and the publishers' lack of funds. Among them were the magazines *Ars* (published by A. Antonovskaya, with the close participation of Gorodetsky in issues 1 and 2); *Orion*, edited by S. Rafalovich; *Phoenix*, edited by Yu. Degen; *Kuranty (Bulletins)*, edited by B.

Korneev and also the magazines *Art*, *The Caucasian Stage*, *The Theater*, *Harlequin*—which were basically devoted to the theater—and the satirical magazines *Igla (Needle)* and *Nart*. Special literary newspapers were also published. Korneev and V. K. Katanyan put out three issues of the newspaper *Art*, and a group of Futurists produced one issue of the Futurist newspaper *41°*. A lot of collections of poetry also came out. The poet Rafalovich founded a publishing house, *The Caucasian Intermediary*, which was financed by A. M. Melikova, in which, apart from Rafalovich's collections, small books of Akhmatova, Pushkin and other poets were published.

The reason for such a variety of forms in literary life was that many writers, poets and artists had ended up in Tiflis. Some had been stranded in Georgia by the First World War, others hoped to find here salvation from the hunger and horrors of civil war which was raging on the other side of the Caucasus. As Grigol Robak'idze wrote: "All around, everything was crumbling and Tiflis remained the only city which greeted this destruction with poetic song."<sup>3</sup> This relative peace can be accounted for by the peculiar political situation which had arisen in Georgia. After the February Revolution, Transcaucasia came under the authority of a Special Transcaucasia Committee of the provisional government. In February 1918 a Transcaucasian Diet was created which declared Transcaucasia to be "an independent federal democratic republic." On May 26, 1918, the Mensheviks declared Georgia an independent republic and formed a government under the chairmanship of Noe Zhordania. It must be said that neither the Menshevik Government of Georgia, busy with the complicated external political situation (fixing the frontiers of Georgia's national state, solving conflicts with Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan), nor the acute internal problems (economic crisis, agrarian reform) interfered with the literary and artistic life of the country: quite often, in fact, young talent was helped. For example, the Mayor of Tiflis got into conversation with the poet T'itsian T'abidze in the street, found out that he and his wife had nowhere to live and immediately handed the poet the keys to the requisitioned building of the Merchant Club.<sup>4</sup> When Gorodetsky in 1919 began to publish the satirical magazine *Nart* he put a cartoon of the Prime Minister of the Georgian Republic, Zhordania, on the cover of the first issue, showing him as a billy-goat which an inexperienced worker was trying to milk: but the magazine was not closed down and

continued to come out for some time.<sup>5</sup> Conditions of complete creative freedom helped literature and art to blossom. In an appraisal of literary and artistic life in Tiflis in those years, the Georgian poet Robak'idze wrote:

Tiflis lives by an esthetic perception of the world—it did so in the past, and it does so now. Many names can be mentioned. Poets: Ovanes Tumanyan, Sergei Gorodetsky, Sergei Rafalovich, two guilds of poets, the *Pleiade* called Blue Horns. Artists: Sudeikin Gudyashvili, Sorin Kak'abadze, Bazhbeuk-Melikov, Kirill Zdanevich etc.—the stage decorator, Salzmann, and the sculptor, Nik'oladze. Futurists: the brothers Zdanevich, Kruchenykh, Vasily Kamensky, Kara-Darvich, etc. Friends of Art: Ali Arsenishvili, V. Ananov, and many, many other names. All of them are united in art. People of different nationalities, different cultures, are brothers in art. . . . We believe in this new international, here in Tiflis the basis must be made for building it.<sup>6</sup>

One of the first literary circles of Russian poets living in Tiflis in 1917 was the literary association Alpha-Lira, whose opening session was held on December 1, 1917, on the initiative of the poetess Tatyana Vechorka, who had arrived from Petrograd. As the Articles of Association said:

The aim of the circle is to develop and support young talent, to look for new paths in the field of poetic form. The work of the circle is daily sessions, conversations on selected topics, reviews, verse translations from foreign languages, co-operative work in this field, mutual criticism, reading works by circle members.<sup>7</sup>

Active members of this circle, which met at the flat of Vechorka and S. Mikhailova (Marr) were G. Bashinjanyan, N. Vasileva, N. Dubchenko, G. Yevangulov and the artists of the miniature theater S. Melnikova and L. Reistadt. I. Zdanevich and Katanian were frequent guests of the circle. Minutes for ten sessions survive and they show that the program adopted was successfully carried out. Apart from reading and criticizing their poetry, members of Alpha-Lira paid great attention to developing poetic crafts: they wrote *bout-rimes*, poems to set themes; they collectively translated Baudelaire and Byron. The circle members' interest in the literature and history of Georgia deserves special mention. They produced a translation (which, unfortunately, has not survived) of a series of poems by Ak'ak'i Ts'ereteli, they produced reviews on the books they had read on the history of Georgia.

At one of the sessions on January 13, 1918, Yevangulov read a paper on old Tiflis. They enjoyed several collective walks through old Tiflis. The theme of Georgia begins to be heard in the Alpha-Lira members' verses. Thus, Vechorka's Georgian poems are imbued with the work of the Georgian artist Lado Gudiashvili.

The forest hinds from beyond the mountain  
have pricked up their dark gaze,  
like women in brocade,  
they pluck the black grapes.

The flowers climb up the slope,  
the clouds are set in red layers,  
the glow-worm of the night lamp  
will soon light up in the monastery.  
And on a slant-eyed horse  
a rider hurries  
to fly in his broad saddle  
over the congealing water.<sup>8</sup>

In the verse of N. Vasilieva, the theme of Georgia is closely connected with the theme of Petrograd and her poetry is constructed around a juxtaposition of the luxuriant southern scenery of the Caucasus with the granite severity of St. Petersburg:

Always, always shall I be faithful  
to the granites of the majestic Neva.  
As before, you possess  
the poet's superstitious soul  
And here above the clouded Kura,  
which runs rapidly between the hills,  
I shan't construct any new temples,  
I shan't create any gods for myself.  
Even the botanical gardens'  
grandeur won't eclipse  
you, my favorite wall,  
in which the summer gardens sensitively sleep.  
From Veria I search in alarm  
among the unstable silhouettes of the mountains  
for the severe outlines of the Isaaki  
and the cathedral of Peter and Paul.  
And the faithful heart cannot,  
will not love Caucasus,

and multiplies its pain with delight  
by remembering you.<sup>9</sup>

G.Yevangulov is attracted by the eastern coloring of the Georgian capital, the exotic figures of the petty tradesmen—the k'into—the rowdy inns (dukhan), the noise of barrel organs. In the poem "Tiflis Scene" he writes:

I love to go on a spree—a cheerful demon—  
in the gardens both summer and winter,  
to read on the signs of "Eden":  
"Don't go away my darling!"

The organ and the noisy zurna  
soothe our ears in a more ordinary way,  
where people get so dreamily drunk  
on the wine from Kakhetia.

Where the day is so sunny and long,  
where at night you can hear, "make merry."  
My own town, you are precious to me  
idle, festive Tiflis!

.....  
On the Golovin Avenue, amid the living  
flow of civilian clothes and cloaks  
I love to meet him, the healthy  
bronze-faced k'into.

He is always so glad  
to take up the fashionable phrases in his grave way  
when he sings drawing it out:  
"Hey, decadent grapes."

And now he is drunk . . . in a burning groan  
the organ of Alaverdi burbles . . .  
Go on a spree, k'into. And in a phaeton  
fly to the Veria gardens.

To the loud toast "wealth and brotherhood"  
drink, get drunk until the early hours!  
After all you always have some wealth for a rainy day  
—your belt is made of silver . . .



Intoxicated, in endless searching,  
infatuated with what I see  
for only a moment in the free and carefree k'into,  
I see my double.<sup>10</sup>

The society Alpha-Lira did not last long. In 1918 its members merged with the guild of poets Armor (*Kolchuga*).

Tiflis has become a fantastic city. A fantastic city needed a fantastic corner and, on one fine day, at No. 12 Rustaveli, in the courtyard, poets and artists opened a Fantastic Little Inn which consisted of a small room, meant for 10-15, but which, by some miracle, had about 50 people in it, more women than men. Phantasmagorias decorated the walls of the room. Virtually every evening the Inn was open and poets and artists read their poems and lectures.<sup>11</sup>

The decoration of the Fantastic Little Inn was undertaken by the artist Gudiashvili (the left wall, the ceiling and the top half of the facing wall), the well-known Tiflis journalist A. S. Petrakovsky (the right wall and ceiling), the cartoonist Sir Gay—the pseudonym of the artist and journalist S. Skripitsyn—the left wall of the entrance), the sculptor Nik'oladze (the drawing on the vaults on the left, which Gudiashvili colored), the poet Yu. Degen (the niche in the facing wall opposite the entrance, the little niche in the left wall) and also the Polish artist, Ziga Waliszewski.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the Petersburg literary and artistic cellars, The Stray Dog and The Comedians' Doss, which were the models for the Fantastic Little Inn, entrance to the latter was free and there was no buffet. This is now the opening of the Fantastic Little Inn was described by one of its habitués, Kruchenykh:

The opening of the evening began with declarations about "metalogical language" by the poets Kruchenykh, Zdanevich and Kara-Darvish. They then read poems in this language. The effect was unexpected and new. There followed recital of exotic verse by S. Koron, the actress Melnikova and Degen. Thus two camps were formed and they joined "battle"; the audience was delighted and encouraged them as best it could; among the "partisans" were A. Q'ancheli, G. Diasamidze, the sculptor Nik'oladze, the artist Sir Gay, the journalist Petrakovsky, the pianists Saumler, Kuzmin, actresses and poets.<sup>13</sup> The Georgian poet P'aolo Iashvili dedicated an impromptu poem to the opening of the Fantastic Little Inn:

Stray thin dogs  
were rounded up from the northern capital,  
and at the Fantastic Little Inn  
Kuzmin wants to settle again.

And as a tender pledge  
from Petersburg rushes  
like an awesome proclamation of the joy of Blok  
into our fantastic Tiflis.

In this brightly-colored tunnel we are kept warm  
and the cognac is not to blame for this  
nor is the gaudy harlequin jacket.

We are too sensitive to everything,  
and too far from the roar of the mob:  
yes, maestro Georgia Yevangulov  
did the awesome festival the honors.

We are guests, and eternally severe,  
but we are full of poetry and we are not mute.  
And our blue horns  
honor the fantastic boheme.<sup>14</sup>

Originally, the Futurists played the leading role in the Fantastic Little Inn. In February 1918 they began a cycle of lectures of "The Futurist University"—*Futurveuchbishche*. The chief readers were members of the circle 41°—Zdanevich, Kruchenykh, I. Terentiev.<sup>15</sup> The lecture themes were varied. So, for example, Zdanevich read "On Italian Futirism," "On the Theater in a Cul-de-sac"; Kruchenykh, "The Word as Such," "The Apocalypse and Speech-Creators," "On Madness in Art," "The History of Russian Futurism," etc. After the lectures "passionate discussions" flared up, invariable participants of which were Robak'idze, Dr. Khara-zov, A. Selikhanovich, T. T'abidze, etc., etc.

The Futurists Zdanevich, Kruchenykh and Terentiev, who formed the group 41°, which was named after the latitude of Tiflis and also because 41° centigrade is the maximum temperature of the human body, published a series of their lectures and poems which had mostly been read on the premises of the Fantastic Little Inn, the publishing house being also called 41°. They also issued a newspaper of the same name.

This newspaper, whose sole issue has long been a bibliographical

rarity, deserves more detailed examination. The first page of the newspaper had the peculiar credo of the group:

‘‘The Company 41° unites left-bank Futurism and confirms metalogical language as the obligatory form for the realization of art. The task of 41° is to use all the great discoveries of its collaborators and to set up the world on a new axis. The newspaper will be a haven for events in the life of the Company and a cause of continuous disturbance.’’<sup>16</sup>

The paper printed an interesting article by Terentiev: ‘‘Record Tenderness’’ (the life of Ilya Zdanevich), in which there was an analysis of the poet’s Futurist dramas *Yako, King of Albania*, *The Ass for Hire* and *Easter Island*, and links were established between them and the tradition of Russian puppet theater, the marionette theater. The peculiarity of Zdanevich’s *dra* lay in the fact that he wrote all the words, as it were, in transcription as they were heard, deliberately ignoring the rules of Russian spelling—which made them somewhat difficult to read. Zdanevich also made wide use of metalogical language. However, the *dra* made a strong emotional impression when recited on the stage. Zdanevich’s *dra* to some extent recall the drama of the theater of the absurd. One can only understand their content from the stage directions, since the characters’ monologues are written in metalogical language. Terentiev managed to isolate the skeleton of a plot in the *dra*. This, for example, is how he sets out the content of the *dra Yanko—King of Albania*:

The adventurer Yanko stumbles on some bandits who happen to be quarreling. As a complete outsider, without any interest, Yanko is forced to be their king. He is afraid. They stick him to his throne with fish-glue; Yanko tries to tear himself free and he is assisted by a German called Prental. They both shout out ‘‘water,’’ but there is no water and Yanko falls a victim to the bandits’ knives, emitting the sound ‘‘yayyu.’’ That is all.<sup>17</sup>

Zdanevich’s *dra Easter Island (Ostraf Pashki)* is also closely linked with puppet theater. As Terentiev sums it up, ‘‘it is a very cheerful drama; everybody dies and everybody is resurrected—a monthly period.’’<sup>18</sup> The playful nature of the action is stressed in this *dra*. The characters of the *dra* go back to the image of ‘‘jumping Johnny’’ (Van’ka-Vstan’ka) and, at the same time, the blood from the stone women goes back to the cranberry juice of Blok’s *The Puppet Theater*. To illustrate this, we can show the finale of the *dra*:

Two-and-a-half stone women  
they get into their coffins  
they die  
the boss, the merchant Pryk, slams down  
the lids of the coffins  
a sculptor enters  
boss, ask the sculptor  
the sculptor  
smashes the first coffin  
smashes the second  
smashes the third  
the merchant runs in  
the sculptor grabs the merchant  
he stabs the merchant  
the merchant falls  
the sculptor stabs him  
the merchant dies  
the sculptor sprinkles the blood on the  
women  
the women are resurrected  
the women in a chorus,  
"Blockhead"  
they beat the sculptor  
they sprinkle the merchant with the sculptor's  
blood  
the merchant comes to life  
Easter  
the women  
depart  
leaving pools of blood  
the boss  
Easter is a negative indication of the death of  
menstruation  
Easter gives the stone women their activity  
and the sculptor too  
it sprinkles the blood of the women over the  
sculptor  
comes to life, runs  
the boss

THE END<sup>19</sup>

Kruchenykh, in the book *Apollo in the Cross-Fire (Painting in Poetry)*, writes about Zdanevich's *dra*:

The apparent absurdity is the wisdom of his outline! Painting is a manifestation of the poet's composition and the outline of his sounds . . . in Zdanevich's dramas we have a cinema of perpendiculars—every minute they get up and fall down. In *Yanko* there is a palisade of bandits, a one-eyed flea and Yanko himself, pinned down, emitting a few "pew" sounds.

In the play *An Ass for Hire* we have vertical bridegrooms with the bride (Zokhna) and the horizontal ass. By the end, everybody is lying down on the ground in tears.

In the third *dra*, *Easter Island*, we get the uninterrupted death and resurrection of five characters: it is the effect of a fence being knocked down and the sporting combination of five fingers against the cheesy truth of death.<sup>20</sup>

Zdanevich gives in his statements a theoretical foundation for the metalogical element in his plays and for its relevance. In the same newspaper, in an open letter to "*Isabella VII*"—the pseudonym of one of the critics of the newspaper *New Day*, probably Robak'idze, who criticized the Futurists, Zdanevich writes: "Metalogical Futurism sets itself the task of realizing in words the facets of experience which could not in any way be realized by our predecessors, so long as poetry was dealing with words that were tied to sense. For this purpose, Futurism creates metalogical words."<sup>21</sup> Kruchenykh—the father of Moscow Futurism, as he was called in Georgia—also held this theory in the years after his arrival from Moscow. In his article "On Madness in Art" he wrote:

It is impossible to write nonsense. There is more sense in nonsense than in anything else. If each letter has its meaning, then any combination of letters has meaning. If somebody, in an attack of jealousy, spite or love, starts to write words in an arbitrary assortment (as happens when people are roused) then what he is really doing is to give a flow of words immediately (without his reason controlling them), words which reflect this feeling and which even outgrow it. Therefore, there are no completely irrational works. And in our day this is being proved by the fact that now, as never before, the work of savages, children, flagellants and the mentally ill is being studied. And now we have the final conclusion—to leave reason aside and to write in a language which has not yet congealed and which has not been labeled with concepts—to write in metalogical language! Let it be absurd, incomprehensible, monstrous.<sup>22</sup>

Kruchenykh develops his theory of metalogical language in other works written in Tiflis. Thus in the book *Fattening Roses*, he repeats his thought about the links between the metalogical and

the mad:

"The metalogical takes all its creative values from madness, which is why the words 'zaumnoye' and 'bezumnoye' are almost identical, and is not only helpless but diseased. Metalogy has outwitted everything...."23

In Kruchenykh's opinion, metalogical language embodies the advantages of both normative (rational) and mad language. He writes:

"Until now we had the rational or the mad: we have given a third—the metalogical, which transforms and overcomes them creatively."24

In Kruchenykh's opinion, each sound has a specific semantic value and in a series of works he investigates the functions of sounds in verse. Thus, for example, in the articles "A Love Adventure of V. Mayakovsky," "Azef-Judas—Khlebnikov," "Malaholia in a Bonnet," and "The Secret Vices of Academics," he examines the significance of the sound "yu." This sound, in his opinion, expresses tenderness, moisture. "The triple harmonies and moist rhymes, such as 'yu,' drive me mad."\* "Yu," as Kruchenykh considers it, is an abbreviation of "Yoni." It is interesting to note that we can find a similar treatment of the letter "yu" in the work of Kamensky and V. Gnedov. Terentiev analyses sounds and their significance in an analysis of Zdanevich's plays in the book *Record Tenderness*.<sup>25</sup> Not by chance is a capital "yu," symbolizing tenderness, put on the cover. As Terentiev notes, in the first play from the cycle *Aslaablich'ia* (*Ass' Features* [?]), *Yanko, the King of Albania*:

There is no single "yo," not a drop of moisture...the poet has met the fate of his hero: he ran out of water. He had a temperature of 41° and a hard nose. Zdanevich looks for emotional softness (the slobber of love): this was the formation of a call for anal eroticism! He gets ill with typhoid! He writes a new play: *An Ass for Hire*—a compress made of woman, which is reverently applied indiscriminately now to bridegroom A and now to bridegroom B and sometimes, by mistake, to the ass.

All the indecent love words in this ecstasy without causality whoop, go "yu," and squawk and produce more saliva than the extreme poet of "yus," Velemir [sic] Khlebnikov.... Zdanevich has won the record of tenderness and radiates satisfaction.

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\*K. Taronovsky gives an analysis of this line of Lermontov's in the article *Susse und Feuchte Reime bei Lermontov*—*Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie*, 1965, 5, 251-4.

In the third drama from the cycle *Aslaablich'ya, Easter Island*, the characters of which constantly die and resurrect, Zdanevich uses the sound "l'ye" to express tenderness. The hero of this *dra* addresses the peasant woman:

lyosya  
lyozhnaya lupan'ka  
lanya

As Terentiev writes: "This is a nightingale's trill—the letters ch, sh, shch, ts, s, f, kh, z convey carnal feeling: 'chest' (honor), 'nezhit' (to be tender with), 'shchupat' (to feel), 'shchekotat' (to tickle)."

Apart from metalogical language, Kruchenykh's attention was turned to "sdvigology," that is to the *sdvigi*, the displacements, which create indecent words. His book *Malacholy in a Bonnet* was devoted to this theme. He gave one of the copies of this book to the poetess Vasilieva, with the following inscription: "To the woman who creates the tenderest words from a compiler of an obscene dictionary (*kakal'nik*)."  
Kruchenykh gives a detailed analysis of "caco-displacements" or the "History of Kak," which was begun with the anal eroticism of *Akaky Akakievich* of Gogol, and which ended with the ykuZYkaki of Zdanevich; the "ik" displacements (*i kto i koshka*); the asinine displacements ("Oh, to fuse, to fuse with him as soon as possible" (*o, slit'sia, slit'sia s nim skoree*) [S. Gorodetsky]. As a result of his observations, he concludes that displacements and turns of phrase which are "cacoid" and testicular (*iamudiynyi*) reveal the love of Russian writers for playing with "kak" and the very "yeti," which can be seen in the examples of "povsekakie," "vetebliany." Proclaiming himself to be the originator of the doctrine of anal and verbal-testicular eroticism, Kruchenykh adds: "If, however, the 'kakisms' of Russian writers can be explained by deafness, so much the worse for them!" Kruchenykh's observations on displacements had a definite practical significance. His lectures on this theme enjoyed great success, and stimulated listeners to finding displacements in their own and other people's poetry.

If Kruchenykh's work has its admirers and followers (for example, the poet G. Aygi), as well as investigators, then this is more than can be said for the work of Terentiev. The reason for this is the difficulty in finding texts. All Terentiev's little books—

*17 Weapons of Nonsense, Record Tenderness, Fact, A Treatise on Continuous Indecency, Grandiosery*—were printed in Tiflis in small numbers. In Moscow in the 1920s he printed his poetry only occasionally in periodicals and was busy mainly as a director in the Leningrad Printing House Theater; in the 1930s he was repressed. Of the Company 41° he was the most right-wing and because of that he was jokingly called "a drawing-room futurist." Together with Kruchenykh, he wrote a theoretical treatise and interpreted the work of Zdanevich. In Terentiev's own poetry, metalogy occurs in extreme moderation, an incrustation as it were of the poetic text. Unlike Zdanevich's *dra*, which are a polyphony of metalogy incrustated with "rational" words, Terentiev's poetics are, in our view, an intermediate link between the poetry of the Futurists and the poetry of the Oberiuts, and in fact incline more to the latter. There is usually a logical link postulated in his poetry and one does not always notice its disappearance as the theme of the poem develops. Thus, one has the illusion of nonsense made sense. As an example we will cite two poems from his collection *Fact* (Tiflis, 1919):

I have no idea what  
My stomach wants  
It might be, though in five years' time,  
A spit-roasted bulldog with onions,  
A hedgehog  
A battalion of calves  
Or a ripped-up gruel of lilies,  
Of pistachios [?]  
The most tasty thing  
Is a woman of the hairy Ingush,  
Purchasers of Antonovka apples,  
Hare fat  
Multiplication of snipe  
So that the SCABIOUS DUZA  
Goes mad.

.....

The bad differs very little from the good  
No wonder that sometimes everything seems clear  
You can read Apukhtin with pleasure  
Adding a pinch of sirolach  
And hippopotamuses wind round a conductor's baton.



The last line strongly recalls Vvedensky. Compare: "Man is on the wallpaper, but Thursday's on the saucer."

The theory of the literature of the fact, worked out by LEF, was perhaps proposed for the first time by Terentiev. In a book which came out in Tiflis in 1920, *A Treatise on Continuous Indecency*, he writes:

Doubt of all things and of all prophecies of the womb has caused world-war and revolution.

The FACT has appeared!!!

Devoid of all sense, useless, vicious, nondescript, uncomfortable, simple, tale-telling, BARE FACT!

And while it still has value for you, it is worth anything madly beautiful or good!

It will not fade, so long as you do not quiver with bliss at the sound of any voice (. . .). The impact of a fact on your thoughts gives birth to a convulsive squeeze of the FACT in the vice of the soft brain matter!

And for that reason every word of the poet sticks out in the middle of the street as something disgraceful, like a dogs' wedding next to a cafe."<sup>26</sup> "An artist is not a fakir and not a confectioner! He is there as an example, so that we can distinguish fact from effect or confectionery!"<sup>27</sup>

Terentiev combines preaching the literature of the fact with a theory of metalogical language and at the same time he calls for the artist to take a dominating role in the life of society:

"The most excellent nonsense, which we carry like banners, remains. Together with the skin of the place on which this *vak* [?] stands, humanity is reaching out for the artist's social power! This is very interesting."<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that in the 1920s Terentiev was close to LEF and, in particular, printed his poetry in the LEF satirical magazine *Rat Killer (Krysodav)*.

In the newspaper *41°* there was also an article by Kruchenikh on the poetry of Khlebnikov, "Azef-Judas-Khlebnikov," a review by Terentiev of an evening of dances by the school of Ginna Matignoni, news in which items of local literary life mingled with sharp witticisms directed at literary opponents. In parallel with the Futurists meeting in the Fantastic Little Inn, there were the sessions of the guild of poets Armor, in which Degen, Vechorka, Korneev, Vasilieva, Poroshin, Semeyko, Katanyan, Kara-Murza and a number of others took part. The creator of the Armor Guild of Poets was Yu. Degen. However, there was no strict hierarchy, no division between maestros and apprentices, and no chief of the

syndicate in this guild. Actually, it was headed by the two most experienced poets, Degen and Vechorka, who happened at that time to be strongly influenced by the poetry of Kuzmin.<sup>29</sup> When Degen was in Petrograd at the end of 1916 and beginning of 1917, he joined the literary circle Sailors of Marseilles, headed by Kuzmin. Although the dominating tendency of the Armor Guild of Poets was towards "Clarism," there was nothing academic and no chaste hermeticism in his work, which is what helps us to distinguish Armor from Gorodetsky's parallel Guild of Poets in Tiflis, which was formed around the editorial board Ars. As Kruchenykh wrote, "In the Guild there was complete freedom for any sort of poetic search, and therefore its friendly sessions, quite unlike those of Ars, were held with animation, variety and interest."<sup>30</sup> A. Poroshin dedicated a poetic joke to these Wednesday sessions:

**Wednesday, Wednesday, nine o'clock...  
The many-colored lantern is alight.  
Hurry to the welcoming flame  
Before the fag-end goes out.**

**Tiflis! Your poets are gathered  
And the little inn roars like the sea.**

**Cross the threshold more boldly  
Of the shelter for the fickle word,  
Today we have gathered again  
To forget the hours of empty worries.**

**On a very ordinary divan  
Die away in a dreamy nirvana.**

Apart from reading their poetry, the Armor society used to arrange evenings of poetry by new arrivals in Tiflis, such as Kamensky, Mayakovsky; they also read lectures on Georgian history, and the professor of mathematics, Kharazov, gave an interesting account of his research on the links between Freudian theory and metalogical poetry.

On November 29, 1918, in the Fantastic Little Inn, the Studio of Artistic Prose opened. At the first session short stories were read by Vechorka, Moshchinskaya, Degen and Yevangulov. After a reading, a discussion took place. Members of the workshop intended to hold a series of lectures on the theory of artistic prose.

Members of Armor published two literary and artistic magazines—*Phoenix*, edited by Degen, and *Kuranty*, edited by Korneev. These magazines, which were produced with greatest polygraphic skill, contained poetry, stories and articles by writers of various tendencies, as well as reviews of new books published in Tiflis. An important place was allocated to Georgian culture in these periodicals. Thus the art section of the magazine *Phoenix* for 1919 was devoted to the work of the artist Gudiashvili. In the second issue of *Kuranty* there was a large article by T'itsian T'abidze, "Blue Horns," illustrated with sketches of the author and Valerian Gaprindashvili, drawn by P'aolo Iashvili. Publishing houses associated with the magazines produced little booklets of poetry by young poets. A peculiarity of these uniform editions was the fact that they opened their pages to poets and writers of all tendencies, "not reserving the field to any particular quests." This distinguished them from the richer publication *Ars*, which did not publish works by Futurists, and gave them no room except in the news section. The only fault that can be found with *Phoenix* and *Kuranty* is that they had the same group of contributors; they repeated each other and exchanged mutually complimentary reviews.

Apart from magazines, members of Armor took an active part in the newspaper *Ars*, which was edited by Korneev and Katanyan. This newspaper had only three issues. One of them was entirely devoted to the arrival of Kamensky in Tiflis. As Katanyan recalls, a copy of this paper was printed on a flag, which was solemnly handed to Kamensky during his performance. In the second issue of the paper, Rafalovich's interesting article, "Muses and the Muse," was printed: it was about the role of women as inspirers of poets and artists; there was a substantial article by Korneev, "Poetry of 41°," which put forward the opinion that Futurism was good as a means, but not as a goal. Though recognizing the indubitable revolutionary achievements of the Futurists as those who had overthrown the old forms, as rebels in the name of future achievements, he protested against metalogical Futurism, as represented by the group 41° at Tiflis, and considered that "metalogical poetry is the limit of rhetoricians' revolt, i.e. 41°, which cannot stand any further strain in the destruction of the organism through words."

There is a pamphlet by Klochkovsky (a pseudonym of Katanyan) which gives a colorful picture of the atmosphere of literary life in Tiflis at that time; it is the *Story of How Tiflis was*

*Transformed into Paris*, and was printed in the second issue of the paper, giving a humorous account of the arrival in Tiflis of Gorodetsky, Degen and Kruchenykh and of the stormy activity they unleashed.

In 1918 the people who frequented the Fantastic Little Inn produced a collection of the same name, an *Almanac of Poets No. 1*, which was printed but never sold because of lack of money. Only a few copies of this publication still exist. In it there were poems by M. Bamdas, D. Burlyuk, N. Vasilieva, Vechorka, Gaprindashvili, Degen, Yu. Dolgushin, Yevangulov, Kamensky, Kara-Murza, Katanyan, D. Kobayakov, Korneev, Koron, Kruchenykh, L. Lesnaya, M. Morovskaya, Poroshin, Semeyko, T'itsian T'abidze (translated by Vechorka), Terentiev, D. Fekhner, Khlebnikov, N. Chernyavsky, G. Shaikovich, V. Ruchiev, Iashvili, Zdanevich, as well as a play by Degen, *Death and the Bourgeois*. Of the poets listed, Bamdas and Khlebnikov were not in Tiflis. Most probably, verses by the former were included by his friend Degen to commemorate their both having belonged to the group Sailors of Marseilles, and the verses of the latter were included by Kruchenykh. This almanac was peculiar in that it included not only verses by Russian poets, but verse written in Russian by Georgian poets, Gaprindashvili and Iashvili. Gaprindashvili was represented in the almanac by the two poems "Evening" and "To Emile Verhaeren," which were written under the influence of Russian Symbolists, in particular Bryusov, whose poetic manner was particularly perceptible in the sonnet "To Emile Verhaeren." Iashvili, under the pseudonym of Kretas the Chimaera, published a Futuristic poem, "Newborn" (*Novorozhd*), which was marked by the strong influence of early Mayakovsky, a fellow pupil of Iashvili's in the Gymnasium at Kutaisi. This poem appears to be the only poem written in Russian by Iashvili that has ever been published.

In 1919 the Fantastic Little Inn published its one and only collection which has long since been a bibliographical rarity, and which was dedicated to the actress of the miniature theater, S. G. Melnikova, who often recited poetry in the Little Inn. Soon after its publication, in an article called "Muses and the Muse,"<sup>31</sup> the newspaper *Art (Iskusstvo)*, No. 2 (1919), pages 1 and 2, Rafalovich wrote:

"The poet Zdanevich, the most convinced and thorough-going of the Futurists, has brought glory on his muse by a truly Futurist device; we are indebted to his muse not only for a number

of his poetic works, but also for a fine book, in which there are many works by other hands."

This collection was compiled at the initiative, and published at the expense, of Zdanevich, and included works by almost all the habitués of the cellar. Georgian poets—Robak'idze, T'abidze, Iashvili—took part in it and their poems were printed in Georgian. A poem by the Armenian Futurist, Kara-Darvish, was printed in Armenian. The book contained verses by Vasiliev, Vechorka, Katanyan, Kruchenykh, Koron, Shaykevich, Chernyavsky, as well as an extract from Zdanevich's metalogical drama, *An Ass for Hire*, an article by Gordeev, drawings by Gudiashvili, K. Zdanevich and Bazhbeuk-Melikov *et al.* It was printed on splendid paper in a great variety of typefaces with reproductions of very high quality, and was a model of polygraphic art. At a special party to honor the collection's publication at the Cafe International, its inspirer, Melnikova, gave the authors signed copies.

The friendly association of different tendencies, which took place in the Fantastic Little Inn, could not help influencing their work. Thus in the poetry of the "Kuzmin" tendency—Degen, Korneev, Semeiko—Futuristic elements become noticeable. Vechorka also tends towards Futurism in the verse published in the collection *The Temptation of Posters*, which is so different from what she had published in the preceding books *Magnolias* and *Helpless Tenderness*. In the *Magnolias* poems Vechorka made a declaration of her strivings for the unusual, the perverse, the far-fetched, and gave an apology for decadence, though still preserving strict poetic form, conservative rhyming and syntax. In *The Temptation of Posters*, she strives for free verse, for unexpected symbols and word combinations and does not always keep within the bounds of good taste and moderation. Here is an example:

I do not like flowers, they do not know pain  
Fading slowly they do not speak,  
And only the nightmarish fantasy of magnolias  
Sometimes charms my languid gaze.

When, white against a shining greenery,  
They shimmer, pegged out in cold weightiness,  
I try to catch their enchanting, spicy aroma,  
Which the south or the greenhouse has given them.

But what then? I could not be different—  
Beardsley and Goya are close to my soul.

and only nurturing magnolias in my fur,  
While the coal in the fireplace burns out,  
I love to drink in the poems of Kuzmin,  
Not listening to the chords of Islamey.<sup>32</sup>

As opposed to:

In the skull of the stage  
A sceptic  
Juggling with a projector  
Schisms  
With reference  
To fining an actress.  
A desiccated  
Has sawn through the props  
And someone's lover  
Feels the sharp back of his neck  
Hit the ceiling....<sup>33</sup>

*The Ecclesiast*

to Alexei Kruchenykh

Remember God, before spring has melted:  
The staff-bearing years will have their revenge.  
The acid salts of wisdom will rust them away,  
The chronicle of the past will burn them with caustic—  
And he who has preserved you from misfortune quivers  
Because there is a lot of grain in the mill.

The sun will stop. The moon will blind.  
The tusk which has pierced the rain-bearing sky [?]  
And the cry of the prophetic, hovering she-eagle,  
A man arises, weakening with purification,  
And he will try to hear prophecy in the cloudburst,  
Swaddled in a shroud of new linen....<sup>34</sup>

At the same time as Vechorka's "turn to the left," the "Futurist-grandiosary" Kruchenykh virtually retreats from metalogical language and yields it to Zdanevich.<sup>35</sup> This move to the right is especially noticeable in the collection *Flowering Parquet Blocks* of 1920. We will cite one poem from this collection, which echoes a

verse of Vechorka:

The shade of Vechorka places its paw  
On the fond east  
Which burns in an alarmed charade  
At the entrance to her drive.  
The sharp edges of almond seeds  
Are saturated right through with steam.  
If you drop them  
There is a vocal rubber...  
At your feet  
The sharp back of your neck will be tested  
By an iron imp.<sup>36</sup>

As Kruchenykh writes, the Georgian Blue Horns poets “felt the ineluctable influence of the work of the Fantastic Little Inn”—which T’itsian T’abidze publicly acknowledged.<sup>37</sup>

The Georgian poets were frequent visitors to the Little Inn, and gave lectures there, took part in discussions, and “entrusted their secret poems to the Fantastic Little Inn. The most prominent figure among them was G. Robak’idze. He was a poet and literary critic who had received a philosophical education at Leipzig University, and had frequented the Merezhkovskys’ Paris salon. He became the leader of the Georgian Symbolists. A follower of Vyacheslav Ivanov and Nietzsche, he gave lectures in the Little Inn on Apollo and Dionysus, “On the Nature of Inspiration,” and on many other themes. His passionate speech enchanted his audience. As Vasilieva wrote:

And Robak’idze’s passionate pathos  
Often shook our souls,  
When he disturbed ancient chaos  
Or proved we had the right  
To combine ecstasy with peace.

And this is how the poetess Vechorka described his appearance:

Deluge, fire, but he is dressed like a dandy,  
The shining parting of his hair over the marble brow  
And, spattered with the echoes of Colchis,  
The thundering voice in the rumbling accent  
.....  
The Dionysus of Georgia—Gregory Robak’idze

Robak'idze himself, when he recalled these times in his novel *Phalestra*, was to write, "We all went through a Dionysus craze."

Apart from Robak'idze, T'itsian T'abidze, Iashvili and Gap-rindashvili often called at the Fantastic Little Inn:

But when the "guild" came to its term  
In our Fantastic Little Inn  
The Blue Horns would appear,  
They crowded noisily at the threshold,  
Throwing a hint of symbols.  
The brilliantly colored P'aolo  
Sang of a frog and of absinthe.  
T'abidze cast his eyes downwards:  
He defended the French school,  
Showing an enchanting accent.<sup>38</sup>

On November 25, 1928, there was a celebration of the Fantastic Little Inn's anniversary, at which "members of the artistic society Armor, Georgian poets and also many artists were present."<sup>39</sup> The Little Inn lasted until the middle of 1919 when many Russian poets left Tiflis.

At the same time as the Guild of Poets and Armor, Gorodetsky's Guild of Poets, which was based on the magazine *Ars*, went through stormy activity. Gorodetsky arrived in Tiflis in early February 1917 as a correspondent for the newspaper *The Russian Word* and as a member of the Union of Towns. While he was staying in Tiflis he started up the literary section in the newspaper *The Caucasian Word*, he began the magazines *Free Song* (devoted to work by soldier-poets) and the *Eaglet of Paradise* (devoted to children's work). Gorodetsky's arrival in Tiflis and his activity has been described by Klochkovsky in the pamphlet *The Story of How Tiflis Was Turned into Paris*:

"Voronezh. A bored train is taking the famous Gorodetsky somewhere.

Good.

The next day—"Rostov, no date. Gorodetsky passed through. I don't know where."

A day later. "Baku. Gorodetsky is here. He is moving on. Tiflis—Van."

The man in the street is worked up. "Surely not to Tiflis! Gorodetsky! Sergei!... Lord!" And he ran off to the station.

He had arrived.



"Tell me, is that the same Gorodetsky?"

"Yes."

"Tall?"

"Yes."

"A little..., you know?"

"Yes, a little."

The man in the street went home.

And Gorodetsky rushed to the editor's office.

"You have got Tiflis!"

"Yes."

"Have you got a literary section?"

"What literary section? In the city administration?"

"In the paper."

"No."

"Do you want one?"

"We do."

They began.

Gorodetsky addressed the audience, "Do you know Pushkin?"

"We do."

"Nekrasov?"

"A little bit."

"How about Ivan Fyodorychev?"

"We don't."

"Do you want me to write something?"

"Do."

He wrote something.

He filled half the columns of the newspaper. People read it and said to each other, "Yes, you know, Fyodorychev, Ivan."

Gorodetsky was writing. He was being read. He wrote about new poets. People read about new poets. He wrote about English officers. They read about English officers.

So Gorodetsky had appeared and started living in Tiflis.<sup>40</sup>

In 1918 Gorodetsky became editor of the literary section of the magazine *Ars* (Nos. 102 [1918] ; No. 1 [1919]), which was published by the poetess, and later historical writer, Antonovskaya. This magazine played an important part in developing Russian-Georgian literary links. Antonovskaya "hoped to get together the best representatives of Russian and Georgian literature around the editorial board, and by using history, architecture, frescoes and archaeology to prove the viability of the Georgian people, who had from century to century passed on their love of freedom and their hatred of tyranny."<sup>41</sup> Some of the most interesting items

in the magazine *Ars* are the article by Rafalovich, "Anna Akhmatova," a Freudian analysis by Kharazov of Tatyana's dream from *Eugene Onegin*, Robak'idze's articles "Andrei Bely" and "Georgian Modernism" and a tale by Degen, "Pink Baby Camels." Not only poems by Russian poets then living in Tiflis, but also translations by Georgian poets of the Blue Horn group and material on Georgian history were generously printed in the magazine.

The Guild of Poets, headed by Gorodetsky, was opened, in association with the magazine *Ars*, on April 11, 1918. At the first session Gorodetsky introduced the audience to the Petrograd Guild of Poets and to the aims of Acmeism; then members of the Guild read and discussed their verse. The Guild of Poets sessions took place every Wednesday at the offices of *Ars*. As one of the women who took part in the Guild, Repsime Pogosyan, recalls, "The Wednesdays of poetry were a real school of verse—he [Gorodetsky] could talk for hours about the structure of a line of verse, on meters and rhymes, about assonance and alliteration and everything which gives sonority to poetic language. He would talk about triolets and sonnets so vividly and poetically that even now I can repeat these lessons word for word."<sup>42</sup> In Repsime Pogosyan's ecstatic memoirs, Gorodetsky emerges as a somewhat idealized figure. We find a more critical portrait in the memoirs of another member of the Guild of Poets, Eristov:

Gorodetsky was genuinely fond of posing, he was pompous, he was superficially talkative and, I must admit, unprepossessing. But to give him his due, he managed to organize a real school of poets. At the weekly meetings of the Guild all the poets read their works, each of which was minutely analyzed from the points of view of form and content. This friendly criticism, which was cruel in its dispassionateness, undoubtedly did a lot of good in that it helped poets to "grow." The publication of the almanac *Acme*, where young poets had their opportunity to print their work for the first time, must also be credited to Gorodetsky. I remember that at the meetings of the Guild my first sonnets "on classical themes" met with a generally favorable response.<sup>43</sup>

The almanac *Acme*, published in 1919, printed verse by R. Asilyants, G. Bammel, N. Bel-kon-Lyubomirskaya, A. Herbsmann, Gorodetsky, N. Gratsyanskaya, Yu. Danziger, M. Koprelevich, V. Zot, O. Kamayeva, N. Kapranova, A. Kulebyakin, Maya, S. Melikova, K. Obratsov, T. Poyarkova, V. Prussak, A. Radake, Rafalovich, V. Sapozhnikov and Semeiko. One of the contributors to

the collection, Bammel, responded to its publication with an ecstatic review. He wrote in the newspaper *New Day* that the characteristic of all the contributors to the almanac was a feeling of artisticness.<sup>44</sup> Another critic of the same paper, Robak'idze, noted the contributors' painstaking attitude to the word, but pointed out the monotony of the verse rhythm, which was due to the bias towards sonnet form and the absence of any poetic breakthroughs. Despite many positive aspects in the work of Gorodetsky's Guild of Poets, a number of young poets did not like the somewhat academic, dry and didactic tone of the Guild's controlling board. Gorodetsky himself, however, considered the tendency of the Tiflis Guild to be more romantic than that of the Petersburg Guild.<sup>45</sup> But another stumbling block was the question of Gorodetsky's attitude to Futurism, for which he had no special sympathies. To put it more exactly, Gorodetsky had an arrogant and patronizing attitude towards Futurism. This article in the newspaper *The Caucasian Word*<sup>46</sup> gives a generally positive response to Kruchenykh's book *Learn, Artmen* and welcomes Futurism. Reviewing a Futurist evening in the same paper,<sup>47</sup> he scolds Degen for the superficiality of his lecture "What is Russian Futurism?" and considers Zdanevich's metalogical drama *Yanko, King of Albania* to be funny. At the same time, he protested furiously when his name was included on a poster advertising a recital by the Futurist Syndicate in the Imedi dining rooms, and gave a disapproving comment on the very idea of appearing before a "masticating audience," not that this stopped him from arranging a little afterwards a recital of his own Guild in the literary and artistic cabaret, *The Argonauts' Ship*.<sup>48</sup> A number of poets, headed by Degen, quarreled with Gorodetsky and soon afterwards left his Guild to form their own Guild of Poets, *Armor*, which we have already written about.

After Gorodetsky left Tiflis at the end of 1919, the remnants of the *Armor* Guild of Poets began meeting under the chairmanship of Rafalovich. Many poets left Tiflis in 1919 because of the deteriorating economic position of Georgia. As Z. Avalishvili comments, "the Georgian Mensheviks ruled according to party doctrine, with no credit to the art of state administration,"<sup>49</sup> which led to corruption and to financial disaster. Even the head of the Government, Zhordaniya, admitted that an economic catastrophe had fallen upon them. Because of this, many Russian poets moved from Tiflis to Baku where the university had just opened.

Vechorka, Kruchenykh, Degen, Semeiko and Gorodetsky continued their literary activity there. Some left for Vladikavkaz and Soviet Russia. Those who remained took no note of the difficulties and went on with their literary business. Rafalovich's wife, Melitta, recalls these meetings:

We met once a week, read and discussed sixty poems an evening... about 15 men and women...half sang, half read their verse, which imitated Gumilev and Akhmatova...apart from Terentiev, who was original and genuinely talented. Life was getting very difficult. Rooms were requisitioned. It was unprecedentedly cold in Tiflis, but the Guild still went on meeting. Wrapped up in their coats, people huddled around the miserable stoves, reading poetry. The electricity went out every minute, but even if it was on, you could not read by it. Paraffin lamps, which smoked, appeared. Cold and hunger stopped this activity.

As Eristov recalls, Osip Mandelstam twice recited during his short stay in Tiflis in 1920 in the Guild. The other event in the life of the Guild was the arrival of the copy of Gumilev's *Pillar of Fire*. "The reading of *Pillar of Fire* made a shattering impression on all those present. Boris Agapov read it exceedingly well. We felt we were present at the birth of the "Word" with a capital letter, at the birth of a great poet."<sup>50</sup>

Apart from the sessions of the Guild of Poets, in 1920 in Tiflis a literary circle called the Academy of Verse, headed by Kharasov, was also functioning. Apart from readings of poetry at its meetings, there were lectures devoted to analyzing literary works from a psychoanalytic point of view. There was an analysis of Tatyana's dream in *Eugene Onegin*, of Grinyov's dream from *The Captain's Daughter* and from the love scenes in Bely's *Petersburg*. Not only Kharasov, but Terentiev, the poetess K. Arsenieva, Tatishvili and the author of prose miniatures, Shepelenko, were active visitors to the Academy of Verse. Shepelenko's prose is markedly different from the prose essays of Degen, which are stylized in the spirit of Kuzmin and Yurkun. In 1920 in Tiflis there was a collection of miniatures by Shepelenko, *Breakthroughs*, published at the expense of the artist Khodotov. In a preface to this collection, Gorodetsky wrote:

Russian artistic prose after Remizov and Bely demands highly active apperception. Khlebnikov's and Kruchenykh's Futurism has reminded us of the extraordinary activeness of the Russian popular language in its perception

of reality. The author of *Breakthroughs* goes further than Symbolism and Futurism and concentrates a whole world outlook in the briefest of poems. He has it. With a perception of reality close to a standpoint of hatred, from "starlets" the shameful triviality of existence, he ironically evaluates the physical law of the world, sensing the inevitability of its perdition, but in the same foundations of existence he finds an outlet for inexhaustible creativity and in so doing affirms a transformed life. In this world outlook there is an authentic reflection of the Russian revolution.<sup>51</sup>

Among the new magazines that came out in Tiflis in 1919, we should mention the magazine *Orion*, published by Rafalovich in the ten issues of this magazine: apart from works by Russian and Georgian writers living in Tiflis, there were works by poets not living in Georgia—the article by Blok, "The Intelligentsia and the Revolution," and poetry by Kuzmin and Mandelstam.

Not to mention the two literary and artistic workshops, The Argonauts' Ship and The Peacock's Tail, would leave the panorama of Tiflis literary life incomplete.

The opening of The Argonauts' Ship, which was housed in a cellar on Rustaveli (then Golovin) Avenue, took place on September 26, 1918. The decoration of the cellar was done by K. Zdanevich. The well-known Tiflis critic, Yakov Lvov, was in charge of the theatrical side. Gorodetsky was responsible for the literary leadership, with the close cooperation of T'itsian T'ab'idze and Gaprindashvili. As Korneev wrote, the color scheme of the Ship vividly recalled similar Petrograd establishments, like The Stray Dog and The Comedians' Doss, "where everything, starting with the stage and the murals and ending with the internal routine and ideological content, was made for its spectator—poet, artist and performer—who might be looking here for his proper rest or, on the other hand, might be completing and creating new images and ideas." In The Argonauts' Ship, which lasted until the middle of 1919, musical and theatrical evenings were arranged. The magazine *Russian Thought (Russkaia дума)* noted that the most successful of them were the composer Cherepnin's creative evening, the evening of waltzes performed by the pianist Lev Pyshnov, and the production of Gorodetsky's play *Aner and Montana*, with music by S. Korona.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, The Argonauts' Ship did not succeed in carrying out its program: it failed to get an auditorium, so that after some time it changed into an ordinary place of amusement.

On April 14, 1918, in the studio of the pianist L. S. Benditsky at 3 Ch'avch'avadze Street, a circle of people active in the arts, The Peacock's Tail, opened. Ya. Lvov was elected chairman of the circle. The committee also included the well-known artistes Orda, Gorodetsky, Korona, Pyshnov, the art expert Ryabov and others; the walls of the studio were painted by Ginzeberg and Salzmann. The program of the studio included evenings on memory of Debussy, in memory of Krylov, a debate on Symbolism and many other things. The circle arranged both open and closed evenings. The permanent members filled in a questionnaire about the aims and tendencies of the circle. In the beginning, meetings took place regularly and very successfully. For example, there was an interesting evening in memory of Rimsky-Korsakov, a series of closed conversations about eroticism in art. Frequent visitors to The Peacock's Tail were the opera singer Sabaneev, and the baritone Orda. Quite often, visitors would sing the special Peacock March. The text was by Gorodetsky and the music by Prozorovsky. The march began:

Don't sit k'atso, like an owl,  
But sing songs like a resonant thrush  
After all, above your head is  
The peacock's tail, the peacock's tail.

This is how M. Rafalovich describes the atmosphere of The Peacock's Tail:

The barman was Ilya Zdanevich and the barmaid was the wife of the pianist Seliger. My husband and I and Rafalovich went to sit down at a table. Suddenly there was shooting. In panic everyone rushed to the doors. I remained sitting and the men, of course, remained with me also.... There was a little stage and in the evenings, when it was crowded with public, someone read verse in Russian and in Georgian. Or we would play some amusing sketch. Everyone knew everyone else—it was very cheerful. Afterwards, for some reason The Peacock's Tail was closed down. As far as I can understand, things were done in a very amateurish way.

\* \* \* \* \*

So for a time Tiflis, just because of its position, was transformed into an international center, or as the Georgian Symbolists loved to say, into little Paris. This was how many Russian poets

treated it. For example, Agnitsev wrote:

Glimmering Tiflis—the son of the mountains of Kakhetia,  
Heracles's crown of their age-old dreams.  
A carpet spread out at the feet of Mount David  
Embroidered with gold on emerald weave.  
You are the dual city of women of the world and k'intos,  
Of Verlaine cafes and low-ceilinged inns,  
You have combined in yourself the rush of cars  
With the idle grace of an eastern sultan.  
Son of the mountains of Kakhetia, shimmering Tiflis,  
Where West and East have embraced on the square,  
Where wine and songs have laughingly intertwined,  
Shimmering Tiflis, eastern Parisian.

In conditions of complete freedom various literary groups developed their activity in Tiflis. Years spent in Tiflis had a fruitful influence on the work of many poets. This is especially true of the activity of the Russian Futurists. As Markov in his book *Russian Futurism* comments, "Kruchenykh's work of the twenties is essentially a rehash of ideas worked out in Tiflis. The talented poet Terentiev had his debut in Tiflis, where he found his true creative self."

These years made a great contribution also to the development of Russo-Georgian literary links. The Georgian Blue Horn poets placed their articles and poetry in Russian magazines and newspapers. Russian poets took up the study of the history of Tiflis, translated the verse of Georgian poets, and in 1921 the collection *Poets of Georgia*, edited by M. Mitisishvili, was published. It was the first anthology of modern Georgian poetry in Russian. It contained translations by Rafalovich, Vechorka, Mandelstam and Bobbyrev. Not just literary relations, but close, friendly links were forged between Russian and Georgian poets. In his book *People, Years, Life*, Ehrenburg recalls the Blue Horns helping him and Mandelstam during their stay in Tiflis in autumn 1920. The Russian poets' attitude to Georgians was vividly expressed by Terentiev in his poem "Magnificat" ("Didebulia"):

Mountains,  
Heat,  
Quiet Tiflis.  
The Kurikulush of the Kura

Didebulia.

Rob'akidze walks the streets

As cold as Napareuli [wine]

The strict organ of Georgia

Tasting the caviar blood of poetry

T'itsian T'abidze quivers.

This is how the flames flare up.

And here is Chichiko Gaprindashvili,

The bear educated by Verlaine.

We are united by mutual love

And a holiday.

The accession of P'aolo to the throne of the Georgian table.

Glory to the country

Where Kara-Darvish walks,

Looking like Catherine the Second,

Where I live and steal things.

1917-20 in Tiflis is an interesting page in the history of literary life. There was a general yearning for art in those years. The spirit of collaboration dominated the spirit of rivalry. There were often collective recitals by poets of different tendencies, and differing views did not prevent friendly links. Lack of money, youth, the inexperience of most of the participants, were the reasons for the final collapse of many beginnings, but it was no cause for melancholy. Every person that came to Tiflis tried to realize to the utmost his potential, and the right conditions were there. Not only the little cafes, but even the whole of the conservatoire would be crowded out during poetic and musical evenings. The poet Kamen-sky, who arrived from Moscow, gave recitals which enjoyed a noisy success. He gave a reading of his poem "Stenka Razin." The dramatists and theoretician Evreinov read his play *The Most Important Thing* with similar success. It is typical of these years that representatives of all forms of art had close and friendly collaboration. In the painting of literary and artistic cafes and in their life the Russian artists, Sudeikin and Sorin, Georgians such as Gudishvili and D. K'ak'abadze, the Armenian Bazhbeuk-Melikov and the Pole Z. Waliszewski took part. We have touched on only the literary life of Tiflis, but it is hard to detach it from theatrical life. In Tiflis artists of the Moscow Arts Theater took guest-star roles and Khodotov, an actor of the Alexandrinsky Theater, performed. Miniature theaters were especially widespread. Apart from the Tiflis miniature theater, whose leading lady, Melnikova, was the muse



of Russian Futurists and read Futurist poems in the Fantastic Little Inn, there were also the theater One-Eyed Jimmy, headed by Agnitsev, and the Grotesque Theater, led by Korona. There were public debates "On the Destiny of the Modern Theater" and on "The Theater in an Impasse," at which artists, musicians, writers, as well as actors, spoke. This collaboration of all the muses at a time when "everything around was crumbling," was the factor that made Tiflis a "fantastic city."

Translated by Donald Rayfield

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#### NOTES

1. For a characterization of literary life in Tiflis then, see Ehrenburg, *Liudi, gody, zhizn'* (Moscow, 1961); Paustovskii, *Brosok na iug, Sob. soch.*, Vol. 5 (1968); R. V. Prilipko, *Russkaia literatura v Tiflise 1917-1921* in the collection *Uchenye zapiski iugo-osetinskogo un-ta* (1971).
2. G. Eristov, "Tiflisskii Tsekh poetov," *Sovremennik* (Toronto, No. 5, 1965), pp. 30-33.
3. G. Robak'idze, *Phalestra*, kartuli mc'erloba (No. 4, 1928).
4. G. Tsurikova, *Titsian Tabidze* (L. 1972), p. 140.
5. See S. Gorodetskii, "Moi put'," *Russkie sovetskie pisateli, Avtobiografii* (M. 1959), I, p. 327.
6. *Novyi Den'* (Tiflis, No. 6, 1919), 2 vi, p. 2.
7. RO IRLI, *fond* of D.P. Gordeyev (Ed. kh. 54).
8. T. Vechorka, *Magnolii* (Tiflis, 1918), p. 22.
9. N. Vasil'ieva, *Zolotye resnitsy* (Tiflis, 1918), p. 22.
10. G. Evangulov, *Baron v zaplatannykh shtanakh* (Tiflis, 1920).
11. Robak'idze *Phalestra* kartuli mts'erloba.
12. *Feniks* No. 1 (1919). Information from V. Katanyan.
13. *Kuranty* No. 2 (1919).
14. Unpublished poem.
15. For a complete list of lectures read in the Fantastic Little Inn, see *Ars* Nos. 2, 3 (1918).
16. 41<sup>o</sup> (a weekly) Monday-Sunday 14-20 July, 1919 (No. 1), p. 1.
17. 41<sup>o</sup>, p. 3.
18. Ibid.
19. I. Zdanevich, *Ostrov Paskhi* (Tiflis, 1919).
20. A. Kruchenykh, *Apollon v perepalke* (Tiflis, n.d.), p. 13.
21. 41<sup>o</sup>, p. 3.
22. *Novyi den'* (No. 5), Monday 26, v 1919, p. 14.
23. A. Kruchenykh, *Ozhirenie roz* (Tiflis, 1919), p. 14.
24. Ibid.
25. I. Terent'ev, *Rekord nezhnosti* (Tiflis, 1919).
26. I. Terent'ev, *Traktat o sploshnom neprilichii*, p. 9.
27. Ibid., 12.
28. Ibid., 13.
29. See Iu. Degen, *Po povodu nastoashchei otsenki M. Kuzmina*, *Kuranty* (No. 3-4, 1919), pp. 19-20.
30. *Kuranty* No. 2 (1919), p. 20.

31. See Iu Degen, "On New Poetry," *Kuranty* No. 2 (1919).
32. T. Vechorka, *Magnolii* (1918), p. 5.
33. T. Vechorka, *Soblazn' afish* (1920), p. 6.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
35. See B. Korneev, *Poezia 41<sup>o</sup>*, *Iskusstvo* No. 2 (1919).
36. A. Kruchenykh, *Tsvetistyie tortsy* (1920).
37. A. Kruchenykh, *Kuranty* No. 1 (1919).
38. N. Vasil'eva, *Fantasticheskii kabachek*.
39. *Kuranty* No. 2 (1919).
40. *Iskusstvo* No. 2 (1919), p. 3.
41. See B. Cherny, "Svyaz' vremen," *Literaturnaia Gruziiia* No. 8 (1971), p. 83.
42. R. Pogosian, "Stareishi master Tsekha poetov," *Literaturnaia Armeniia* No. 3 (1964).
43. G. Eristov, "Tiflisskii Tsekh poetov," *Sovremennik* No. 5 (Toronto, 1965).
44. *Novyi Den'* No. 1 (1919).
45. S. Gorodetskii, "Pis'mo k Nvard Tumanyan ot 23 iii 1950," in his *Ob Armenii i armianskom iskusstve* (Yerevan, 1974), p. 190.
46. *Kavkazskoe slovo* No. 122 (1917), Sunday, 4 vi p. 3.
47. *Ibid.*, No. 263, Friday 24 xi p. 3.
48. See B. Korneev, "V Lad'ie Argonavtov," *Kuranty* (Tiflis, 1918).
49. Z. Avalov, *Nazavisimost' Gruzii v mezhdunarodnoi politike* (Paris, 1924).
50. G. Eristov, *Tiflisski Tsekh poetov*.
51. D. Shepelenko, *Prozrenia* (Tiflis, 1920).
52. *Russkaia дума* No. 7 (1918).

Anna Lawton

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**VADIM SHERSHENEVICH:  
A FUTURIST  
WESTERNIZER**

The role played by Vadim Shershenevich in the frame of Russian Futurism has been usually dismissed as irrelevant, when not harshly criticized. His contemporaries considered him a poor poet and a pretentious theoretician, who, lacking originality, borrowed his ideas from many different Western European and Russian sources. By and large, his poetry was believed to be an uninspired imitation of Severyanin's, later mixed with some urbanist elements in a Mayakovskian style, and his theoretical writings a manipulated transcription of Marinetti's manifestoes. There is no doubt that Shershenevich's works present a considerable number of elements, traceable to these sources. However, in the light of the most recent studies, this fact is seen as an asset, rather than a deficit. In Vladimir Markov's opinion: "Shershenevich's prerevolutionary futurism. . . is worth scholarly scrutiny for many reasons. The chief among them is that he forms a bridge between ego-futurism and Hylea, and it was he who made the most consistent attempt in Russia to build on Marinetti's legacy. . . he was in the vanguard of the Russian Futurist assimilation of European modernism."<sup>1</sup>

The beginning of Shershenevich's activity as a futurist



Vadim Shershenevich

poet can be established by the date of publication of his collection of verses *Romantic Face Powder* (*Romanticheskaia pudra*), in the first months of 1913. However, he was already known on the literary scene through the publication of *Patches of Earth Free of Snow* (*Vesennie protalinki*) (1911) and *Carmina* (1913). The former is a collection of very immature and traditional verses in a romantic vein, which betray the influence of German poets, such as Heine (an epigraph from Heine emphasizes the direct connection), and which retain Symbolist suggestions. One easily recognizes Balmont in lines, such as: "Be a bright light, like the Sun, and summon, like the Sun!" Russian Symbolists, German Romantics and French *poètes maudits* seem to have been the models that Shershenevich followed in his second collection of verses, *Carmina*. He borrows themes from Blok and Kuzmin and translates Heine, Rilke and Verlaine. He is still far from Futurist poetry, both in subject matter and in style, which, as the title suggests, is rigorously classical. *Carmina* was published in 1913, when Russian Futurism was already a well established fact, and therefore these poems (all written between 1911 and 1912) were devoid of significant novelties. Shershenevich himself must have realized this, because very shortly after its publication he put out a third collection, *Romantic Face Powder*, which was well in tune with the fashionable trend of Ego-Futurism. As if to sanction the switch from more or less Symbolist poetry to Futurist poetry, the collection was printed by the official publishing house of the ego-group, *Petersburg Herald* (*Peterburgskii glashatai*), directed by I. V. Ignatyev. The opening poem, "L'Art Poétique," reveals Shershenevich's intent to write Ego-Futurist poetry. "Treat poesies like society women" he urges. The word "poeza"<sup>2</sup> immediately labels the following poems as Ego-Futurist, and the "society women," as described by the author, in "jupe coulottes" with "aigrettes" in their hair, could have come out of any of Severyanin's poems to participate in the ceremony of initiation of a newly acquired member of the family. As expected, one moves through the pages of this book as through an endless series of drawing-rooms, lit by a diffused aura of sophisticated eroticism, and witnesses refined high-society extravagances, rendezvous' in the moonlight accompanied by Chopin sonatas, and five o'clock teas. As any true Ego-Futurist, Shershenevich is fond of foreign words, of which he makes large use, either transcribed in cyrillic characters (egret, dendi, absent, shale, manto, pas'ians, buduar,

komfort, prozhektor) or in their original orthography (mesdames, éntree, Requiem, esprit, Adieu, five o'clock, rendezvous, Rue de la Vie). His attempt to write contemporary poetry is revealed by images, which include fragments of the new technological reality ("Love, like an electric light, suddenly/ Lit up the drawing-room," "Life speeds along the streetcar rails," ". . . let's go/ Watch how the new skyscrapers collapse/ Without malice"), and by unusual juxtapositions of traditional romantic motifs with trivial everyday objects: for example, he compares his existential spleen with a toothache.<sup>3</sup> In the last poem of the collection, "Today" ("Segodnia"), Shershenevich reaches his Futurist peak and at the same time reveals his limits. His emphasis on "today," as opposed to the past, and his contempt for academies and tradition unconvincingly lie on the surface of the poem, as something added *ab externo* and not organically grown with it. At this time, Shershenevich was only a would-be Futurist, but his roots were still well radicated in the tradition of the *poètes maudits* and of the French Decadents. This is shown by several poems in an erotic-macabre vein and by the numerous epigraphs from Huysmans, Rimbaud and Laforgue.

The year 1913 is a very productive one for Shershenevich. He contributes to several Ego-publications,<sup>4</sup> mostly with poems written in a conventional sugary manner. However, in the seventh almanac of the St. Petersburg group, *The Alwayser (Vsegdai)* (Spring 1913), a new Shershenevich appears. The poet, by this time, has apparently become acquainted with the works of Italian Futurists, especially Marinetti's, and has assimilated the urbanist elements, most characteristic of this branch of Futurism. Furthermore, he has become a bolder experimenter in new poetic forms. Shocking imagery and cleverly assembled dissonant rhymes more than make up for the trivial residues from his previous coquettish poetry.

Shershenevich develops his new trend and consolidates it in his new book of poetry *Extravagant Scent Bottles (Ekstravagantnye flakony)* (Fall 1913). The switch in orientation is also marked by the fact that the book is no longer a publication of the *Petersburg Herald*, but is printed by the new Futurist Moscow group, Mezzanine of Poetry (*Mezonin poezii*), of which Shershenevich was a leader. According to Markov, "Shershenevich has become now consciously urbanist and in a new way: he sings of the noise of boulevards, of the roar of automobiles, of street lights and

skyscrapers."<sup>5</sup> It is common knowledge that the theme of the "big city" does not begin with the Futurists. Even Marinetti, who developed an original brand of urbanism, based on the celebration of the technological society, found his sources back in the nineteenth century. There are indications that the leader of Italian Futurism found elements congenial to his temperament in the French Decadents, especially in Laforgue, and in the Belgian Verhaeren (not to mention Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens* or Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, which were the necessary antecedents to urbanist poetry).<sup>6</sup> Marinetti's progression from his early Symbolist poems to his Futurist production shows a gradual modification of the theme of the city.<sup>7</sup> La "ville charnelle"<sup>8</sup> slowly loses its mythical connotations and becomes a "power source of optimism" pregnant with "the rude poetry of the great metallurgic industry."<sup>9</sup> The hyperbolic glorification of the dynamism of the city, as a symbol of life, is very far from Laforgue's rejection of the city structure as oppressive and inhuman and even from Verhaeren's acceptance of the technological civilization shaded by a veil of metaphysical anxiety. The theme of urbanism came to Russia through French literature and became an integral part of Futurist programs, although different branches of Russian Futurism made different uses of it.<sup>10</sup>

Shershenevich's urbanism is a mingling of French and Italian themes filtered through the experience of Russian Symbolism: on one hand, he glorifies the beauty of the machine and calls for the destruction of academies and libraries in a true Marinettian vein; on the other hand, he seems to perceive the dehumanizing power of technology and to feel the anguish of the individual in the big city, as found in Laforgue.<sup>11</sup> He declares: ". . . I love only the rumble of the boulevard,/ Only the roar of engines, I despise the silence.../ And in the stanzas, disregarding measures, whirl/ Street lamps, skyscrapers and poster poles."<sup>12</sup> But, almost in every poem, the presence of the devil casts a disquieting shadow on the frenzied life of the boulevards, and often threatening ghosts peep from behind the city structures. In a single poem<sup>13</sup> we find the following lines: "I believe the secret melodies/ Of the flying electric devils...," "The two-eyed gas-devils puff," "And the street-cars, having become impudent, show/ Corpses stiffened at the exit door," "The evening chime got blood-stained/ by the snorting of the baby devil-grimacers..." In "City Chase" ("Gorodskaja okhota"), after having described the pursuit of a woman by a

crowd of people, buildings and stores, he concludes: "And only the Devil, contemplating the event/ Walked unhurriedly behind you and rattled his bones." In "On the Boulevard" ("Na bul'vare"), among the colorful crowd of the passersby and the roar of automobiles, he sees "—Dressed in a tennis outfit—/ A balding skeleton."

*Extravagant Scent Bottles* are also valuable experiments with new poetic devices. Shershenevich deliberately draws attention to his techniques, as suggested by the title of some poems. "Broken Rhymes" ("Slomannye rifmy") is entirely constructed on enjambment rhymes (Ibukvy-stuk/Vylezaet, fialki-ustal/Kivaia, serdtsa-er/Tsepliaias', oprometchivyi-poet/Chego); in "Frivolous Dissonances" ("Frivol'nye dissonansy"), the poet informs the reader of his technique of versification ("Other poets bind lines/ By rhyme. . ./ But I love only the bond of dissonances") and, at the same time, provides examples of dissonant rhymes throughout the whole poem (*strochki-svechki, dissonansov-skunsom, grazhdanskii-vselenskoii*). Another poem, "To the Russian Language" ("Russkomu iazyku"), shows Shershenevich's interest in rejuvenating the literary medium. The language is presented under the metaphor of a pen knife, which has been abandoned in a courtyard and exposed for centuries to the rain brought by Tartar, German and French clouds. The poet intends to clean it up, sharpen it and use it, "but only not that way—not as before." One can find examples of the "analogical technique," which Marinetti publicized in his manifestoes and which consists of juxtaposing images "apparently different from and hostile to each other," but related by analogy.<sup>14</sup> Shershenevich displays a rather felicitous hand in the application of this principle, starting from this early stage ("I put on my soul/ Glasses for the near-sighted," "Episodes and facts pass through the mind/ And, as if from a machine, exit as steel strips," "At night, when the paw of the massive city/ Wiped up the splashes of the streetcars' sobs.")

The Mezzanine of Poetry was a short-lived group. Born in the summer of 1913, by December of the same year it was already disbanded. But, during this short period it had a certain impact on the literary scene with several publications, among them three interesting almanacs.<sup>15</sup> Besides Shershenevich, the most prominent figures in the group were K. Bolshakov, who together with Shershenevich and Mayakovsky represents the urbanist



trend in Russian Futurism; R. Ivnev, who later joined Shershenevich's Imaginist group; and L. Zak, who contributed to the movement as poet, critic and painter. *Vernissage (Vernissazh)* opens with the manifesto-like "Overture" ("Uvertiura"), which is meant to inform the reader of the poetic credo of the new group. But, except for an appeal for concreteness in poetry, which contains a mild polemic with the Symbolists, it does not provide any significant insights into the Mezzanine program and esthetic theories. The style is rather frivolous, still closer to the salon orientation of the Ego-Futurists than to the aggressive militancy of the Hyleans (the latter, since 1912, in their "Slap in the Face of the Public Taste," had already adopted Marinetti's style in manifesto-writing, although they always denied being influenced by the leader of Italian Futurism). The Mezzanine ties with the ego-group are further indicated by Severyanin's contributions (one poem in *Feast*, and two poems in *Crematorium*) and by the attitude of the Mezzanine critics, who, as a rule, directed their attacks towards anyone who did not belong to their group (as was the habit among the contemporary avant-garde), sparing, and even praising, only the Ego-Futurists.<sup>16</sup> Shershenevich's poetry in the three almanacs proceeds on the line traced in *Extravagant Scent Bottles*: glorification of the technological civilization mixed with macabre motifs and interspersed by occasional snobbish affectation. His irregular rhymes become even bolder: *muzyka-uzok, ved'my-naslediem, likerami-formu, bezusye-briusova* (no capital *b*), and even *kodakom-borodu, uidemte-omute, elektronervnym-vseravny*. In one poem, making use of the enjambment, he rhymes on the preposition, once for each stanza: *petlitsu-reznits u, plyvu k-zvuk, kricha s-chas, vypit-Vy pod*. Occasionally he creates effective alliterative verses, such as: "I tiulem v iiule obernulli telo" and "I v strasti, i v zlosti, kosti i kisti/ Na chasty lomalis'." He displays a more consummate talent for urbanist imagery, which in the best of cases draws him close to Mayakovsky ("The streets are seamed by stone embroideries," "From the skyscrapers trail dampened beards," "The streetcars rear up wildly"), even though he does not renounce completely his earlier Severyaninian manner ("The wind flapped from the unwary street/ Dust, like powder from a courtesan's face")

The concept of image acquires more and more importance in Shershenevich's poetics as he proceeds in his career. Image,

in his opinion, is the essence not only of poetry, but of prose as well. In *Crematorium of Common Sense*, Shershenevich provides an excerpt of Futurist prose, followed by an open letter to Rossiyan'sky (alias Zak), in which he discusses the concept of "word-image" (*slovo-obraz*), as opposed to "word-content" (*slovo-soderzhanie*). The word, when created by intuition, does not have a precise meaning, it only evokes an image; in the historical process, the image is gradually changed into content (i.e., a meaning attributed to the word by the intellect). Example: the expression "pitat' nadezhdu" was originally a combination of images; the image faded over the years and only a concept remained; but, by means of a simple substitution, "kormit' " for "pitat'," the image could be refreshed and totally reinstated. The prose excerpt which precedes this letter<sup>17</sup> is a conscientious application of his theory. The sentence "Poet govoril po privychke banal'nye novosti i vytaskival iz svoego mozga zelenykh cherviakov"<sup>18</sup> is divided into two parts, of which the second seems to be in meaning the exact equivalent of the first. However, while the first is still logically expressed by means of "words-content," the second is expressed by "words-image," thus striking the reader with a much greater impact. The impact is usually based on surprise, as in the following examples: "Kokotka podvodila veselym karandashem *dushu*." The last word comes as a surprise, since one would expect "brovi" or "glaza" (notice also the adjective "veselyi," which by analogy characterizes the girl, rather than the pencil). "Ia nadel *na moe serdtse* pensne"; the usual place to put glasses on is, of course, the nose; therefore, "serdtse" in that position strikes the reader as something that does not really fit, and while causing him to visualize a new image, attracts his attention to the particular state of mind of the narrator, which is one of emotional participation.<sup>19</sup> The adjectives almost always refer, by analogy, to something other than the noun they modify. For example: "*Svezhezernistaia pokoinost'* byla ochen' *vkusnaia*," in which the adjectives "*svezhezernistaia*" and "*vkusnaia*" give to the abstract concept of "*pokoinost'*" the pleasant concreteness of caviar. Where the juxtaposition of noun and adjective reflects the traditional logical process ("khleb. . . gorazdo vkusnee"), the trivial effect is corrected by a series of other non-traditional modifiers of the noun, as in the example: "*khleb iz chernykh gradovykh tuch, esli ego namazat' solnechnym maslom, gorazdo vkusnee.*"

As we have seen, Shershenevich's concept of image stands very close to the core of Marinetti's theories. To what extent Shershenevich was under the influence of the Italian Futurist is difficult to say. Ideas such as simultaneity, dynamism, intuition were part of the cultural environment all over Europe. They can be traced back to Bergson's and Croce's philosophy and they constituted the skeleton of several avant-garde movements in literature and the arts. However, Shershenevich revealed a concrete interest in Marinetti's works and felt the need to translate and divulge them.<sup>20</sup> In the year 1914, he published the book *Manifestoes of Italian Futurism (Manifesty ital'ianskogo futurizma)*, five of Marinetti's best known manifestoes<sup>21</sup> and seven manifestoes concerning Futurist arts and culture.<sup>22</sup> The difficulty of translating the Futurist terminology and technical formulae is perceivable in some very clumsy passages and in the omission of several excerpts. The second part of the manifesto "Answer to the Objections," which is the practical application of the theory discussed, is omitted because, as the translator states in a footnote, "The abundance of onomatopoeia, the absence of punctuation marks, of declensions and conjugations—make impossible even an approximate translation of the excerpt." At times, Shershenevich misinterprets Marinetti's words, as when he translates the analogy "man-torpedo boat" as "man-fisher of electric rays." Nevertheless, the interest of the book lies in the fact that it raised a dissident voice in the general chorus of denigratory, and often tendentious, evaluations of Marinetti's role. Shershenevich was the only Russian that credited Marinetti—rightly or wrongly—with being the father and founder of Futurism. He states in the "Preface" that "Futurism not only was born in Italy, but it also reached its full flourishing there." Similarly, he expresses his appreciation for Marinetti's art in the "Introduction" to *The Battle of Tripoli (Bitva u Tripoli)*,<sup>23</sup> published in 1916. The translator praises the work because of its "literary and artistic value," which consists "in the clear-cut design and precision, in the novelty of the images," and even places Marinetti on a higher level than Tolstoy, Garshin, Pushkin, Lermontov and Tyutchev. They sang the war with different feelings and in different styles, but none of them transfigured it in an esthetic image based on the principle of dynamic vitalism, as Marinetti did: "The chaos of the battle grows out of the chaotic style; the tempo and rhythm of images and style convey the tempo and rhythm of the battle."

In the same year, Shershenevich also published the translation of the long novel, *Mafarka, the Futurist (Futurist Mafarka)*.<sup>24</sup> The book was censored in Italy because of its "excessive" eroticism, and Marinetti tried in court. It reintroduces the theme of the Nietzschean superman in a Futurist version; the setting, in an imaginary African country, reflects Marinetti's taste for exoticism, linked to his Symbolist production of the early years.

Shershenevich's theoretical writings reiterate his views on Italian Futurism. In *Futurism Without a Mask (Futurizm bez maski)* (1913), he credits the Italians with being the only true Futurists, and denies that any Russian group can legitimately bear that name. Not even the Ego-, in his opinion, could be considered full-fledged Futurists, although they stand closer to the original model than any others in Russia. He declares that movements, such as Realism and Symbolism, are now obsolete, because their poetic techniques have lost the freshness of originality. What makes poetry is the new and the unexpected, and this novelty comes from Italy: "Shouts come closer and closer; drumbeat; grenades; scout planes darting about; an army in uniforms of clowns and jesters, turning somersaults and shouting absurd *boutades*, is rushing from Italy." In the chapter dedicated to Italian Futurism, he explicitly refers to Marinetti as to "the first one who dared, the first innovator. . . of universal Futurism." However, a few lines below, he corrects this statement by saying that "neither Marinetti himself, nor his friends, found new forms." This apparent contradiction might be explained by Shershenevich's desire to show his independence. He is right in pointing out a lack of formal solutions where Marinetti's first manifesto, "The Founding," is concerned; however, one should not forget that the manifestoes which followed deal strictly with problems of form. Basing his argument on "The Founding" (of which he gives a summary), Shershenevich sees Marinetti's innovation only in the rejection of romantic clichés, trite sentimentalism and escapist mysticism and in the rapprochement of literature to life. Since the most pervasive quality of modern life is speed—"a crowd of telegraphs, telephones, autos, airplanes, meetings, the stock-exchange, expresses"—the task of Futurism must be "to catch the rapid, cinematographic tempo of life." The new esthetic principle, therefore, is the "beauty of speed." This concept is at the basis of Marinetti's most famous formulae, "wireless imagination" (*immaginazione senza fili*) and "liber-

ated words" (*parole in libertà*), mentioned for the first time in the conclusion of the "Technical Manifesto" and thoroughly discussed in "Destruction of Syntax." In the latter, Marinetti describes the "wireless imagination" as "the absolute freedom of images or analogies, expressed by means of disconnected words, without the aid of syntactical conducting wires and punctuation." The "liberated words" are described as essential words, juxtaposed by analogy in the very instant of perception of an image. In order for the "liberated words" to have a visual impact, their typographical arrangement must match the loose syntactical structure. This technique has its antecedent in the works of Mallarmé, especially "Un coup de dés." Marinetti was very well acquainted with Mallarmé's production, in fact, in 1916, he translated and published a collection of works by the French Symbolist, *Versi e prose*.<sup>25</sup> Mallarmé's technical innovations served as a point of departure for Marinetti, who on this basis was able to elaborate his own original theories. However, Marinetti's eagerness in dissociating himself from Mallarmé, based on the argument that he reversed Mallarmé's platonism and replaced it with the principle of dynamism,<sup>26</sup> betrays ties more profound than he was willing to acknowledge. Dynamism justifies the new telegraphic style. In force of the new esthetic principle, the "beauty of speed," poetry must be "an uninterrupted chain of analogies."

Marinetti's concept of poetry as a "chain of analogies" is reintroduced by Shershenevich, slightly modified, in his second theoretical treatise, *Green Street (Zelenaia ulitsa)*<sup>27</sup> (1916): "A poetic work is an uninterrupted series of images. The imagery of each word is perceived even more sharply when it is juxtaposed to another image, since we all perceive by means of juxtaposition and comparison." According to Marinetti, there is no such thing as "categories of images," images are not "noble or gross, odd or natural," they are all valid as long as they are new.<sup>28</sup> Shershenevich sticks to this idea, almost *verbatim*: "There are no eccentric or natural images, simple or complex images. . . there is only one criterion of success: expressiveness, based on absolute novelty." Neither are images subject to any specific limitation. Marinetti states that "the broader their affinity, the longer will images keep their power to amaze," and Shershenevich is of the same opinion: "The broader, the more unexpected are images, the greater will be their potential to survive the day of their

birth." The chaotic dynamism of the city cannot be expressed otherwise but by the interior dynamism of the verse. Therefore, according to Marinetti, "it is necessary to orchestrate images according to a maximum of disorder." Shershenevich agrees: "All these images follow a maximum of disorder" (similarly, he praised *The Battle of Tripoli*, as we saw, because the apparently chaotic orchestration of images reproduced the rhythm of the battle). However, as we have already observed in *Futurism Without a Mask*, Shershenevich feels the need to underline his independence from Italian Futurism. In the "Overture" to *Green Street*, he states that he considers himself a Futurist only because Futurist theories on the image converge with his own, but that he prefers to be called an Imaginist.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, after having presented his poetic theory, he stresses the superiority of Russian Futurism over its Italian counterpart and explains that the latter is only a "social movement," while "the Russian is an upheaval in art." Shershenevich's contradictory attitude towards Italian Futurism could lead to two observations: firstly, it could be explained in terms of self-defense; he was particularly sensitive to criticism, and throughout his career he engaged in several battles with hostile critics, who accused him of plagiarism (the second part of *Green Street* is, in fact, entirely dedicated to rebuttal of criticism, published by different Russian journals from 1911 to 1914). Secondly, it might indicate a self-conscious unwillingness to acknowledge the degree to which Marinetti's writings did indeed influence his views on poetry. The conclusion of the book, "Two Last Words" ("Dva poslednikh slova"), not only deals with old Italian themes (destruction of museums and academies versus technology, the beauty of speed, contemporaneity, etc.), but it does so in a typical hyperbolic Marinettian style: "it is necessary to raise our voices to the howl of transatlantic sirens," "ferro-concrete twenty-storied skyscrapers arise, which with the smoky chevelure of our turbulence support the heavens of your ecstasy," "Learn to understand our automobile-words," "We would gladly be the first to welcome you if you hissed us for backwardness, for un contemporaneity!"

Another document that shows Marinetti's influence on Shershenevich is "Declaration about the Futurist Theater" ("Deklaratsiia o futuristicheskom teatre").<sup>30</sup> The Futurist contribution to the development of the avant-garde theater is well known. A number of Futurist poets and artists not only wrote and painted

sets for the theater, but also acted on stage. The most conspicuous example is, of course, Vladimir Mayakovsky, author and star of the homonymous tragedy; but the taste for theatrical performance was an essential component of all the Futurist public appearances.<sup>31</sup> In Italy, as well as in Russia, Futurist *soirées* were usually held in theaters and choreographed as a spectacle. The Futurists also became pioneers in the new art of cinematography: Marinetti and his friends made the movie *Futurist Life (Vita futurista)*<sup>32</sup> (1916), and in Russia Goncharova and Larionov created a Futurist film, *A Drama in Futurist Cabaret No. 3*, in which Shershenevich participated, together with Mayakovsky and the Burlyuks.<sup>33</sup> In his manifesto about the theater, Shershenevich rejects not only the traditional aspects of the contemporary theater (Stanislavsky), but also the most avant-garde ones (Meyerhold). He advocates a new conception of the theater similar to that expressed by Marinetti in his "Music Hall."<sup>34</sup> The main points that link the two manifestoes are: 1) elimination of the word, as a means of expression, substituted by movement; 2) elimination of a written text in favor of actor's improvisation; 3) elimination of sets and painted background, substituted by light effects; 4) mixing of genres and combination of pieces from different plays. Both are against tradition, historicism and psychological effects and in favor of contemporary subjects which would lend themselves to a dynamic representation. After having theorized about the theater, Shershenevich tried his hand as a playwright. He published *Swifthood (Bystr')* (1916), which Markov called "a poor imitation of Mayakovsky's tragedy *Vladimir Mayakovsky*,"<sup>35</sup> and which also reminds of Marinetti's "satiric tragedy" *King Bombance (Le Roi Bombance)*.<sup>36</sup> Although the socio-political satire present in Marinetti's play is not to be found in *Swifthood*, nevertheless the two plays coincide in the theme of "the poet and the crowd," expressed by grotesque imagery.

After the dissolving of the Mezzanine of Poetry, Shershenevich (together with Bolshakov) was officially accepted into the group of the Cubo-Futurists. The publication that sanctioned this alliance was *The First Journal of Russian Futurists (Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov)* (March 1914), of which Shershenevich was chief editor. He apparently took great advantage of this position, "gave his own poetry star billing, printing it near the front of the issue, immediately after Mayakovsky's" and "filled the critical

section with reviews praising himself to the skies."<sup>37</sup> The main interest of the eleven poems which Shershenevich contributed to this issue consists in their affinity with Mayakovsky's poetry, in terms of themes as well as of rhythms, rhyme and imagery.<sup>38</sup> If we consider that Shershenevich's poetry is immediately followed by that of Bolshakov, we realized that it was his intention to group together the three representatives of the urbanist trend, and to give them a prominent position over the others, reiterating in this way his views about the main role of the big city theme in Futurist poetry. In the following almanac, *The Croaked Moon (Dokhlaiia luna)* (Spring 1914),<sup>39</sup> Shershenevich, still in charge of the editing, became even bolder and printed his own poetry in first position, preceding everyone else, even Mayakovsky. He contributed seven poems to this issue, which are, in Markov's opinion, "among his best and serve to underscore once again the fact that Russian twentieth century poetic metaphor and rhyme cannot be studied without taking into consideration. . . Shershenevich" (p. 179). The basic theme of these poems is still the same as in his preceding collections—man in a technological environment—but with a modification. The ghosts of the subconscious no longer materialize as skeletons and devils, but are embodied in the machines themselves: "Out of illuminated graves come automobiles." The forces of evil now take the shape of "Snorting, brutalized, wild engines" with "tails of smoke"; the streetcars, transformed into mythological monsters with a hundred eyes, threaten the poet with a diabolical grin, and so, "bloodily," does the electric current.

*The Croaked Moon* is the last instance in which we see Shershenevich collaborating in a leading Futurist group. In the following years, before the revolution, Shershenevich is confined to a solitary activity.<sup>40</sup> Besides translations, theoretical writings and criticism, which have already been discussed,<sup>41</sup> he published a short story, "The Diary of George" ("Dnevnik Georgiia")<sup>42</sup> and a collection of poems, *Automobile Gait (Avtomobil'ia postup')* (1916). The former is a rather unfelicitous experiment in prose, in which the author tries to combine ideas about art, polemics with his critics, surrealist fantasies, digressions about a utopistic society of the future and moral disquisitions concerning romantic love and lust. A rather traditional narrative thread, almost Chekhovian, ties together this pretentious and heterogeneous material.

Shershenevich's Futurist period is concluded by *Automobile*



*Gait*, which is intended to be a summing-up of the first stage of his career. As he states in the "Preface," "I wanted to present in this book my entire path, without omitting even a single deviation." In order to pay his last homage to Futurism, Shershenevich does his best to sound like his mentor Marinetti in the defiant and conceited tone that he displays in the "Preface," and significantly, he includes in the collection a section of new poems glorifying the war (which are vaguely Marinettian because of the theme, but far from the technique of "liberated words" that Shershenevich praised in *The Battle of Tripoli*). The rest of the book consists of four sections, arranged by theme, in which Shershenevich includes a large part of his poetry previously published in separate collections or miscellanies. The author carefully selects only his most Futurist poems; the others, those preceding *Romantic Face Powder*, are discarded and confined to that realm of things past which, from a Futurist standpoint, deserves only to be despised or, in the best of cases, ignored. He once again stresses the necessity for poetry to be contemporary and constantly rejuvenating itself. His last words suggest that Futurism is bound to die and that he is already looking towards a new kind of poetry (which in a few years he will identify under the name of Imaginism): "The fact is, that 'Book No. 1' (*Carmina*) is today infinitely far from myself, and I don't consider it mine. However, having labeled 'Automobile Gait' as 'Book No. 1,' I have doomed myself to a countless number of 'Books No. 1': I hope that in a year this book too will be alien to me."<sup>43</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History*, (Berkeley, 1968), 378. To the best of my knowledge, this book is the only one in existence which provides a rather extensive picture of Shershenevich as a Futurist. The post-revolutionary period of Shershenevich's activity, as a leader of Imaginism, is best described by Nils Ake Nilsson in *The Russian Imaginists* (Stockholm, 1970).

2. The word was invented by K. Olimpov. It appeared for the first time in Ego-publications as a subtitle for Severyanin's *Ruch'i v liliakh* (1911). Afterwards it was consistently used by the Ego-Futurists instead of the regular Russian word "stikhotvorenie." See Markov, 63.

3. More examples of this technique are reported by Markov, 104: "a heart melting like ice cream, the moon compared to absinthe, buttercups wearing a make up of dew."

4. *Dary Adonisu*, one poem; *Zasakhare kry*, one poem; *Bei*, two poems; all published by the *Petersburg Herald*. He also contributed nine poems to *Krugovaiya chasha*, a Moscow publication.

5. Markov, 105.
6. M. Raymond, *De Baudelaire au surrealisme* (Paris, 1947); B. Romani, *Dal simbolismo al futurismo* (Firenze, 1969); G. Mariani, *Il primo Marinetti* (Firenze, 1970); B. Eruli, "Preistoria francese del futurismo," *Rivista di letterature moderne e comparate*, Vol. 23 (Dec. 1970).
7. Also marked by a switch from French to Italian, two languages that Marinetti used interchangeably, having been born by Italian parents in Alexandria, Egypt, and educated in Paris.
8. *La ville charnelle*, (Paris, 1908). Although the title is reminiscent of Verhaeren's *Les villes tentaculaires*, it is already a celebration of vitalism, violence and lust.
9. *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista* (Milano, 1969).
10. As Markov points out, "It is well known that Bryusov. . . was probably the first real urbanist in Russian poetry and that he took this theme from Verhaeren. Alexander Blok made use of this theme, too, following Bryusov. In the works of the Hylean poets, the city theme was not dominant (though one can discover it even in Khlebnikov). Only Guro developed it extensively, and later Mayakovsky made full use of it. With the ego-futurists, urbanism immediately took on a salon coloring: they wrote about the city of drawing rooms, rather than of streets." Pp. 88-89.
11. It is significant that Shershenevich dedicated his attention as a translator mainly to Marinetti's and Laforgue's works. In 1914, a collection of Laforgue's poems appears in Moscow, under the title *Fericheskii sobor*. Among the twenty-eight translations, eighteen are by Shershenevich, five by Bryusov and five by N. Lvova. Shershenevich also wrote the introduction. In the same year, he published a collection of manifestoes by Marinetti and other Italian Futurists, *Manifesty ital'ianskogo futurizma*. In 1916, two of Marinetti's major works were translated and published by Shershenevich, *Futurist Mafarka* and *Bitva u Tripoli*.
12. "Frivol'nye dissonansy" in *Ekstravagantnye flakony*.
13. The poem has no title.
14. "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (May 11. 1912). All of Marinetti's manifestoes mentioned from now on are to be found in F. T. Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista* (Milano, 1968). The English translation of some of them is to be found in *Marinetti, Selected Writings*, R. W. Flint and A. A. Coppotelli eds. (New York, 1972).
15. *Vernissazh* (Sept. 1913), *Pir vo vremia chumy* (Oct. 1913), *Krematorii zdravomysliia* (Nov.-Dec. 1913—double issue, III and IV).
16. M. Rossiianskii (alias Zak), "Perchatka kubofuturistam," *Vernissazh* (no page numbers, as in all Mezzanine publications). Shershenevich, "V zashchitu futurizma," *Vernissazh*. Abbat Fanferliush (alias Shershenevich), "Simvolicheskaiia deshevka," *Vernissazh*. Abbat-Fanferliush, "Poeticheskaiia podtasovka," *Pir vo vremia chumy*. Abbat-Fanferliush, "Poshlost' na p'edestale," *Krematorii zdravomysliia*.
17. From the projected novel, *Introduktsiia samoubiitsy*, never published.
18. Italics mine.
19. This image stands close to Bolshakov's *Serditse v perchatke* (1913), which, in turn, derives directly from Laforgue, as the epigraph explains (Et celles dont le coeur gante six et demi). See Markov, 110-111.
20. Although these translations were not the only ones existing in Russia at that time, they represent the most exhaustive picture of Italian Futurism given by a single translator. The first translation of some of Marinetti's manifestoes was published by the magazine *Soiuz molodezhi* in 1912. Genrikh Tasteven includes the translation of some manifestoes in the appendix to his book *Futurizm: na puti k novomu simvolizmu*, 1914. M. Engelhart translates and collects Marinetti's lectures in his book *Le Futurisme*, 1914. Osorgin translates excerpts of Marinetti's poems and includes them in his article "Ital'ianskii futurizm," *Vestnik Evropy*, No. 2, (1914). I. Erenburg includes

one poem by Marinetti in his collection of contemporary French poets, *Poety Fransii* (Paris, 1914). For more information about the circulation in Russia of articles and books by and about Marinetti, see Markov, 147-162, and Cesare, G. DeMichelis, *Il futurismo italiano in Russia 1909-1929* (Bari, 1973).

21. "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" (1909), "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (1912), "Answers to the Objections" (1912), "Destruction of Syntax, Wireless Imagination, Liberated Words" (1913), "Music Hall" (1913).

22. "Manifesto of Futurist Painters" (1910), "Manifesto of Futurist Musicians" (1910), "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman" (1912), "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture" (1912), "Manifesto of Lust" (1913), "The Art of Noises" (1913), "The Art of Sounds, Noises and Odors" (1913).

23. *La bataille de Tripoli* (Milano, 1912). Later translated into Italian.

24. *Mafarka le futuriste* (Paris, 1910). Later translated into Italian.

25. Furthermore, Marinetti might have read a book by Vittorio Pica, *Letteratura d'eccezione* (1898), where the author discusses Mallarmé's technique of relating to each other different symbols by means of analogies. See M. Verdone, *Che cosa è il futurismo* (Rome, 1970), 39-40.

26. "I fight the decorative and precious esthetic of Mallarmé. . . I fight, also, the static ideal of Mallarmé by means of this typographical revolution, which allows me to impress to the words. . . the speed of the stars, of the clouds, of the aeroplanes, of the trains," "Destruction of Syntax."

27. Markov observes that the title of this book can be translated as *Running the Gauntlet*, 106.

28. "Technical Manifesto."

29. He actually calls himself an "imazhionist." Markov points out that "For those who know that Shershenevich became, after the Revolution, one of the leaders of imagism (imazhinizm), it may be interesting that the roots are to be found in this book," 375.

30. Published first in *Nov'* (April 26, 1914) and then reprinted in *Zelenaia ulitsa*, 54-61.

31. See Michael Kirby, *Futurist Performance* (New York, 1971).

32. Followed by the "Manifesto of Futurist Cinematography" (1916), which systematized the practical experience.

33. In the postrevolutionary years, Mayakovsky wrote scripts and acted in several other movies. See Markov, 147; and A. M. Ripellino, *Maiakovski e il teatro russo d'avanguardia* (Torino, 1959).

34. Published first in the magazine *Lacerba* (Oct. 1, 1913), under the title "Il teatro di varietà"; later in the *Daily Mail* (Nov. 21, 1913).

35. Markov, 377.

36. Published first in French (Paris, 1905) and later in Italian, under the title *Re Baldoria* (1910).

37. Markov, 174.

38. Markov observes that, rather than Mayakovsky's influence on Shershenevich, "the mutual influence of these poets may safely be suggested," *ibid*.

39. The first edition of this almanac was published by the Hyleans in Fall 1913, without the participation of Shershenevich, who at that time was still the leader of the Mezzanine.

40. Interrupted only by his contribution of poems to three publications of the semi-unknown "Odessa group": *Avto v oblakakh* (1915), *Sed'moe pokryvalo* (1916), *Chudo v pustyne* (1917).

41. In order to give a complete picture of Shershenevich's activity in this period, it is necessary to mention also his publication of a collection of poems by Yazykov, with a long introductory article by the editor, *Liricheskie stikhotvoreniia* (1916).

42. In *Novaia zhizn'*, No. 3 (1916).

43. I would like to thank Prof. Vladimir Markov of UCLA and Prof. Herbert Eagle of Purdue University for their helpful suggestions.

Ellen Chances

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**MAYAKOVSKY'S  
"VSE-TAKI" AND  
BOOCIONI: CASE STUDY  
IN COMPARABLE  
TECHNIQUE**

In dealing with Mayakovsky's early poetry, the extrinsic approach to literary criticism is totally justified and in fact, even necessary. Just as a study of French Impressionist art remains incomplete without connecting the movement to the rise of photography—catching the fleeting instant, capturing life at a particular moment, so too, a full account of Mayakovsky's poetry is impossible without taking into consideration the impact of painting techniques upon his work.

In his excellent article "Mayakovsky and Painting" ("Maiakovskii i zhivopis'"),<sup>1</sup> the brilliant Soviet scholar N. Khardzhiev focuses on the close ties between Russian poets and artists of Mayakovsky's time. There is Kruchenykh's appropriate remark: "Almost all Cubo-Futurists were first artists."<sup>2</sup> Then, too there is the fact that the Futurist poets David Burlyuk, Alexei Kruchenykh, Elena Guro, and of course, Mayakovsky all began their careers as artists.<sup>3</sup> Khardzhiev goes on to explain the importance of art elements in the composition of Mayakovsky's early poems, in particular the "dynamic displacement of objects and their interpenetration" ("dinamicheskoe smeshchenie predmetov i ikh vzaimopronicaemost'.")<sup>4</sup> He states

that this influence is strictly Cubist; Mayakovsky, he says, was using the same methods as the French Cubists were.<sup>5</sup>

Other critics have taken Khardzhiev's lead in citing the great significance of Cubist painting for Russian Futurist poetry. Krystyna Pomorska writes, "The direct transformation of Cubism into poetry was Russian Futurism."<sup>6</sup> She speaks of both movements' refusal to make images of reality, choosing rather to concentrate on the material itself—paint, geometric shape, and so forth.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Stahlberger hovers about the general area without plunging into the heart of the problem. He asserts that a fragmentation of reality was common to Cubism, Expressionism, and Russian Futurism and leaves the matter at that.<sup>8</sup>

Mayakovsky was like *Futurist* painters, Khardzhiev writes, in his emphasis on the dynamism of urban life. However, the Soviet scholar does not carry the parallel any further. Instead, he pursues the affinities with Cubism. All this is very interesting, but one wishes that he—and others—had spent more time on the Futurist painting/poetry connections. In fact, I would maintain that it is essential to acknowledge Mayakovsky's great debt to the techniques of the Italian Futurist painter Umberto Boccioni.

Let us turn to a case in point. The 1914 poem "And yet" ("A vse-taki") might at first glance resemble a pile of scattered jigsaw puzzle pieces, all of which could just as easily be jumbled into a different pattern. No one image necessarily follows another. The reader hunts in vain for a logical sequence and finding none, hastily concludes that the imagery in the poem is like that in a Cubist painting. Braque's and Picasso's 1910-1912 works consist of fragments of objective reality—part of a violin, half a human face, a kitchen utensil, letters of the alphabet. In a Cubist work, these objects retain their random placement. Were they to be arranged in a different pattern, they would still remain merely sections of individual objects placed on the canvas in such a way as to form a design of interesting geometric shapes. The imagery does not result in a representational picture.

Although Cubism may seem to be the governing principle at work in Mayakovsky's poems, nothing could be further from the truth. Upon examination, one realizes that the pattern is very similar to the one which can be discerned, in particular, in Boccioni's paintings.

When one first looks at his paintings, one might feel that

they do not make any sense either. A first reaction might be to assert that they are filled with individual chunks of reality thrown together haphazardly. On further inspection, it is evident that one is dealing with *two* or more representations of the objective world—one superimposed on the other, analogous perhaps to a double exposure photograph. The result is a merging, or “interpenetration,” of the layers into a confusing picture. In Boccioni’s “The City Rises” (1910-1911)<sup>9</sup> (see illustration, page 348), one “layer” is the city, represented by the buildings and smokestacks in the background. Composing another layer, the horses and men move across the foreground of the painting. It is only upon close scrutiny that one can clearly disentangle the outlines of each individual image—one man’s arm and rope from the horse’s muzzle; one horse’s legs from the body of another horse; the horse’s mane from a building in the background. In like fashion, Boccioni’s “Elasticity” (1912) (see illustration, page 348) contains a horse, its rider, and a background of smokestacks and other symbols of industrialized society. Once again the images seem to merge into one another so that comprehension emerges only after the spectator has sorted out the various layers.

Mayakovsky utilizes exactly the same technique in his poetry. That he does so should come as no surprise. After all, he was himself an accomplished artist. It is not impossible that he derived his technique directly from Boccioni. At the time, there was a great deal of cultural flow between Russia and Western Europe. Russians flocked to art exhibitions in major European cities. Boccioni himself had spent some time in Russia in 1904.<sup>10</sup> Several exhibitions of Italian Futurist works had taken place in Russia. The press avidly followed news of contemporary art movements.<sup>11</sup> Marinetti, king of Italian Futurism, had given a series of lectures in Russia at the beginning of 1914. And Boccioni was certainly no stranger to Mayakovsky.<sup>12</sup>

Many planes are interwoven in Mayakovsky’s poem “And yet.” Let us first read through the poem:

**The street caves in like the nose of a syphilitic.  
The river is lust oozing out like one’s spit.  
The gardens spread in June, are obscene, sybaritic  
and have thrown off their undies’ last leafy bit.**

**I come out into the square**



Boccioni, "Elasticity" (1912)



Boccioni, "The City Rises" (1910-11)



and I put on my head  
the burnt city block like a wig of red.  
People in terror. The unchewed shout  
within my mouth wiggles its legs out.

But I'll not be condemned; I'll not be overpowered.  
My footprints will be (like a prophet's) beflowered.  
All those with the caved-in noses know it:  
I'm—your poet.

Your last judgment terrifies me like a saloon!  
I alone will be carried through the burning commune  
by whores like a holy thing of adoration  
they will show to God as their vindication.

And over my little book God will cry!  
Not words, it is shudders that gooseflesh portends.  
He will run with my poems in His hands through the sky  
and, all-out-of-breath, read them to His friends.<sup>13</sup>

Mayakovsky, like Boccioni, superimposes animate objects over images of the city. At the beginning of the poem, he uses the conventional poetic technique of simile. He compares the collapse of a street to that of a syphilitic's nose. The two levels, city and human being, are brought closer and closer to each other. From simile, we proceed, in line two, to metaphor. The river *is* lust oozing out into slobber. Finally, in the remainder of the first stanza, the city takes on the characteristics of the human being. The gardens throw off their underwear. Stanza one has thus set the stage for the clear example of the Futurist painting technique which follows in the next stanza. The poet has placed a burned city block on his head like a red wig. A human shout, compared to legs, emerges from his mouth. After we have sorted out the confused pieces of the two stanzas, we see that Mayakovsky, like his Italian Futurist brother, has "interpenetrated" the layers of city and human being.

Are the multi-layered planes merely cute formal devices with which Mayakovsky is playing? Not at all. The poet's choice of this intricate form is dictated very much by the substance of the poem. Obviously, we are confronted with a vision of the Last Judgment. What is important about the representation is the central position which the poet occupies. It is *he* who is wearing the city block. *His* mouth is the one from which the legs come. *He* is the poet of the city. If the reader has not yet gotten the point, Mayakovsky

makes sure that he will. It is in the center of the poem, in the third out of five stanzas, that the narrator exclaims, "All those with the caved-in noses know it:/ I'm—your poet." ("Vse eti, provalivshiesia nosami, znaiut:/ Ja—vash poet.") Mayakovsky does not just state this. As we have seen, he shows it in very visual, concrete terms.

The first half of the poem, with the city imagery constantly overlaid by human imagery, prepares the way for the idea of the special calling of the poet, so heavily emphasized in the second half of the poem. It is not Pushkin's poetic inspiration waiting like an eagle to be awakened, nor is it Akhmatova's Muse perched on her shoulder. Rather, it is a much more complex process. First of all, we are introduced to the double exposure effect which places the poet at the center of a vision of the city.<sup>14</sup> Next, in the midst of the destruction, the city's residents, the prostitutes, pay tribute to the poet by carrying him through the conflagration to show him to God. And finally, God Himself realizes the poet's value: He runs through heaven, reading the poet's book to his celestial companions.

Mayakovsky's vivid imagination, nurtured by Boccioni's paintings, has thus conjured up a striking, fresh view of the mission of the creative individual.

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#### NOTES

1. N. Khardzhiev, "Maiakovskii i zhivopis'," in *Maiakovskii. Materialy i issledovaniia*, ed. V. O. Percov, M. I. Serebrianskii (M, 1940), 337-401.
2. *Ibid.*, 348.
3. *Ibid.*, 347.
4. *Ibid.*, 393.
5. *Ibid.*, 393, 397-8.
6. Krystyna Pomorska, *Russian Formalist Theory and its Poetic Ambiance* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), 20.
7. *Ibid.*, 38.
8. Lawrence Leo Stahlberger, *The Symbolic System of Maiakovskii* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), 53.
9. I would like to thank Professor Marion Burleigh-Motley of Princeton University's Department of Art and Archeology for her illuminating discussion of Italian Futurism.
10. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiore, *Archivi del Futurismo* (Rome, 1958), I, 407.
11. See, for example, Paolo Buzzi, "Pis'ma iz Italii. Zhivopis'," *Apollon*, No. 9, (1910), 16-18; Paolo Buzzi, "Pis'mo iz Italii. Muzyka. Poeziia," *Apollon*, No. 5, (1913), 69-70; Sillart, "Vystavka futuristicheskoi skulptury Boccioni," *Apollon*, No. 7 (1913), 61-62.

12. See in particular the outline of his 1913 speech "Babushkam akademii," where he refers to Boccioni. "Tezisy dokladov o noveishei russkoi poezii," in Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (M. 1955), I, 367.

13. This English translation of the poem appeared in Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks, ed., *Modern Russian Poetry* (Indianapolis, 1966), 529.

14. Again, reminiscent of Boccioni. See his "The Noise of the Street Penetrates the House" (1911).



T M E H I E

LET US BE  
OBJECT B

HAC

M Y

H O E

Charlotte Douglas

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VIEWS FROM THE  
NEW WORLD  
A. KRUCHENYKH  
AND K. MALEVICH:  
THEORY AND  
PAINTING

Critics of modern art and literature are fond of generalizations about the inherent relationship of twentieth century forms of art to modern technological philosophy. The modern artist is characterized as "alienated," the avant garde is a "culture of negation," art has become "dehumanized." All this has come about, it is often said, because the old unities are gone, the former coherent, connected world, and such disintegration is naturally reflected in the break-up of grammar, words, and the pictorial image. Not directly, perhaps, or consciously, but inevitably this was bound to happen; somehow the center did not hold. The passing of Newton is cited, the laws of probability, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle (that there could be a *principle* of uncertainty!) and the general precariousness of modern life. In such a situation it is small wonder, this argument would go, that Kruchenykh babbled nonsense syllables or that Malevich painted pictures of squares. Anybody would. A disordered illogical universe begets a disordered illogical art.

But if one looks at the theoretical statements and the art of Alexei Kruchenykh and Kasimir Malevich, two most extreme Russian Modernists, the dominant perception appears

quite different. The significance of the new scientific principles seems not so much their divisive as their cohesive force; both the verbal and the pictorial subject is the continuity of man with the universe. In modern times poets have persisted in talking about their art in terms of the new science, however inapplicable to art or incorrectly understood these concepts may seem to scientists or the critics. Yet for art, the scientific validity of an idea is less important than its artistic function and what it can tell us about cultural attitudes on the one hand, and the mechanics of stylistic evolution on the other. This essay will suggest that the initial splintering of words and the dismemberment of pictorial images was associated with a newly postulated unified world view, a sensibility that embraced both heaven and earth, and which solved the basically eighteenth and nineteenth century discontinuities simply by allowing for them in the system. At the beginning of the twentieth century Russian Modernism imagined nothing less than a new reconciliation of science and poetry, a gathering of all the multiplicities of life in order to see it steadily and see it whole. As emblematic of this enterprise we may cite a book well known to the Cubo-Futurists, *The Fourth Dimension*. Its author was Charles Hinton, an Englishman, and the book was published in New York in 1904. Hinton, by means of a series of detailed drawings and mental exercises, attempted to teach his readers to imagine clearly—to see in the mind's eye, if only for the barest moment—a four-dimensional cube. Such an instantaneous vision of an elusive whole was also the purpose of Kruchenykh's and Malevich's art, and it determined the course and development of the new styles. When, for example, Kruchenykh called the word "self-sufficient,"<sup>1</sup> it was not only because it had ceased to have any referents, but also that it included them all simultaneously; the word was "self-valuable" as the objectification of a flash of insight, the moment of resolution of the old dichotomies, the conclusion. "Now a work of art can consist of only one word," Kruchenykh said, and Malevich painted a black square.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most significant milestone in the evolution of modern styles was the sudden materialization of abstraction in art. In the first fifteen years of this century Russian artists made a transition from an expressionist, primitivist art to an art of pure form, from feverish Futurism to cool Constructivism. The mode of that transition is of central importance in the history of art and

ideas. This essay will consider some aspects of the problem. How did Malevich's painting—and Malevich was undoubtedly the first to arrive at such an extreme abstract style—evolve from primitivism and irrationalism to what appears to be a precise intellectual concern with absolute art? The question is not only relevant to Malevich, or even to Russian art alone, the same stylistic scenario will be repeated slightly later on a larger scale as European art goes from Dada to the Bauhaus. (Figs. 1, 2)

Kasimir Malevich was born near Kiev in 1878 and came to Moscow about 1902 in order to study art. He attended the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, and began to exhibit in Moscow about 1907. By 1911 many of the dramatis personae of the Russian art avant garde had assembled in and around the Moscow Institute: Vladimir and David Burluk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Mikhail Larionov, and Alexei Kruchenykh. Kruchenykh, although he is known primarily as a writer, began his professional career as an artist, he had even taught art in a ladies' gymnasium. The Moscow painters also had ties with a St. Petersburg group of painters loosely organized around the painter, theoretician, and patron, Nikolai Kulbin. Kulbin was a military doctor and a professor at the Army Medical Academy, but his primary interest lay in the new art, he was known especially for his rather indecipherable lectures on esthetics and his generosity to his (somewhat younger) colleagues in the arts.<sup>3</sup> Kruchenykh knew Kulbin and had exhibited with him in the 1909 *Impressionist* exhibition in St. Petersburg. In 1913 Malevich, Kruchenykh and the rest of the Moscow Cubo-futurists (as they called themselves by then) became formally associated with the Petersburg painters who had organized into The Union of Youth. The opera *Victory Over the Sun*, with libretto by Kruchenykh, prologue by Khlebnikov, music by Matyushin, and decor by Malevich, was planned and produced that year as a joint project of this Moscow-Petersburg alliance. During the same year, from December 1912 to December 1913, Kruchenykh, sometimes with Velimir Khlebnikov and other members of the Cubo-futurists, wrote several statements of esthetic principles; five of Kruchenykh's publications this year contained illustrations by Malevich.<sup>4</sup> Since 1913 is the year Malevich mentions in connection with his basic square form, and since he made no direct statements about his own esthetic



Fig. 1. Malevich, "Peasant Woman with Buckets," 1912.





Fig. 2. Malevich, "The Woodcutter," 1912.



Fig. 1. Malevich, "Peasant Woman with Buckets," 1912.



Fig. 2. Malevich, "The Woodcutter," 1912.

have taken Kruchenykh at his word when he condemned the Symbolist "psychologizing"<sup>8</sup> and declared the word to be "self-sufficient," and in part because we have not taken him at his word at all whenever he spoke about the psychological basis of his literary style. Kruchenykh was condemning the Symbolist search for correspondences, the desire to manipulate, on any level, the consciousness of the perceiver. He regarded any calculated appeal to the subliminal, even to subconscious associations, as just a further extension of the kind of lock-step logic of rational thought he was trying to escape.<sup>9</sup> To Kruchenykh, the self-sufficiency of the word derived from its independence from logic, from grammar, from the "real," world, and thus it was left free to demonstrate the bare bone of the psyche. Any theory of art, Nikolai Kulbin had said in 1910, must be derived from "nature as reflected in the psyche of the artist."<sup>10</sup> This was the only reality truly (and just barely) accessible to the artist. The Futurists' exploration of primitive and child art was motivated by their desire to get at the human brain as a piece of the universe, untouched by the learned logic Sechenov had pointed out. But in the psyche Kulbin had discerned not "harmony," which he defined as correct relationships, symmetry, sleep, dormancy, but a certain "dissonance," which accompanies any complication of form. Kulbin suggested that dissonance—in form, in color, in tone—had affective value because, "In man's nature there are irregularities (*nepravil'nosti*)... and so complete harmony will not suit him."<sup>11</sup> Three years later, in *The Declaration of the Word as Such*, Kruchenykh repeats Kulbin: "In art there may be unresolved dissonances 'unpleasant to hear' for in our soul there is a dissonance to which they are resolved."<sup>12</sup> This demand that language be the objectification of a psychological realm which is dissonant or irregular or complicated, led Kruchenykh inevitably to *zaum*.

The desire to encompass a vital, intuitive, but seemingly chaotic relationship with the universe made even chance a positive device in the new art. Far from finding uncertainty a destructive force which undermines the meaning of life, the Futurists were charmed by accidental occurrences, by typographical errors for example, they were the occasion for rejoicing, because they made manifest those all-pervasive natural laws which link man with nature. Vladimir Markov in his essay "Principles of the New Art" published in the Union of Youth journals in 1912 elevates chance to an artistic principle and points to Chinese pottery glazes and wind chimes as examples.

Markov also mentions another very important aspect of the new art—its absurd nature: "To be ugly and absurd on the outside does not mean to possess no inner values," he writes, and "often it seems that the absurd forms are not the echo and translation of Nature, but the echo of the creator's inner psychology. 'They are the swans of other worlds,' as the Chinese sing."<sup>13</sup> The absurdity of Kruchenykh's works was a very specific *zaum* behavior; it was different from the *seemingly* absurd with a hidden message, an apparent lack of sense which disappears when the right key or keys are found, different even from the "surreal" type of subconscious associations. This absurdity was a pointless, mindless, stubbornly senseless, irresolvable condition meant only to reveal new and heretofore invisible realms, those "swans of other worlds." The breakdown of causality found in *Victory Over the Sun*, for example, is an appeal to a higher cause, one that is implicit only in the form of the work itself. It is in this sense that it may be called "self-sufficient." The spatial-temporal coherence is destroyed for the sake of a simultaneous universe, one that is stable and pervasive.

In the programmatic statement published six months before the performance of *Victory*, Kruchenykh and Malevich stated their intention to destroy thought which moves according to the laws of logic and causality and "to transmit a personal creative insight into the genuine world of the new people."<sup>14</sup> This "genuine world of the new people" refers to a concept which had been developing in Russia ever since the late nineteenth century. Since the new psychology had postulated physiologically based senses and perceptions, it seemed reasonable to suppose that at some future time human perception of space and time would evolve—presumably to even greater sensitivity and higher levels of consciousness. P. D. Uspensky published two books which had this as their main thesis: *The Fourth Dimension* in 1909 and *Tertium Organum* in 1911. Both books were well known to Malevich and Kruchenykh (and to the Futurists in general). Uspensky is responsible for bringing together and popularizing several non-Russian sources of similar ideas. He quotes at length from *Cosmic Consciousness* by R. M. Bucke, a Canadian physician and a friend of Walt Whitman, and from the work of Edward Carpenter, the English socialist-mystic. Uspensky also seems to be the primary early source in Russia for Charles Hinton's two books,

*A New Era in Thought* (1888) and *The Fourth Dimension* (1904).<sup>15</sup>

The basic proposition of all these works is similar: that man is developing a new level of perception that will enable him to see and understand the world in a suprasensible way. Bucke follows current physiological arguments to trace the development of the conceptual ability from initial raw sensory data, and projects this process into the future when man will proceed to an even greater capacity for abstraction than he now possesses. Carpenter had a similar scheme. All of these writers, including Uspensky himself, agreed that the new people with the new powers were about to, or had already begun to, appear in society. Uspensky differed from his Western counterparts in that, instead of believing that the new developments would be essentially religious or mystical manifestations, as Bucke and Carpenter suggested, he maintained, following Vladimir Solovyov, that the new consciousness would first be noticed in art.

"We are the new people of the new life!" The Cubo-futurists lost no time in declaring themselves the new men and their art the "art of the future."<sup>16</sup> By the art of the future they meant two things: that their art was stylistically avant garde, and that it was also in the psychic avant garde, that it somehow gave a glimpse, an impression, of future mental capacities. They did not mean this in a mechanistic way (i.e., that this is what things would "look like,") but that the new style had a quality or qualities which produced the "sensation" of future consciousness. It was this nebulous "sensation" they called the "fourth dimension."

Unfortunately, many contemporary critics understood the term either in a mechanical way—as it was used by Hinton, for example—or confused the fourth dimension with time, a completely different use of the term made current by Minkovsky in his book *Space and Time*.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, in an effort to clarify and emphasize the difference between the mechanistic use of the term and their own, Kulbin and Kruchenykh introduced a system with an even greater number of dimensions.<sup>18</sup>

The vision of a new world was closely associated with Kruchenykh's ideas about language. Bucke and others had suggested very early that a change in language would be one of the outward manifestations of the new consciousness. Kulbin had essentially agreed. "For the depiction of the new and the future

completely new words and a new combination of them are necessary," Kruchenykh declared in "New Ways of the Word." "A new content is only revealed when new devices of expression are attained. . . once there is a new form there is consequently a new content. . . form causes content," and vice versa. "The psyche gives birth to strange 'senseless' combinations of words and letters," and these in turn produce "a new perception of the world."<sup>19</sup> In *Declaration of the Word as Such* he explained, "By creating new words I bring in a new content where everything begins to slip (the conventions of time and space, etc., here I agree with Kulbin. . .)." <sup>20</sup> Kruchenykh lists various devices which will generate the slipping in space and change in perception: incorrect sentence structure, grammatical confusions, neologisms, unexpected sound patterns, and also absurd action, strange comparisons and primitive coarseness.

Malevich at this time developed an absurd, alogical style in painting. One of his devices is a variation in the size of objects which does not depend on any systematic perspective. There is also little or no narrative cohesion in a work; unrelated and incongruous images simply turn the mind back on itself until interpretation is abandoned. In *Woman at the Tram Stop* a man, not a woman, appears peering from behind one of the painting's rectangular planes, and a realistically painted bottle and schedule occupy central positions in an otherwise non-objective, cubistically constructed work. *The Aviator* shows a huge fish partially covering the body of a one-eyed man, and scattered letters of the word "drugstore" (*apteka*) add to the puzzle. In "New Ways of the Word" Kruchenykh mentioned incorrect perspective as one means of inducing his more transcendent universe,<sup>21</sup> and in *Englishman in Moscow* we find Malevich also experimenting with this idea. In addition to the absurd fish and a red spoon stuck onto the Englishman's hat, a tiny ladder is contrasted with a sword as wide as the painting, and a church, complete with cupolas and crosses, appears in front of, and smaller than, the man's face. The viewer is refused his usual point of view outside the painting and is forced, like Alice, merely to accept an ambiguous position in a topsy turvy world of objects which do not behave properly. Because they do not particularly relate to one another, except of course as structural parts of the composition, the viewer is compelled to accept each one individually as a "self-sufficient object."

There is a curious coincidence of Kruchenykh's terms and Malevich's images here: Kruchenykh wrote, "We think that language should first of all be *language*, and if it reminds one of anything then it should be a saw or the poisoned arrow of a savage." A saw juts out from behind the hat of Malevich's Englishman, and a large red arrow sweeps across his chest.

All of Kruchenykh's linguistic devices may be found in his libretto for *Victory Over the Sun*. The opera is written in two acts; the first is set in present time and the action concerns (sometimes very indirectly) the capture of the sun. The aim is to cover it up, board it up in a concrete house. The sun here is the image of rationality, of three dimensional logic, which keeps men subjugated to a lower nature and never lets them transcend their earthly origins. The second act takes place in the future, after the sun has been taken: "We picked the sun with its fresh roots," the victors sing, "They're fatty, smelled of arithmetic."<sup>22</sup> The opera is silly, chaotic, difficult, often impossible to make sense of—which of course was the point. The sets designed by Malevich for *Victory* work out the analogies drawn by Kruchenykh between the methods of futurist poets and painters. Just as Kruchenykh derived his *zaum* language from the splintering and reordering of words, Malevich here begins to slice objects apart. It is important to note that he was not concerned with reducing or simplifying or idealizing the object, but simply with showing partial views, cross sections and distortions of perspective. "We have cut the object!" Kruchenykh cried, "We have begun to see through the world!"<sup>23</sup> The object had not really come apart previously in Malevich's divisionist rendering of motion, nor had the shallow spacial requirements of cubistic planes, nor even the concern with Leger-like volumetric studies been the primary impetus to his non-objectivity. The operative process can be seen clearly by comparing two paintings: *The Woodcutter*, and one of the many later works designated without reference to a subject, *Suprematist Composition* (Figs. 2, 4). The logs and figure of the earlier painting appear in the later one as plane sections. The woodcutter is still bent over his task, a ghostly shadow of his other life. Unlike the Cubists, Malevich never hesitated to abandon all references to the objects of the real world, in spite of the fact that his geometrical elements derived directly from them. Nor did he insist on the Cubists' shallow spatial perspective; although some works are entirely





Fig. 3

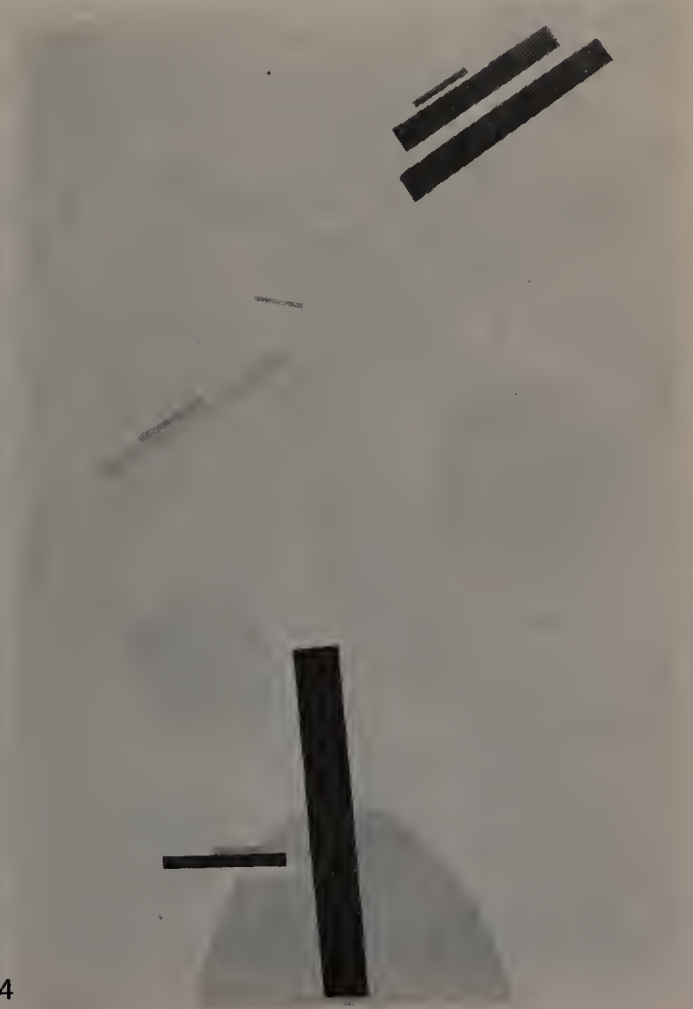


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

coincident with the picture plane, many others display traditional perspective, and some have a deep, cosmic sense of space. All modeling of surfaces was eliminated. The famous sketch for the backdrop in *Victory* which has always been considered "abstract" is most probably a "close up" view of the sun; it makes use of three of Malevich's stylistic devices: partial view, alteration of usual size, and the substitution of flat planes for rounded surfaces.

Possibly the immediate cause of the new style was the experiments with light in the production of *Victory*. It is not *new* objects which should be used in art, Kruchenykh had said, but a new and fantastic light should be thrown upon the old ones.<sup>24</sup> Malevich adopted this statement quite literally in *Victory*; spotlights roamed the stage during the performance, picking out and focusing attention on random pieces of bodies and backdrops. On the backdrops themselves, painted light often seemed to come from strange angles, distorting objects beyond recognition and casting long and mysterious shadows (Fig. 5). The role of these shadows can be seen clearly in an illustration from *Troe*, the publication in which Kruchenykh's "New Ways of the Word" appeared (Fig. 6). Since modeling with light has been abandoned, the planar divisions have become either bright or dark, and the independent "suprematist" elements have begun to emerge. This illustration is one of the most striking demonstrations of Malevich's route to the new world.

When Malevich's non-objective paintings were shown for the first time in 1915 in the "0.10" exhibition, some bore such explicit titles as *Painterly Realism of Boy with Knapsack—Color Masses in the Fourth Dimension*.<sup>25</sup> Although we have been unable to connect such titles with particular paintings, it seems safe to say that his "New Realism" was a projection of the new vision described by his friend Alexei Kruchenykh. The suprematist elements, derived from objects, are still related to each other as objects, they just exist in another dimension. Here the analogy between Kruchenykh's *zaum* and Malevich's forms is obvious. As Lotman has pointed out, a *zaum* word is not just sound. Since it is given out as speech it is necessarily a signifier, only its content—that which is signified—is obscure.<sup>26</sup> In a similar way, Malevich's suprematist elements are *objects*, only the content is mysterious.

Thus abstraction cannot always be assumed to be reductionist. It is not necessarily—like technology—looking for partial

answers, nor are formal problems necessarily the beginning and end of its concern. Neither can we automatically make the easy assumption that a geometric art derives from a machine esthetic or a chaotic or disintegrating universe. "Creation is always spiritual," Kruchenykh said,<sup>27</sup> and even modern styles can display a unified and spiritualized sensibility. Malevich's Suprematism, like other Russian futurist art, was personal without excessive personality, expressive without being expressionistic. The most radical in form, it was very much a positive creative statement, the poetic image of a meaningful and coherent world.

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#### NOTES

1. "Samotsennoe (samovitoe) Slovo," in the manifesto "Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu," see Note 4, below. The manifesto is signed by D. Burluk, Kruchenykh, Mayakovsky, and Khlebnikov. Reprinted in *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov*, V. Markov (ed.) (Munich, 1967), 50.

2. A. Kruchenykh, V. Khlebnikov, "Slovo kak takovoe," a 1913 draft published later by Kruchenykh in No. 18 of *Neizdannii Khlebnikov* (M. 1928-33). Reprinted in *Manifesty*, 59.

3. Kulbin's theoretical statements are contained in: a) *Svobodnaia muzyka* (St. P. 1909); also published in French and German. An article by the same named appeared in *Studiia impressionistov*, N. I. Kulbin (ed.) (St. P. 1910), 15-26.

b) "Svobodnoe iskusstvo, kak osnova zhizni," *Studiia impressionistov*, 3-14.

c) Statement (untitled) in the catalogue *Salon 2* (Odessa, 1910-11), 19.

d) "Garmoniiia, dissonans i tesnyia sochetaniia v iskusstve i zhizni," *Trudy Vserossiiskogo s'ezda khudozhnikov v Petrograde. Dekabr', 1911 - Ianvar', 1912*, 1, (P. 1914), 35-40.

e) *Chto est' slovo (II deklaratsiia slova kak takogo)* (St. P. 1914). Republished in *Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov* (St. P. 1914), n.p.

f) "Novyi tsik slova," *Gramoty*, n.p.

g) "Kubizm," *Strelets*, A. Belenson (ed.), 1, (P. 1915), 197-216. Some details of Kulbin's esthetic theories may be found in C. Douglas, "Colors Without Objects: Russian Color Theories (1908-1932)," *The Structurist*, No. 13/14, (1973-74), 30-41.

4. Kruchenykh's most important theoretical statements from this period are contained in:

a) "Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu," *Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu* (M. 1912), reprinted in *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov*, V. Markov (ed.) (Munich, 1967), 50-51.

b) An untitled manifesto published in *Sadok Sudei II*, (St. P. 1913). In addition to Kruchenykh, it was signed by D. Burluk, Guro, N. Burluk, Mayakovsky, Nizen, Khlebnikov, and Livshits. Reprinted in *Manifesty*, 51-53.

c) A. Kruchenykh, V. Khlebnikov, *Slovo kak takovoe* (M. 1913), reprinted in *Manifesty*, 53-58.

d) *Deklaratsiia slova, kak takovogo* (St. P. 1913), reprinted *Manifesty*, 63-4.

e) "Novye puti slova," A. Kruchenykh, V. Khlebnikov, E. Guro, *Troe* (St. P. 1913), reprinted *Manifesty*, 64-73.

f) Pervyi vserossiiskii s'ezd baiachei budushchego," *Za 7 dnei*, 28/122 (St. P. 1913), 605-6. In addition to Kruchenykh, this "report" of the "congress" held in July was signed by Malevich and Mikhail Matyushin.

Short statements and polemical and critical pieces may be found in half a dozen additional publications. Illustrations by Malevich appear in *Slovo kak takovoe*, *Troe*, *Vozroshchem* (St. P. 1913), *Vzorval* (St. P. 1913), and *Porosiata* (St. P. 1913).

5. Sechenov's essay, "Refleksy golovnogo mozga," was originally entitled, "Popytka svesti sposob proiskhozhdeniia psikhicheskikh iavlenii na fiziologicheskie osnovy"; it was denied publication in *Sovremenik* by the censor. In 1863 the essay was published with the new title and several minor changes in a supplement to *Meditsinskii Vestnik*. It was enlarged and issued as a book under the same title in 1866. There is an English translation of "Reflexes of the Brain" in I. M. Sechenov, *Selected Works* (M.-L. 1935), 263-336.

6. Lobachevsky had first proposed the principles of his new geometry in 1826, but in spite of publications in several languages, he remained generally unrecognized and unappreciated during his lifetime. Toward the end of the century A. Vasilev at the University of Kazan did much to publicize Lobachevsky's work. For an interesting assessment of Lobachevsky's work see the address given by Vasilev at the Lobachevsky jubilee at Kazan University in October, 1893: A. Vasil'ev, *Nicolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky*, George Bruce Halsted, trans., (Austin, 1894).

7. N. A. Morozov was a remarkable and magnificent man. Imprisoned in the Shlisselburg Fortress for revolutionary activities, he survived almost twenty-five years of solitary confinement by elaborating linguistic and scientific theories. It would be impossible even to indicate here the extent of his publications after his release in 1905. Bibliographies may be found in: L. Krukovskaia, *N. A. Morozov: Ocherk zhizni i deiatel'nosti* (M. 1912, 1919) and N. A. Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni* (M. 1947). His relationship with Bryusov is examined in A. Margarian, "Valerii Briusov i shlissel' burzhets N. Morozov," *Russkaia literatura*, 1, (1965), 169-187, and S. V. Belov, "V. Ia. Briusov i N. A. Morozov (neopublikovannie pis'ma V. Ia. Briusova)," *Izvestiia A. N. SSSR, Seriiia literatury i iazyka*, XXIII, 4th edition, (1964), 331-339.

8. In "New Ways of the Word" and *The Word as Such*, for example.

9. In "Pervyi vserossiiskii s'ezd baiachei budushchego" Kruchenykh, Matyushin, and Malevich promised to "destroy the antiquated movement of thought according to the law of causality, the toothless, common sense, the 'symmetrical logic' wandering about in the blue shadows of symbolism. . ." *Za 7 Dnei*, 28/122, (St. P. 1913), 605-6.

10. "Svobodnoe iskusstvo, kak osnova zhizni," 11.

11. "Svobodnoe iskusstvo, kak osnova zhizni," 7.

12. *Manifesty*, 64.

13. Vladimir Markov (Waldemars Matveis), "Printsiipy novago iskusstva," *Soiuz molodezhi*, 1 (April, 1912), 5-14; 2, (June, 1912), 5-18.

14. "Pervyi vserossiiskii s'ezd baiachei budushchego," 605.

15. P. D. Uspenskii, *Chetvertoe izmerenie, Opyt izsledovaniia oblasti neizmerimago* (St. P. 1909); *Tertium organum, Kliuch k zagadkam mira* (St. P. 1911). Somewhat later Uspensky translated and introduced Hinton's *Vospitanie voobrazheniia* (P. 1915), and *Carpenter's Liubov' i smert'* (P. 1915). Another Russian translation of Hinton, *Chetvertoe izmerenie i era novoi mysli*, was published early in 1915.

16. Manifesto in *Sadok sudei II*, in *Manifesty*, 52.

17. For one misinterpretation of the Futurists' "fourth dimension" see S. Makovskii, " 'Novoe' iskusstvo i 'chetvertoe izmerenie,' " *Apollon*, 7, (Sept. 1913), 53-60.

A. Vasilev's translation of Minkovsky's *Prostranstvo i vremia* was published at the beginning of 1911 in Kazan. Another translation was issued in Petersburg at the end of 1911, a second edition of which appeared in 1915.

18. *Deklaratsiia slova, kak takovogo* in *Manifesty*, 64. In this connection one should note that Velimir Khlebnikov, following Poincare, understood the fourth dimension as a mathematical concept, but believed that any necessary spatial principle of only three dimensions was thereby negated. Although Khlebnikov was not anxious to tie spatial perception to physiological mechanisms, he, like Lobachevsky, regarded number as an abstract expression of physical truth.

19. *Manifesty*, 68.

20. *Manifesty*, 64.

21. *Manifesty*, 68.

22. A. Kruchenykh, *Pobeda nad solntsem: opera v 2 deimakh 6 kartinakh*, muzyka M. V. Matiushina, dekoratsii Kaz. S. Malevicha (St. P. 1913), 15. The history of the production of this work is given in C. Douglas, "Birth of a 'Royal Infant': Malevich and 'Victory Over the Sun,'" *Art in America*, (Mar.-Apr. 1974), 45-51.

23. "Novye puti slova," in *Manifesty*, 71.

24. "Novye puti slova," in *Manifesty*, 72.

25. The titles of Malevich's paintings as they appeared in the catalogue for the "0.10" exhibition are reprinted in Troels Andersen, *Malevich* (Amsterdam, 1970), 162-3.

26. Iu. M. Lotman, *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta*, Brown University Slavic Reprint (Providence, 1971), 178.

27. "Novye puti slova," in *Manifesty*, 71.

John Bowlt

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PAVEL FILONOV

One of the most imaginative and most enigmatic members of the Russian artistic avant-garde was the painter Pavel Nikolaevich Filonov (1883-1941).<sup>1</sup> Although he was associated with some of the literary Futurists, not least with Khlebnikov, and even contributed designs to the production of Mayakovsky's *Vladimir Mayakovsky* in 1913, Filonov remained outside the turbulence of the Futurist mainstream and pursued philosophical and esthetic goals rather different to those of the Burliuks, Kruchenykh, Mayakovsky, Severyanin, etc. Although mention will be made of Filonov's tenuous links with the Russian Futurists, this article will pay particular attention to the idiosyncracies of his own artistic biography and to his singular contribution to the evolution of the Russian avant-garde as a whole.

Filonov, in fact, can scarcely be accommodated under any conventional rubric of Futurism, even though some aspects of his work might prompt association with the St. Petersburg Futurists (especially Guro and Matyushin) who, like him, tended to uphold a more intuitive, expressionistic conception of art—as opposed to the more analytical, more “formal” approach of the non-Petersburg

Futurists (David Burliuk, Khlebnikov, Livshits, etc.). Filonov did not espouse any of those cardinal principles which we identify, however mistakenly, with Futurism as a whole: he was hardly affected by the cult of the machine, he dealt only superficially with the idea of speed (convinced, as Malevich was, that the Italian Futurists had failed to transmit the essence of speed) and shared little of that xenophobic panslavism which was supported, albeit sporadically, by Khlebnikov, Livshits, etc. and which culminated in manifestoes such as *We and the West (My i Zapad)* of 1914.<sup>2</sup> Be that as it may, Filonov was an artist of extraordinary vision and, while more of an "Expressionist" than a "Futurist," also sounded the "horn of time."<sup>3</sup> The following discussion of Filonov's radical Theory of Analytical Art and some of his paintings will, it is hoped, demonstrate the originality and innovation of his esthetic system within the framework of Russian Modernism.

The exact chronology of Filonov's life is still to be compiled—something which can be done only when we are granted access to his autobiography and diaries in TsGALI and the Russian Museum. Even so, the fundamental turning points in Filonov's early life are known and there is adequate material available concerning his theoretical and pedagogical ideas of the 1920s (including oral and written reminiscences by his former students). Filonov was born on January 8, 1883 into the poor family of a Moscow launderer and in 1896, as an orphan, he moved to St. Petersburg which remained his home until his death. Filonov's first contact with the professional art world was his enrollment in evening courses at the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts in 1897, which he attended after taking classes in practical decorating and design in the daytime. In 1903 Filonov enrolled in the preparatory course for entrance into the Higher Art Institute of the Academy of Arts, although after a few months he was expelled for "not yielding to any pedagogical influences";<sup>4</sup> subsequently, he began to frequent the private studio of the academician Lev Dmitriev-Kavkazsky (1849-1916). Although we know comparatively little of Filonov's artistic preferences at this time, his drawings of the mid-1900s, as well as those of several of his colleagues such as Boris Anisfeld (1879-1974), Lyudmila Burliuk (1886-196?) and Isaak Brodsky (1884-1939, later to become famous as Stalin's favorite portraitist) indicate very definite tendencies: the expressivity of line evident, for





Photograph of Filonov taken in late 1930s

example, in *Two Boys* (1909, RM<sup>5</sup>), the careful juxtaposition of *blanc et noir* for maximum psychological effect, together with a frequent bizarreness of theme reflect not only Filonov's innate artistic sensibility, but also the appreciable influence of *Art nouveau* or, more specifically, Munich *Jugendstil*. Even though the concepts of *Jugendstil* design and ornament were alien to the St. Petersburg Academy's teaching system (and to Dmitriev-Kavkazsky's), there is no doubt that St. Petersburg artists were well aware of the latest achievements of the Munich Sezession. Not only did the *World of Art* journal propagate that kind of art, especially in its last issues of 1904, but also many Russian art students—Ivan Bilibin (1876-1942), Mstislav Dobuzhinsky (1875-1957), Igor Grabar (1871-1960), Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944), to mention but a few—were in Munich for greater or lesser periods around the turn of the century, and, therefore, brought back with them news of the new style. That Filonov was influenced by Julius Dietz and Thomas Heine seems very apparent, although he surely owed his mastery of academic proportion and perspective to Dmitriev-Kavkazsky, himself a competent draftsman.<sup>6</sup> Filonov's links with *Jugendstil*, however superficial, are important for understanding something of his later development: the Germanic influence in Filonov's early career provides additional evidence for connecting Filonov with Central European Expressionism just before and after the Great War and helps to explain his life-long admiration for the great Medieval masters—Altdorfer, Dürer, Grünewald—whom the German Expressionists themselves considered forerunners of their art. Filonov himself was particularly interested in Grünewald and, allegedly, saw the Isenheim altar piece during a trip through Germany in 1912. Although supporting a very different interpretation of art, Filonov shared that evocative intensity of line peculiar to the later German Expressionists such as Otto Dix, George Grosz and Paul Klee, and only during the 1920s did he emerge as a remarkable colorist, manifesting an almost Byzantine "mosaicness" of spectral impression.

Filonov's interest in the mystical and demonic forces of existence already identifiable with early works such as the *Two Boys* and *The Hero and His Fate* (1909-10, RM), became particularly evident during his association with the St. Petersburg Union of Youth organization (1910-14). While the Union was a very eclectic one, numbering among its members such contra-

dictory personalities as Malevich and Pougny, David Burliuk and Matyushin, Guro and Rozanova, its geographical position and organic assimilation of a more Baltic, Teutonic culture, its propagation of the "intuitive" and "fortuitive" in art and its undoubted penchant for the darker moments of the human condition gave it a certain resemblance to *Der Blaue Reiter* and *Der Sturm* groups in Germany. If, in fact, we attempt to determine retrospectively the existence of a school of Russian Expressionism—something which is entirely feasible especially when we remember that over forty percent of *Der Blaue Reiter* associates were Russian-born and that a number of "Western European" Expressionists were, in fact, East European by origin (Chagall, Kokoschka, Soutine), then the composition and function of the Union of Youth acts as a vital auxiliary support to our argument.

Some of the Union's associates, e.g., Vasily Matyutin (1884-1955) and Vladimir Markov (1877-1914)<sup>7</sup> were themselves of Baltic origin, and the "Neo-symbolist" work of Elena Guro, Masyutin, Eduard Spandikov (1875-1929) and Filonov himself shared basic affinities with the Expressionism of Kandinsky, Gabriele Münter and Marianne von Werefkin in Munich. Guro, in particular (and Filonov was a great admirer of her work), maintained and expanded the lyrical, contemplative tradition of modern Russian painting as refracted through Isaak Levitan (1861-1900), Viktor Borisov-Musatov (1870-1905), the Blue Rose group and Kandinsky; and, as such, Guro was one of the few to reach a virtually abstract conclusion by this route. It was as a member of the Union of Youth that Filonov participated in his first professional exhibitions (Union of Youth sessions of 1912 and 1913-14), that he contributed illustrations to the Futurist miscellany *Roaring Parnassus (Rykaiushchii Parnas)* in 1914 and that he co-designed (with Shkolnik) the production of *Vladimir Mayakovsky* staged by the Union in December, 1913. Mayakovsky's conception of the city as a monstrous and disintegratory force, one which divided the hero (Mayakovsky) into "mere intonations of his own voice clothed in visual images,"<sup>8</sup> was in keeping with Filonov's own ominous notion of the world as a source of superhuman, almost demonic strength ready to envelop man in a relentless, organic growth. As one of the actors recalled: "Filonov had only *madness* and *terror*, nothing else."<sup>9</sup> It was not coincidental, therefore, that Filonov should have begun his own transrational "play," *Song of Universal Growth*

(*Propoven o prorosli mirovoi*), in the same year and that should have compiled the first, unpublished draft of his Theory of Analytical Art and the Principle of Madeness in 1914-15<sup>10</sup> in which he attempted to elucidate his conception of reality as a vast ganglia of physico-chemical forms ever moving and ever changing.

During 1916-18 Filonov saw active service on the Rumanian front and towards the end of 1918 became chairman of the so-called Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Independent Baltic Naval Division, something which indicates his sympathy with the common soldier and sailor. On his return to Petrograd Filonov welcomed the Revolutionary government and, at least initially, did what he considered to be of utmost benefit to the new art consumer—symbolized by his cycle of paintings entitled *Entry into World Flowering* and exhibited at the I State Free Exhibition of Works of Art in Petrograd in April-June, 1919. Like many of the avant-garde, Filonov occupied a variety of administrative and pedagogical positions under the general auspices of IZO Narkompros (Visual Arts Section of the Ministry of Enlightenment), although he was always at loggerheads with his colleagues over fundamental issues of artistic policy. His most important positions were within the Petrograd affiliation of the Moscow Institute of Artistic Culture (Inkhuk) where he worked closely with Malevich, Pavel Mansurov (Paul Mansoureff, b. 1896), Mikhail Matyushin (1861-1934) and the critic Nikolai Punin (1888-1953) and within the restructured Academy of Fine Arts where he supervised a group of students—in 1925 to become the Collective of Masters of Analytical Art or the Filonov school. It was among these devoted pupils—and they included such gifted artists as Yulia Arapova (b. 1882), Boris Gurvich (b. 1905) and Pavel Kondratiev (b. 1902)—that Filonov disseminated the principles of his Theory of Analytical Art. His profound and lasting influence became especially evident from their contributions to their single joint exhibition at the Leningrad *Press House (Dom pechatii)* in April-May, 1927 (31 participants) and from their stage designs for Igor Terentiev's concurrent production of Gogol's *Revizor* on the same premises; above all, the imprint of the master became very clear from the collective decoration of the Academy edition of the *Kalevala* in 1933 (to be discussed below). Paradoxically, it was in that same year that the Collective, already ousted from the Academy in 1927, was forced to break up; from then on until his death Filonov was represented at only



Iosif Brodsky, "Ludmila Burlyuk." 1906



Filonov, "Peasant Family." Watercolor, 6 x 17.5, 1910.

one official exhibition<sup>11</sup> and his "dismal intensity of theme, his tragic constraint, his desperate ideas"<sup>12</sup> were criticized mercilessly. He died of pneumonia during the Leningrad blockade on December 3, 1941.

As in the case of Khlebnikov and, to a much lesser extent, Kruchenykh, the essence of Filonov's theoretical and artistic innovation ca. 1912 lay in his own peculiar recourse to primitivism. Like Khlebnikov, Filonov attempted to recapture a more pristine level of communication by cultivating a naive or infantile rendition of reality. In this respect, Filonov was influenced to a certain extent by the ideas of the Russian Neo-primitivist painters, led by Goncharova, Larionov, Malevich and Alexander Shevchenko (1882-1948). These artists examined non-academic optical methods such as inverted perspective, sharp color contrast, vulgarization of form, distortion of objects according to semantic rather than to spatial significance, and incorporated them into their easel work. Essentially, theirs was not a "philosophical" movement and it would be misleading to contend that their recourse to national, peasant art had any direct political connotation. Goncharova, Larionov and Shevchenko were concerned, above all, with the creation of a more spontaneous esthetic system, of a new formal vocabulary which would enable them to attain a virtually non-figurative art, form, Rayonism, by 1912. Shevchenko summarized their tenets in 1913:

For the point of departure in our Art we take the *lubok*, the primitive art form, the icon, since we find in them the most acute, most direct perception of life—and a purely painterly one, at that. . . Art is for itself, and not for the execution of a subject, and if it does appear as such then this is not the motive, but the consequence. . . The meaning of painting is within painting itself. It is not inherent in the subject matter, but has its own content of a purely painterly character; it is inherent in texture, composition and style.<sup>13</sup>

For Filonov, however, the interest in the formal elements of primitive art was part of a wider and more complex philosophy, one which relied heavily on a curious combination of objective and subjective, social and religious symbologies.<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch as Filonov's Theory of Analytical Art was concerned with "Intuition as the highest form of consciousness and as the way to transubstantiate impressions of inner life into outer forms,"<sup>15</sup> it brought to mind Surrealism with its cultivation of the dream



Filonov, "The Hero and His Fate." Oil on canvas, 33 x 22, 1909-10.

and the unconscious levels of a more universal intelligibility. That Filonov was aspiring towards a more universal, "democratic" art form was evident from the ambitious titles of some of his paintings: *West and East* (1912-13, RM), *Man and Woman* (1912, TG), *Entrance into World Flowering* (1919, TG), *Formula of the Cosmos* (1918-19, RM), *Formula of the Petrograd Proletariat* (1920-21, RM). The philosophical and, as it were, "biological" spaciousness of Filonov's worldview, inspired on the one hand by an almost eschatological belief in the primitive masses and on the other by a precise, "analytical" comprehension of life, produced the constant ambiguities and contradictions to be found in the written versions of the Theory itself:

"Realism" is a scholastic abstraction of only two (the object's) predicates: form and color. Speculation with these predicates results in esthetics. . .

Since I know, analyze, see, feel by intuition that in any object there are not just the two predicates of form and color, but a whole world of visible and invisible phenomena, their emanations, reactions, inter-fusions, geneses, separate realities and known or unknown qualities which, in turn, sometimes contain innumerable predicates—I reject once and for all as unscientific and moribund the dogma of the contemporary realism of *two predicates* together with all its rightist/leftist sects.

In its place I advocate scientific, analytical intuitive naturalism. . . I advocate the master-researcher's persistence and the principle of the *biologically* made picture.<sup>16</sup>

Just as Malevich obviously regarded Suprematism to be an art form of imminent universal value, so Filonov could expand his doctrine to advocate the "proletarianization of art, the art of the proletariat and the conception of the proletarian ideology of art. . . the collective of artists as a *workers' collective* creating values which are the psychological property of each and everyone. . ."17

It was because of his desire to "proletarianize" art that Filonov gave particular attention to what he called the "madness" ("sdelannost") of the picture: he saw this as a universal value ("everyone possesses ability for making pictures. . .")18 and as the highest artistic criterion ("the highest work of art. . . is any work. . . in which the maximum of analytical madness



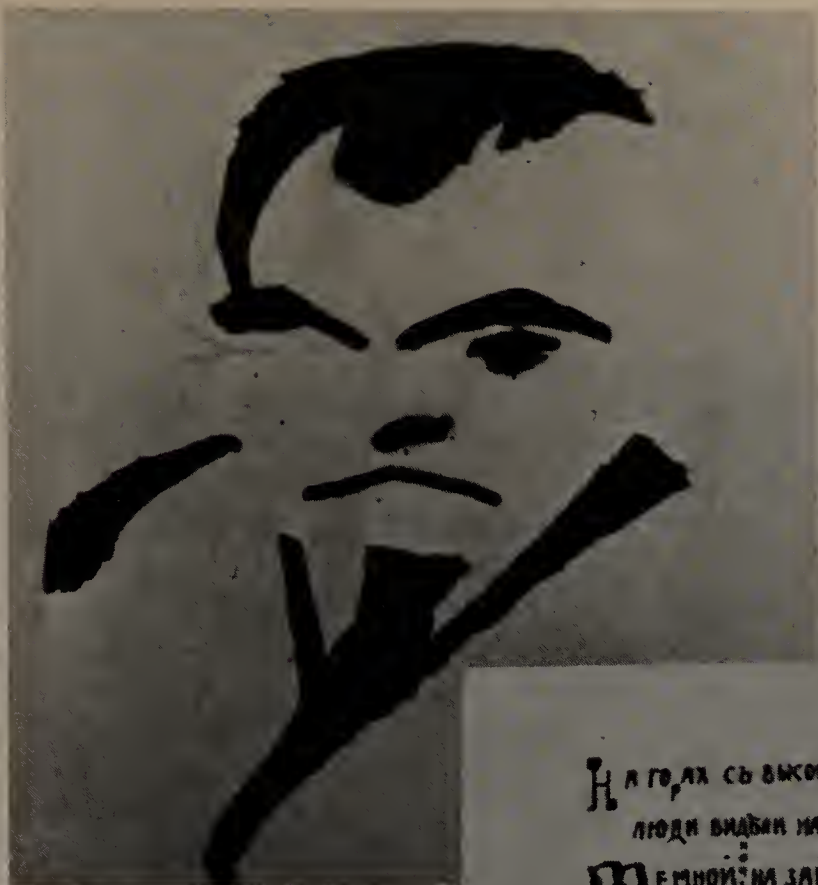
has been concentrated. . .").<sup>19</sup> For Filonov every atom of the surface had to be "analyzed" and "made," although his notion of intellect presupposed more often than not a display of inspiration, artistic intuition and fantasy rather than a simple, rational assemblage of materials as the Constructivists were proposing. Paradoxically, therefore, many of Filonov's canvases have a very limited thematic appeal, for the optical *non-sequiturs*, the fixation with certain images especially the human head and eye, the baffling complexity of composition and the almost lunatic intensity and kinetic force transfer Filonov's work from the cosy world of "intelligible" art to a level of "super-reality" and "metaphysic-ality." This is true of Filonov's masterpieces, whether early such as *Heads* (1910, RM) and *Victor Over the City* (1912-15, RM), or late such as *The Head and the Thumb* (1925-26, RM) and the abstractions of ca. 1930.

A particular stimulus to Filonov's primitive, lapidary style of ca. 1912-ca. 1920 was his interest in, and research on, pre-Christian and early Christian artifacts of S. W. Russia, Siberia and, presumably, Scandinavia. In some cases, it seems as though Filonov has transferred the formal characteristics of *kamennye baby* or petroglyphic designs to his own paintings, emphasizing their massiveness of limb, ponderousness of stance and severity of expression, e.g., in *Workers* of 1915 (RM). Filonov's conscious disruption of academic perspective and anatomical precision, his treatment of objects according to a psychological rather than to a locational position are devices which invite comparison with Khlebnikov's primitivist poems where the author resorts constantly to archaisms, "wrong words" and abrupt metrical shifts. These artistic and literary parallels attained a remarkable conjunction in Khlebnikov's *Miscellany of Verse (Izbornik stikhov, 1914)* which included not only two illustrations by Filonov but also Filonov's own calligraphy for the lithographic supplement *Wooden Idols (Derevyannye idoly)*. The Soviet art historian Evgeny Kovtun has explained the importance of this joint endeavor:

What was new was that Filonov had changed individual letters into a drawing, into a visual symbol which denoted the word as a whole. He attempted to restore the written language to its sources, to change the phonic script into an ideographic one—into pictography and hieroglyphics. In the word *shipovnik* (dogrose), the letter "k" was changed



Top: Filonov, "Peasants," watercolor, 22 x 24, 1912. Bottom: Filonov, "West and East," oil on paper, 40 x 45.5, 1912-13. Russian Museum, Leningrad.



D. Burlyuk, "Portrait of Pavel Filonov," ca. 1912.

Н а год, ах съ выскокой Мавкой  
 люди видны наредни  
 М етлой на зарь  
 это верно и не бредни  
 Т амь на капишь джкаръ  
 узнай-же! Мавд чериго-рова  
 но мертвыи ужь как лук въ руках  
 З адюку держише сурово  
 и рыба нбси на ъстах  
 а сзави кожи нбт у ней  
 О на шиповниѣ а красиѣ  
 шагами хищныи сильни  
 съ дгоѣ влостыхъ глаза она  
 и ими смотрится въ чорѣ  
 а за режем у ней топора  
 улыбки нбту откровеннѣ  
 М а ты ужасно тривлятиѣ

Filonov illustration to Khlebnikov's "Wooden Idols" in the *Khlebnikov Izbornik*, St. Petersburg, 1914.



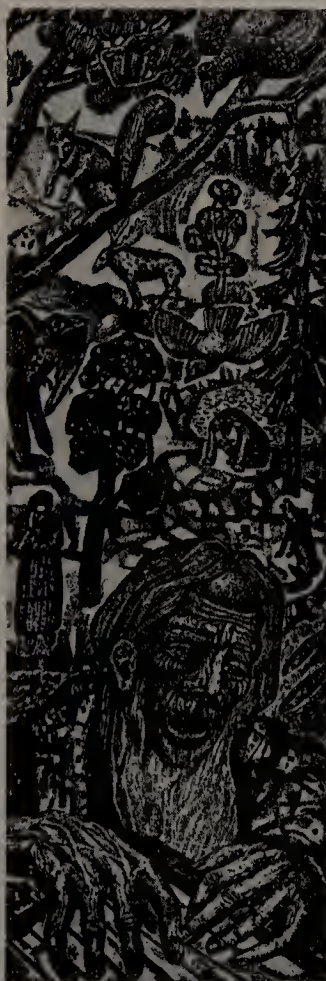
Filonov, "Head." Oil on paper, 48 x 37, 1924. Russian Museum.



Filonov, "Head." India ink, 43 x 43, 1925-26. Russian Museum.



Top: Petroglyphs from village of Sheremetievo, 2000 B.C.  
Bottom: Filonov, Untitled. Oil on paper, 98 x 68. 1930.



РУНА СОБОР ПЕРВАЯ

*Вейнемейнен играет на кантеле*

Старый, верный Вейнемейнен,  
Векочный заклинатель,  
Тут привел в порядок пальцы,  
Помочил больших два пальца,  
На скаду отрады вышел,  
Сел на камень пенопенья,  
На сребристом возвышеньи,  
На холмочке золотистом.

Пальцами берет оп гусли,  
Ставит выгиб на колени,  
Держит кантеле руками,  
Говорит слова такие:

«Приходи сюда послушать,  
Кто еще не слышал раньше  
Этих звуков вечных песен,  
Как звучат прекрасно гусли».

Начал старый Вейнемейнен  
Издавать искусно звуки  
На тех гуслях рыбьей кости,  
На том кантеле из щуки;  
Пальцы быстро поднялися,  
Высоко большой поднялся.

Шло веселье за весельем,  
Клик за кликом раздавался;  
Та игра была игрою,  
Пенье было по напевам;  
Звук издали рыбы кости,  
Дали тон те щучьи зубы.  
Струны звук давали мощный,  
Волоса коня — тон светлый.

Вот играет Вейнемейнен —  
И в лесу не оставалось  
Никого из тех, что ходят,  
Тех, что могут бегать, прыгать,  
Чтоб не шел туда послушать  
И, ликуя, восторгаться.

Векши весело цеплялись,  
С ветки прытали на ветку;

Top: Ernst Josephson, "Joan of Arc" (ca. 1900).

Bottom: School of Filonov illustration to the *Kalevala* in the Academy edition of 1933.

into a branch of the plant with flowers and thorns. We hear "shipovnik" and we see a *shipovnik*.<sup>20</sup>

The close interaction of literary and artistic methods within a primitivist context also achieved a singular, if bizarre unity in Filonov's *Song of Universal Growth*, a transrational drama written and illustrated by Filonov himself. Some obscurity surrounds the actual moment of the work's conception, since the date of publication was March, 1915 whereas, allegedly, some of the illustrations were done in 1913;<sup>21</sup> the text itself seems to reflect events of the Great War, involving constant collisions between the dramatic "hero," Ivan Klyuchnik, his comrades and the "bad" men—an old German king, an agent provocateur and a "putrified commander" ("istlevshii komandor"). Although the language recalls Khlebnikov's *zaum*, it lacks any punctuation and is often composed of arbitrary combinations and neologisms devoid of any morphological pattern—so that what we read and hear seems like an echo of some vaguely familiar Slavic dialect, yet one as semantically remote as the petroglyphs and hieroglyphics which so fascinated Filonov. The introductory lines of the *zapevalo* (sic) or first chorister provide a convenient example:

materela penno-kruzhliva nogami sneginia  
zhelalna tantsa protantsevanem neulovimym  
v oranzheree balerin  
zherebuiu metu nemnogo zhutiu liubimoiu venchit<sup>22</sup>

It is this fracture of conventional sequences which gives Filonov's theoretical and practical work its haunting, oneiric quality: familiar yet foreign, meaningful yet meaningless, representational yet abstract. In turn, it was this remarkable disharmony of photographic image and fabulous vision which inspired Alexander Grinevsky's extraordinary description of Filonov's studio as seen through the eyes of Ammon in the story "Seekers of Adventure" ("Iskateli prikliucheni"):

Ammon turned round. The folder lying on the table riveted his attention, already agitated, by its size; it was large, fat, and when he opened it, it turned out to be full of drawings... Ammon looked through them one by one and was astonished by the superhuman gift of fantasy. He saw flocks of ravens flying above fields of roses; hillocks sown, like grass, with burning electric light bulbs; a river overflowing



with corpses; a plexus of hairy hands clasping bloody knives; a tavern full of drunken fish and lobsters; a garden where gallows grew....; a pool full of bearded ladies.....; almost all the drawings were strewn with golden spangles... and had been executed as carefully as any labor of love.<sup>23</sup>

While such hellish fantasies derived at least in part from Filonov's deep admiration of Bosch and Brueghel the Elder,<sup>24</sup> their lugubrious images, macabre juxtapositions and expressionistic, even surrealistic mood recalled the work of the fin-de-siecle Scandinavian artists Alexis Gallen-Kallela and Ernst Josephson. Filonov's interest in the culture of Scandinavia, particularly of Finland, reached its culmination in his supervision of the illustrations to the 1933 Academy translation and edition of the *Kalevala*. The function of nature as a psychological and emotional extension of man, the notions of "natural" time and constant growth—essential to the tale—were elements which were fundamental to Filonov's "organic esthetics."<sup>25</sup> Filonov regarded the *Kalevala* as a superb opportunity to express the "predicates" of reality and, although he transferred practically all the design work to his students, he followed the decorative process from beginning to end. Thirteen artists from the Filonov School contributed, including Tatyana Glebova (b. 1900), Alisa Poret (b. 1902), Mikhail Tsibasov (b. 1905 [?]) and Izrail Zaltsman (b. 1908). They worked collectively and anonymously, achieving a remarkable degree of artistic cohesion and integration; indeed, their loyalty to the collective and to a single principle brings to mind the spirit of a Medieval atelier dedicated to the illumination of a holy manuscript. The text contains a colored frontispiece, title page, ten full page black and white illustrations, fifty half-page vertical illustrations for the beginning of each rune as well as numerous page decorations and tailpieces. Of particular interest are the half-page vertical illustrations which, by their very format, dictate an effective, falling perspective, one which parallels, as it were, the downward movement of the verse lines themselves while repeating the totality of lines on the page. This double perception of the printed page reminds one of Filonov's early experiments on the ideograph in Khlebnikov's *Wooden Idols*. The tailpieces also play a specific role: always horizontal and nearly always narrative they lead, so to speak, from the end of one rune into the visual-cum-literary beginning of the next. Despite the unquestionable originality of several of the

illustrators, not least Poret and Tsibasov, their designs all betray the appreciable influence of Filonov whether in the intricacy of detail, in the monoplanar presentation of imagery or in the intense emotional interaction of man and nature. Nowhere else in modern art has there existed such a unanimity of purpose and loyalty to a single style.

Filonov received the invitation to supervise the *Kalevala* in November, 1931, but by the time the book was published, in December, 1933, he had been ostracized for his "pathological. . . decadent Expressionism."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, as early as 1929 Filonov and the *filonovtsy* had been attacked for their "mystical subjectivism. . . [their] extreme manifestations of a world-view belonging to the decadent ranks of the petit bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia,"<sup>27</sup> and it is a miracle that the *Kalevala* was ever commissioned and produced. Filonov was condemned officially, although tacitly, when his one-man exhibition was not allowed to open in the Russian Museum in 1930. Containing almost 250 works and occupying four halls, the exhibition covered the whole of Filonov's career, but although the pictures were hung, the catalogue was printed and some visitors were allowed, pressure from Realist artists, especially Brodsky, Alexander Gerasimov (1881-1963) and Evgeny Katsman (b. 1890), the project was postponed and then cancelled. According to one source,<sup>28</sup> Filonov did, in fact, have a one-man show in 1935 or 1936 also in Leningrad, at which all his later works were shown, including his illusionist still-lives of 1934-35:

A wooden table. On it bread, a plate, and it's as if a white egg has fallen from the plate and is rolling off. The impression of the falling egg was amazing and somewhat terrifying—any moment now it will fall off and break. It was so illusory.<sup>29</sup>

Filonov continued to paint until his death, although in circumstances of extreme indigence and inclemency. But what hurt Filonov was not only the silence to which he was reduced or the physical and psychological discomfiture which he was forced to suffer, but the painful distortion and elimination of artistic truth. In one of his later manuscripts Filonov uttered a tense cry of anguish and despair, condemning that:

small group of people who have no direct relevance to art, who have no

competence in matters of art, who have no right to act behind the artist's back or on the artist's behalf, who have no right to be the self-styled regisseurs of an ideology and an economics in a profession of which they know nothing.<sup>30</sup>

That tragic *cri de coeur* still echoes now, and no less urgently.

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#### NOTES

1. The most comprehensive sources of information on Filonov are: Troels Andersen, "Pavel Nikolajevic Filonov," *Signum*, No. 4 (1963) [Copenhagen], 20-31.

John E. Bowlt, "Pavel Filonov" *Studio International* (London, July/August, 1973), 30-36.

Jan Kriz, *Pavel Nikolajevic Filonov* (Prague, 1966).

Miroslav Lamac, "Filonov a jeho skola" in *Vytvarne umeni*, No. 3 (1967) [Prague], 126-45.

Details of Filonov's biography will be found in Kriz, of Filonov's Theory in Bowlt and of Filonov's students in Lamac.

2. G. Iakulov, B. Livshits, A. Lourie, *My i Zapad* (St. Petersburg, 1914); also published in French in *Mercure de France* (Paris, 1914, April 16), 882-83. Russian version reprinted in B. Livshits, *Polutoraglaziyi strelets* (L. 1933), 203.

3. D. Burluk, A. Kruchenykh, B. Maiakovsky, V. Khlebnikov, *Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu* (M. 1912), 3.

4. I. Brodsky, *Isaak Izrailevich Brodsky* (M. 1973), 27-28.

5. RM = Russian Museum, Leningrad; TG = Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

6. See, for example, Dmitriev-Kavkazsky's illustrations in I. Boterianov, *Voina russkogo naroda s Napoleonom 1812* (St. Petersburg, 1911).

7. Vladimir Markov was the russianized name of the Latvian artist and critic Waldemars Matvejs. Markov was a highly influential figure within the Union of Youth and his publications played a major role in the propagation of primitive art and "intuitivism." See, for example, his essay, "Printsipy novogo iskusstva" in *Soiuz molo-dezhi* (St. Petersburg, 1912), Book 1, 5-14; Book 2, 5-18.

8. Livshits, 185.

9. K. Tomashevskii, "Vladimir Maiakovskii," *Teatr*, No. 4 (1938) [Moscow], 141.

10. From 1914 Filonov constantly modified his Theory. His basic principles were first published as "Deklaratsiia 'Mirovogo rastsveta'" in *Zhizn' iskusstva* (Petrograd, 1923), No. 20, 13-15. (translated into Czech in Lamac, op. cit., 126-28). Theses from the Ideology of Analytical Art were published in the catalogue to Filonov's proposed one-man exhibition in the Russian Museum (Leningrad, 1930), *Filonov* (introduction by S. Isakov), 41-42. A letter from Filonov to a student, written in 1929 and elucidating some of his ideas on Analytical Art is translated and edited in Bowlt, op. cit., 35-36. An unpublished article, "O printsipakh tvorchestva," was translated into Czech and published in Lamac, op.cit., 128-29.

11. According to *Vystavki Sovetskogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1967), Filonov did not contribute to any official exhibitions between July, 1933 and shortly before his death. But a former pupil of his, Yulia Arapova, maintains that he did have a one-man show in 1935 or 1936 (see main text).

12. I. Ioffe: *Sinteticheskaia istoriia iskusstv* (L. 1933), 484.

13. A. Shevchenko, *Neo-primitivizm. Ego teoriia. Ego vozmozhnosti. Ego dostizheniia* (Moscow, 1913), 11, 12, 28.

14. The question of religious influences on Filonov, particularly in the context of early Christian art, deserves separate attention. Suffice it to say that Filonov was very interested in the fresco and icon, went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem before 1910 [according to M. Ostrovsky, *Khudozhestvennyi spravochnik sto pamiatnykh dat* (Moscow, 1973), 13] and prompted comparison with Nikolai the Miracle-worker—see N. Iznar and M. Kholodovskaia [compilers], *N. N. Kupreianov. Literaturno-khudozhestvennoe nasledie* (Moscow, 1973), 126.

15. Letter from Yulia Arapova to John Bowlit, August 19, 1973.

16. P. Filonov: "Deklaratsiia 'Mirovogo rastsveta'," 13. The reference to the "biologically made picture" relates to Filonov's concept of "madeness" ("sdelannost"); for him this term implied the quality of execution, of craftsmanship evident in the finished work.

17. P. Filonov, *Osnova prepodavaniia izobrazitelnykh iskusstv po printsipu chistogo analiza, kak vysshaia shkola tvorchestva, sistema "Mirovoi rastsvet,"* N. D. but ca. 1925. Unpublished manuscript, 17. Author's collection.

18. *Ibid.*, 24.

19. *Ibid.*, 17.

20. E. Kovtun, "Das Antibuch der Warwara Setpanow/Varvara Setpanova's Anti-Book" in *Von der Fläche zur Raum/From Surface to Space* (catalogue of exhibition at Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne, 1974), (1974), 60.

21. According to the list of works in the 1930 catalogue, op. cit., 33.

22. P. Filonov, *Propoven o prorosli mirovoi* (Petrograd, 1915), 3.

23. A. Grin, *Iskateli prikliuchenii* (1915). *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moscow, 1965), III, 265.

24. I dealt with the question of Bosch and Filonov in my paper, *Pavel Filonov: His Painting and His Theory*, presented at the International Slavic Conference, Banff, Canada, September, 1974. It is published in *Russian Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (July, 1975, Stanford).

25. It seems probable that certain of the physico-biological ideas of artistic creation, propounded by the St. Petersburg "crazy doctor," Dr. Nikolai Kulbin (1868-1917), would have impressed Filonov. Some understanding of Kulbin's "organic" approach to art can be gained from his articles "Svobodnoe iskusstvo, kak osnova zhizni" in *Studiia Impressionistov* (St. Petersburg, 1910), 3-14; "Kubizm" in *Strelets* (Petrograd, 1915), 197-216.

26. O. Beskin, *Formalizm v zhivopisi* (Moscow, 1933), 9.

27. I. Matsa et al. (editors), *Ezhegodnik literatury i iskusstva na 1929 god* (Moscow, 1929), 482.

28. Yulia Arapova in letter to John Bowlit, August 19, 1973. Although Filonov is still a very questionable figure in Soviet art historiography, his name has been mentioned increasingly over the last fifteen years. His work was partly rehabilitated with the small exhibition of Filonov and Matyushin at the Mayakovsky Museum, Moscow organized by Nikolai Khardzhiev in 1961. A large Filonov retrospective was organized in Novosibirsk in 1967, of which the catalogue (two editions), *Pavel Filonov. Pervaia personalnaia vystavka*, is an invaluable document.

29. Arapova, op. cit.

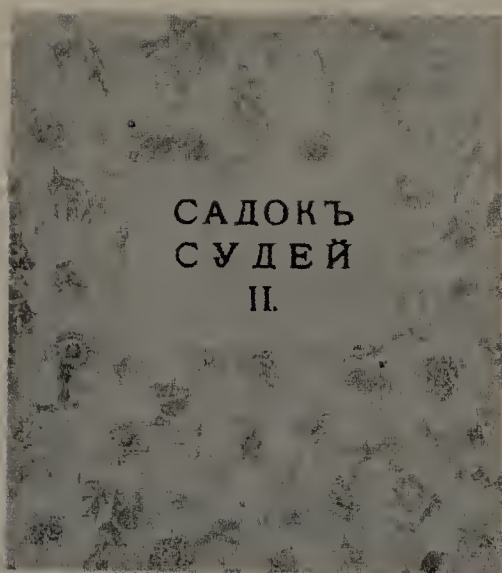
30. Filonov, *Osnova* . . . , 18.

**FUTURISM IN PHOTOGRAPHS**

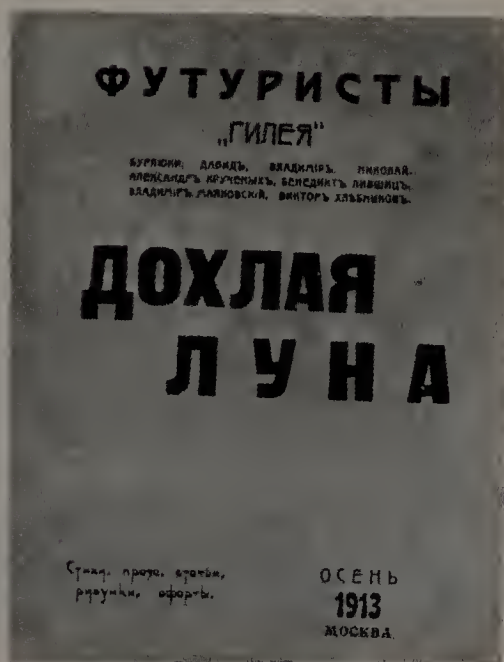




*A Trap for Judges, 1910*



*A Trap for Judges, II. 1913*



*The Croaked Moon, 1913*



Members of Hylaea. From left to right: Kruchenykh, David Burlyuk, Mayakovsky, Nikolai Burlyuk, Benedikt Lifshitz (1913)





Я. Крученых и В. Хлебников

# СЛОВО КАКЪ ТАКОВОЕ



*The Word as Such*, 1913  
by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov,  
cover drawing by Malevich.

ФУТУРИСТЫ

# РЫКАЮЩІЙ ПАРНАСЪ



СВЯТЫЙ ВЕНДИ СТОНИ БУКЪ Б. ЛЮБИЩЕ ЧЕЩЕЦЪ ПИОРЪ В. ГОРОС  
И БУРЮКЪ КАМЕННИКЪ МАДРОСКИ А КОСЪ Я. ХЛЕБНИКОВЪ СОВЕРЯНИИ  
СЛОСКИ И БУРЮКЪ ПИВАКЪ ПИНИ ПИВЕЛЬ ФИЛОВЪ  
М. МАЛЫШОВЪ КЛОСЪ П. МАШИЧЪ Я. БУРЮКЪ О. РОЗАНОВА

Cover of *Roaring Parnassus*, 1914

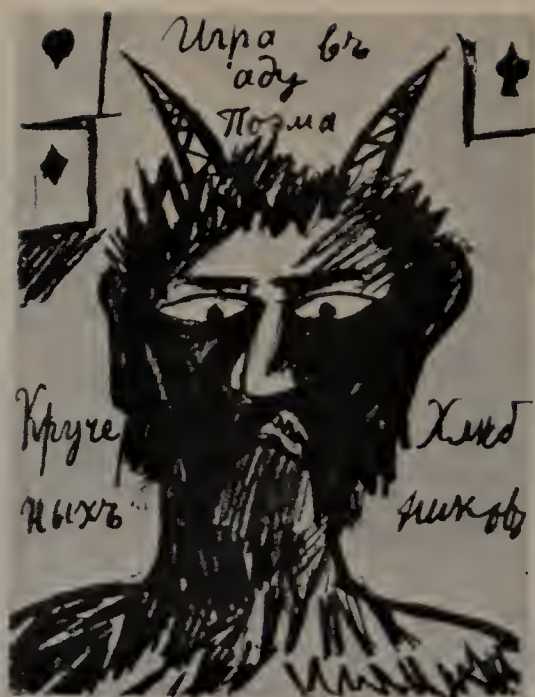


О. Розанова.

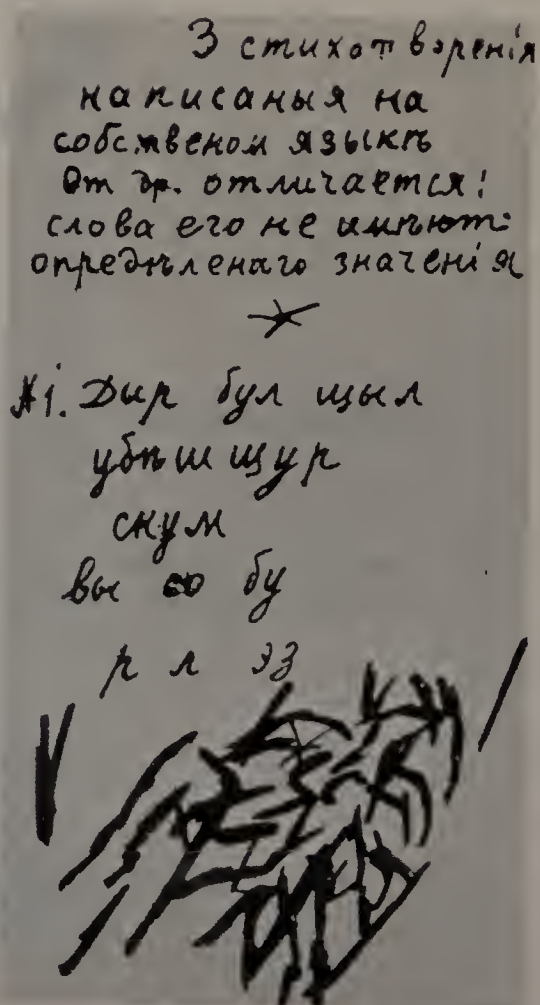
Голубья шапшолонь.

Drawing by Olga Rozanova, from *Streletz (The Shooter)*, Collection No. 1 (Petrograd, 1915), facing page 194.

Cover of Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov's *Igra v adu* (*Playing in Hell*), 1912. Natalia Goncharova.



Page from Kruchenykh's *Pomada* (*Pomade*), 1913. Mikhail Larionov.





N. Kulbin, "Sappho." From *The Shooter, No. 1*. Facing page 208.



Mayakovsky in 1910 or 1911



Boris Pasternak

Явись, Марія!

Я не могу на улицахъ!

Не хочешъ?

Ждешъ, какъ щеки провалятся ямкою, —

Попробованный всѣми, прѣсный,

Я приду и беззубо прошамкаю,

Что сегодня я — , удивительно честный!

Марія, видишь,

Я уже началъ супулитъся.

Въ улицахъ —

Люди жиръ продырявляютъ въ четвірэтажныхъ зобахъ,

Высунуть глазки, потертые въ сорокгодовой таскѣ,

Перехихикиваются, что у меня въ зубахъ

Опять

Черствая булка вчерашней ласки!

. . . . .

Какъ въ зажирѣвшее ухо вписнуть имъ нѣжное слово?

Птица подбирается пѣсней,

Поетъ голодна и звонка,

А я человѣкъ простой,

Выброшенный чахоточной ночью въ грязную руку Прѣсни.

Марія хочешъ такого?

Пусти!

Судорогой пальцевъ зажму я желѣзное горло звонка!

Марія, звѣрѣютъ улицъ выгоны!

На шеѣ ссадиной — пальцы давки!

Открой! мнѣ больно!



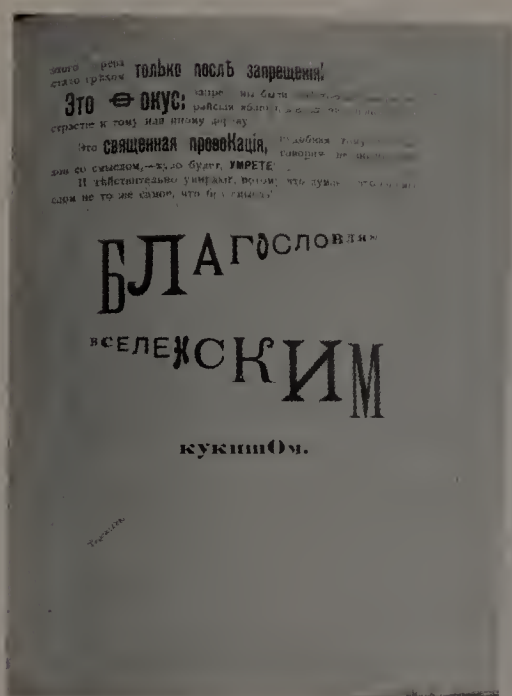


Maria Denisova, model for Maria in "A Cloud in Trousers" (Odessa, 1914)

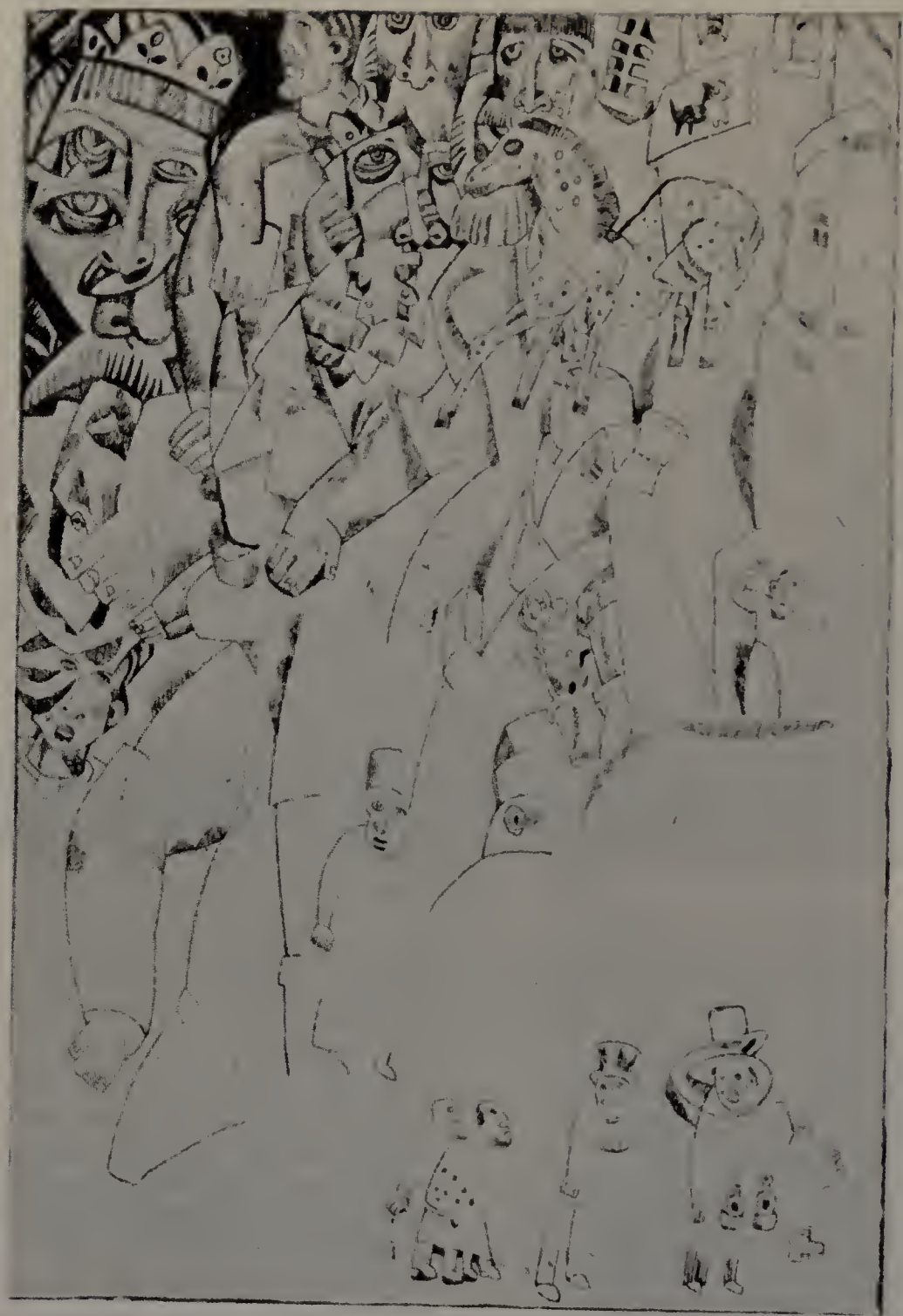




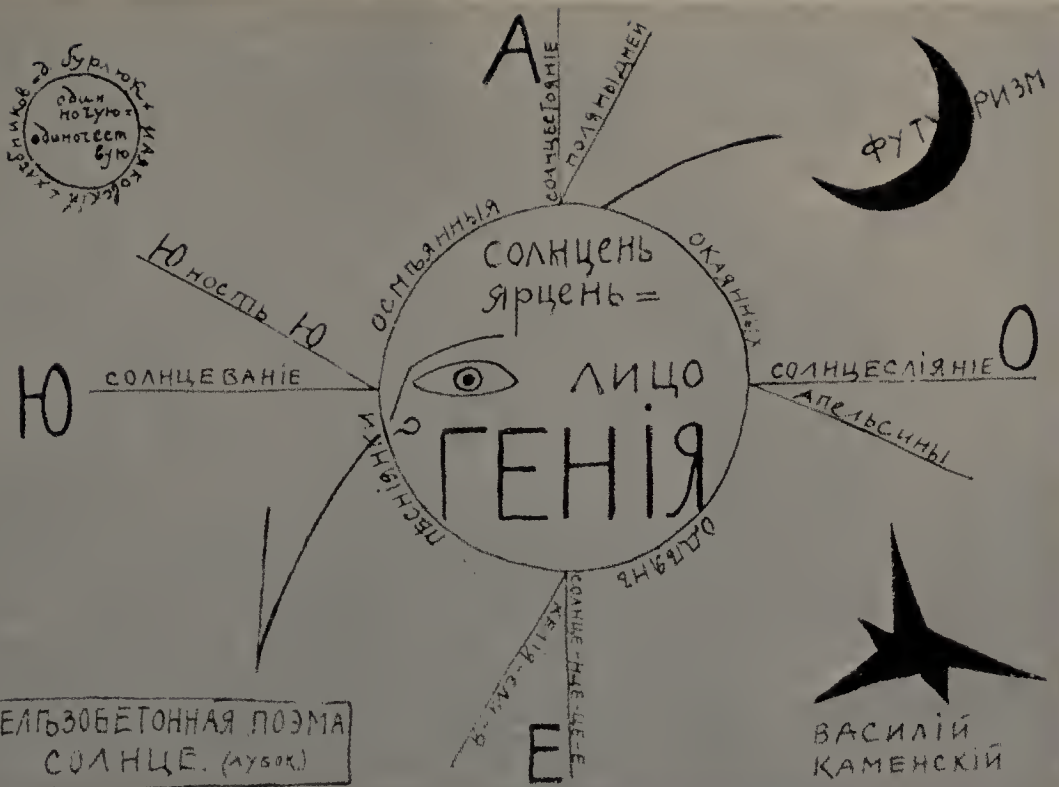
Above: Mayakovsky, D. Burlyuk, Andrei Shemshurin. The picture was published in a Moscow newspaper on February 14, 1914, with the following caption: "On February 13, during the literary-artistic circle reading of one of the papers about the Futurists, a serious scandal ensued, requiring the intervention of the police. The Moscow Futurists Larionov, Burlyuk, and Mayakovsky outraged the public with their verbal assaults, and their audience began to whistle and demand their withdrawal. Burlyuk appeared that evening with a painted face."



Left and opposite: cover and three pages from the *Treatise on Total Obscenity*, as examples of Futurist printing.



Pavel Filonov, illustration to Khlebnikov's *Izbornik (Collection)*, 1914



Above: a diagram of Futurism by Vasily Kamensky, the sun-center being the "Face of Genius."

Below: poster for a Kazan performance of the Futurists (1914).

**ДВОРЯНСКОЕ СОБРАНИЕ.**  
**ВЪ ЧЕТВЕРТЬ 20<sup>1</sup> ФЕВРАЛЯ**

**ФУТУРИСТЫ** ЗЕМЛЕИТЫЕ  
**МОСКОВЦЕ**

Устраивать вечер

**О ЖИВИС. И ЛИТЕРАТУРЪ**

прочесть доклад 1) Аэропланы и поэзия футуристовъ  
 прочесть доклад 2) Кубизмъ и Футуризмъ  
 прочесть доклад 3) Достигнуто футуризма

**Василий КАМЕНСКИЙ**  
**Данил Булюновъ**  
**Владимиръ Маяковский**

Бу.УТ. ЧИ.ТЪ ВЪ.И.СТЪ.ИИ.

Начало въ 8 часовъ вечера.

Вместо программы въ чрезвычайномъ изданіи **ВОСТОЧНАЯ ЛИРА** а въ день пріемъ въ 8 часовъ вечера въ Дворянскомъ Собраніи.

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**ФУТУРИСТЫ въ КАЗАНИ. ОЦЕНА ГАСТРОЛЪ.**

Москва



Товарская 51

Дворец Искусств

Рукавишникову

У.С.

Дорогой Иван Сергеевич!

Спасибо вам за доброе письмо и деньги.

Скоро появится в Москве, а пока  
посылает вам для издания "Братскую дружбу"

Порода северная. Кустроенные мои.  
Скорее вам!

Вам

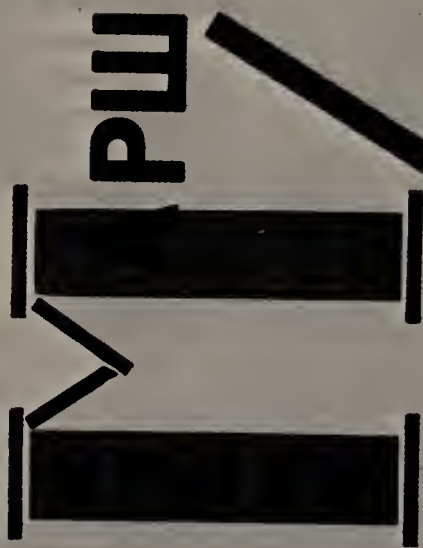
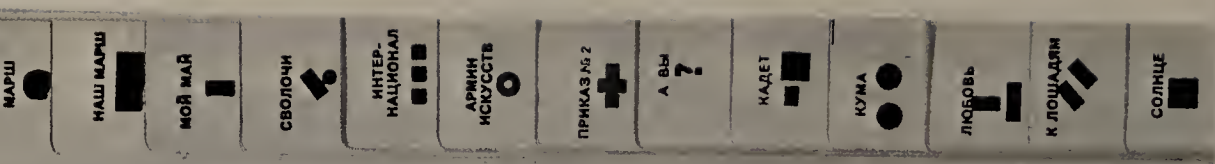
В. Хлебников

с верхарни  
летела Бельв  
Тисе жарко синие реки  
Лоты вечерних вилс  
За мровью покая  
Зелумана вечера мжалв, зубне про  
Незак глубино  
Свомязат <sup>в</sup> лав шау в з <sup>в</sup> ч <sup>в</sup> тама <sup>в</sup> цуе  
Гертмадн в Бесан

И мои сторониктосе вв пекло  
В герне суют в русле ретниу  
Это елучайная выписка —  
Кросьба устани устарых коснутас  
шар и за шаром в уле шар  
По руслам пикорных событий  
Это молитва о первых умерших,  
образитом в осколки обете!

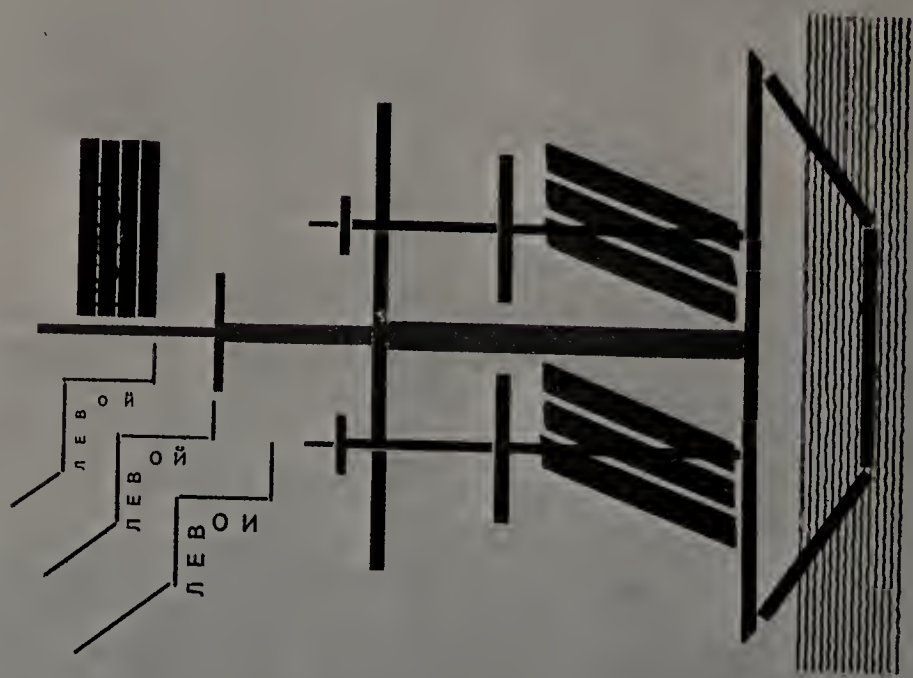
В. Клебников

7 авг. 1944



**МАТРОСАМ**

Разворачивайтесь в марше!  
Словесной не место в кляузе.  
Тише, ораторы!



Two facing pages from Mayakovsky's book *Dlia golosa (For the Voice)*, designed by El Lissitzky (Berlin, 1923).





Lily Brik and Mayakovsky, the Crimea 1926. (Courtesy of Lily Brik.)



Two lithographs from the *Kleine Welten* by Kandinsky, 1922.

К. МАЛЕВИЧЪ.

ОТЪ КУБИЗМА И ФУТУРИЗМА  
КЪ СУПРЕМАТИЗМУ.

НОВЫЙ ЖИВОПИСНЫЙ  
♦♦ РЕАЛИЗМЪ. ♦♦

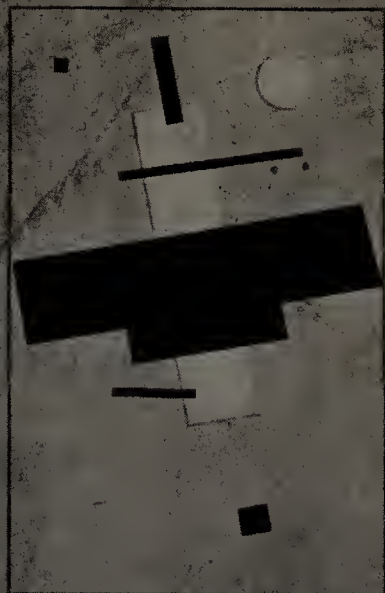


ИЗДАНИЕ ТРЕТЬЕ  
МОСКВА.  
1913

K. Malevich, *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism* (1916).

K. Malevich, *Suprematism* (1920).

ЦИКЛ



ЛЕКЦИЙ  
ИЛИ СУПРЕМАТИЗМА.

N. Punin, *A Cycle of Lectures*. Color cover lithograph by Malevich.

К. МАЛЕВИЧЪ  
СУПРЕМАТИЗМЪ  
ЗЧРХСНКА



УНОВИС  
ВНТБСК 1920

Обоснование этих вопросов выразилось в написанной мною книжечке "Мы как Уникальное Совершенство"

В данных мне трех страницах нельзя выказать всего того как и что я сделал, и какие результаты дали и дадут -- дания, установив определенные планы супрематической системы, дальнейшее развитие уже архитектурного супрематизма должно поводом молодым архитекторам в широким смысле слова и во всю эпоху новой системы архитектуры только в нем.

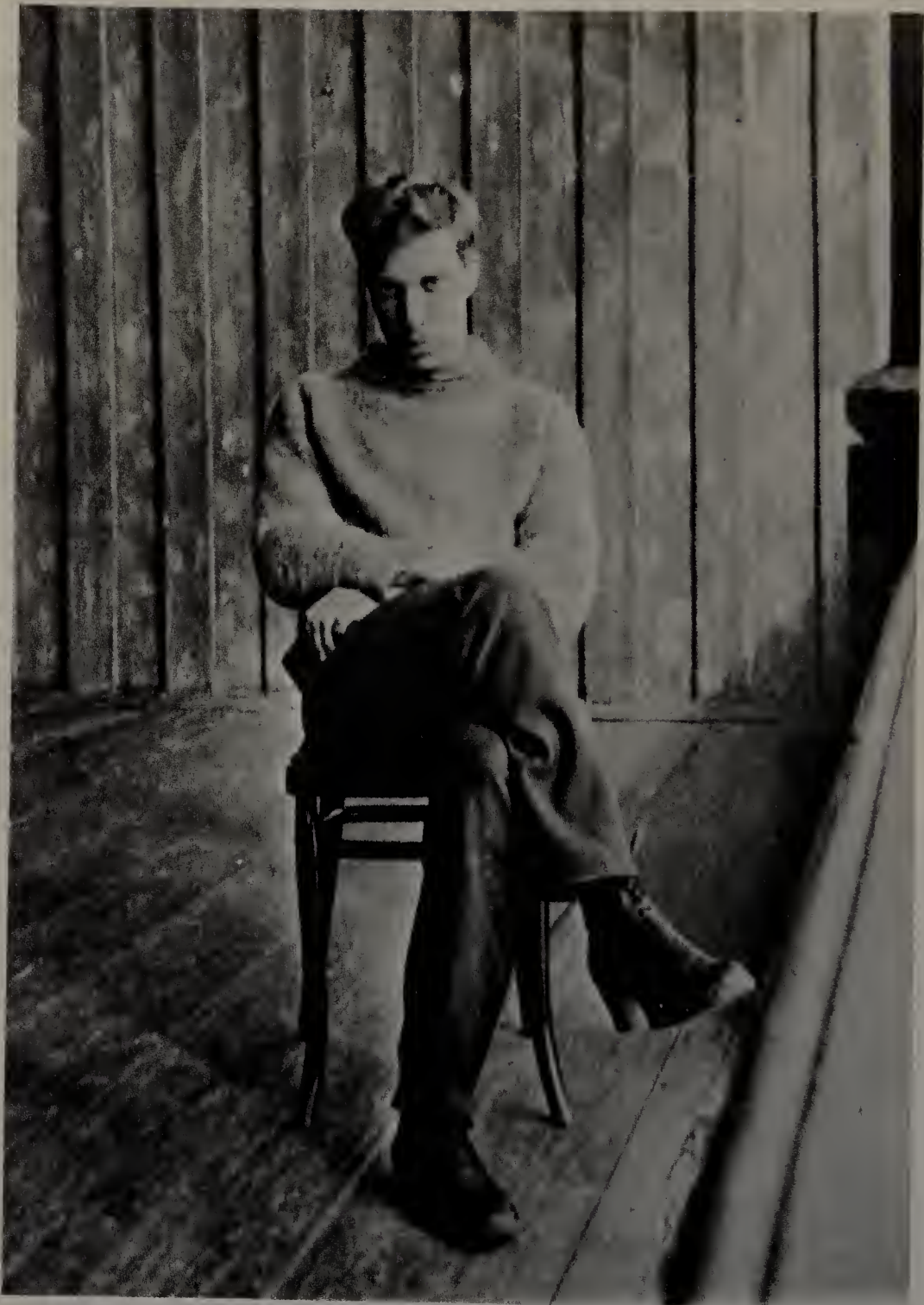
Сам же я занялся в новую для меня область мысли и ни мгн не могу излагать что убожу в бесконечном пространстве человеческого черепа.

Да зародится единая система, мировой архитектуры земли.

Да зародится творчий и утверждающий носое в мире УНОВИС.

K. Malevich

ВНТБСК 15 ДЕКАБРЯ  
1920



Boris Pasternak

*[Faint handwritten text at the top of the page, possibly a title or address.]*

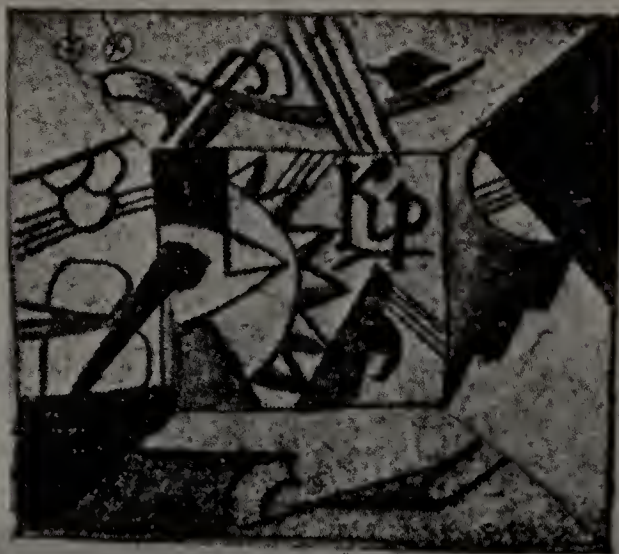
Сергеевичу.

*[Several lines of handwritten text in Cyrillic script, which is the autograph of Pasternak.]*

Autograph of Pasternak on Lily Brik's manuscript copy of *My Sister, Life*, a complete text varying in many particulars from the printed version. (Courtesy of Lily Brik.)

# ПОБЕДА НАД СОЛНЦЕМ

опера А. Крученых музыка М. Матюшина



Cover of Kruchenykh's opera *Victory over the Sun*, lithograph by Malevich (1913).



El Lissitzky lithograph for *Victory over the Sun* (1923).

**ДАЛЬШЕ!**

**4**

**У Лефа пара глаз—  
и то спереди,  
а не сзади.**

**„Назад, осадил“—  
на нас**

**орут**

**раз десять на день.**

**У Лефа**

**неповоротливая нога;  
громок у Лефа рот—  
наше дело**

**вперед шагать**

**и глазеть**

**и звать вперед.**

**ЛЕФ**





A. Rodchenko, untitled. Gouache (1919).



L. Popova, designs for Meyerhold's production of *The Magnanimous Cuckhold* (1922).

1922

МАСТЕРС. МЕЙЕРХОЛЬДА  
ВЕЛИКОДУШНЫЙ

КРОМЕ/МНК

РОГОЖЕ

САЖ

АРШ



УСТАНОВКА

Above: Set for Meyerhold's *Zori*.

Right: Set for Meyerhold's *The Magnanimous Cuckhold*.

ПРОЗ

ОДЕЖ

АКТ  
ЕРА

ДА

№ 5

5





ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ ЦЕНТР  
КОНСТРУКТИВИСТОВ

# ГОСПЛАН ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

СТАТЬИ

БОРИС АГАПОВ  
И. А. АКСЕНОВ  
КОРНЕЛИЙ ЗЕЛИНСКИЙ  
ВЕРА ИНБЕР  
ИЛЬЯ СЕЛЬВИНСКИЙ  
Д. ТУМАННЫЙ

СТИХИ

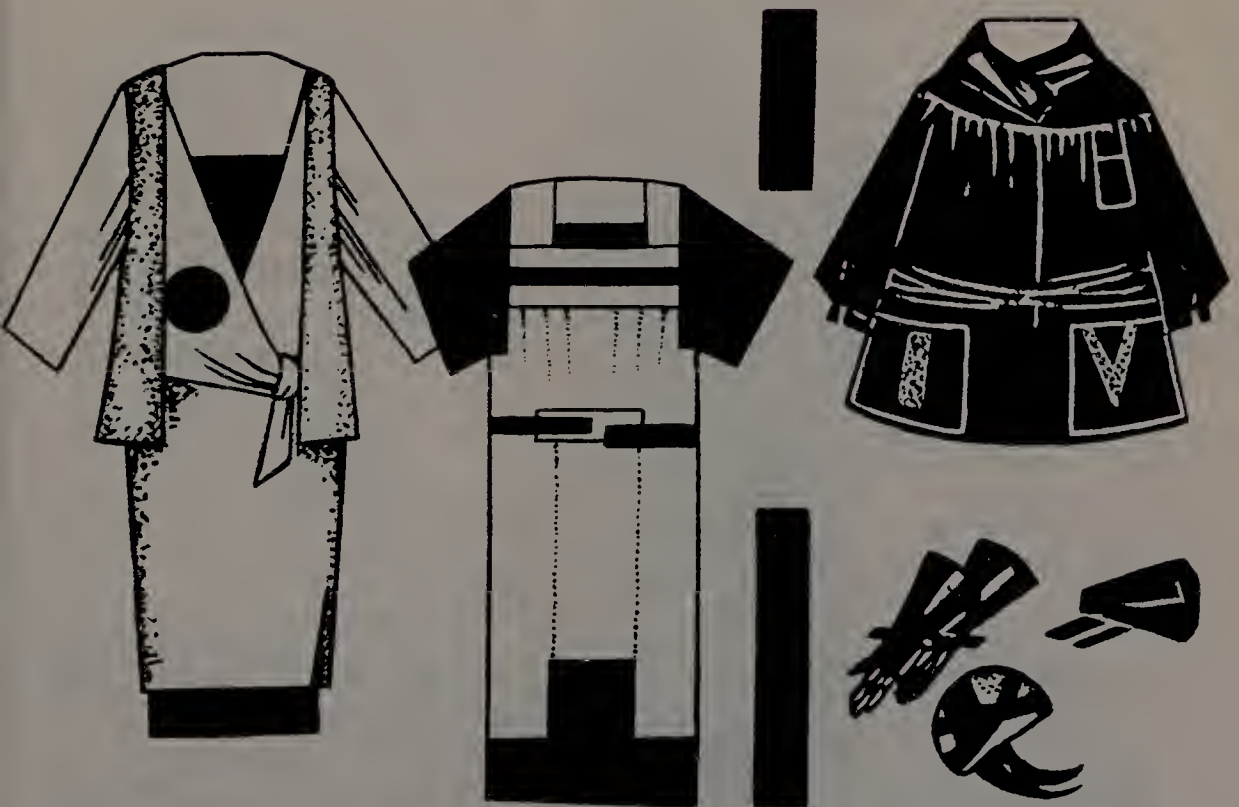
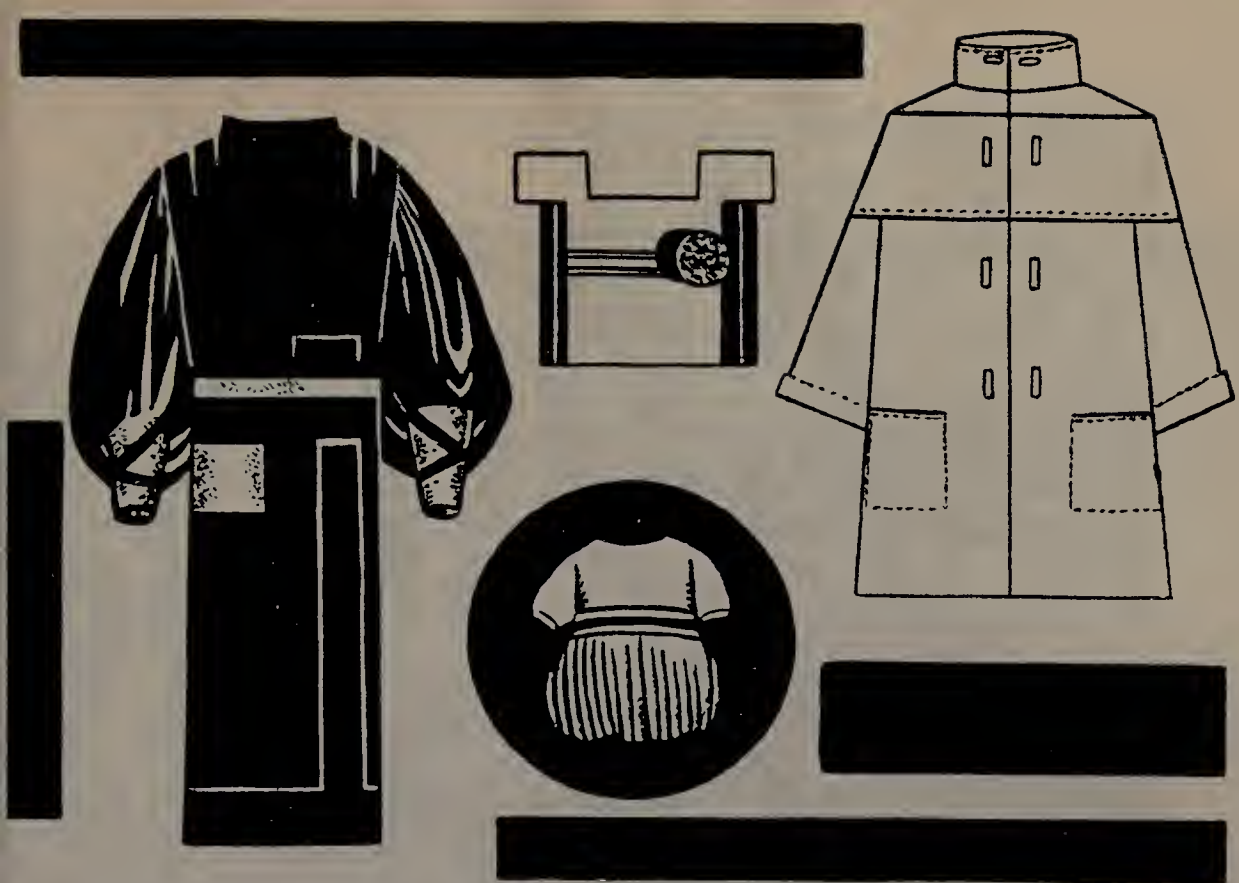
МОСКВА

Above left: Rodchenko cover for Selvinsky's *Notes of a Poet*.

Above right: cover of the Constructivist anthology *State Plan for Literature*, featuring Agapov, Aksenov, Zelinsky, Inber, Selvinsky, and Tumanny.

Left: caricature (1922) of Meyerhold's "biomechanics" and *The Magnanimous Cuckhold*.





A. Ekster, designs of Constructivist work clothing, from *Atelier*, 1923

ПОД РЕДАКЦИЕЙ ИЛЛИНСКОГО И ИЛЬИ ЗВЕНБУРГА

СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

GEGENSTAND

# ВЕЩЬ

ОБЪЕКТ

№ 3

МАИ

Искусство и общественность. Точка зрения Илья Звенебурга. Визуальная культура. Проблемы искусства и дизайна. Живопись. Скульптура. Архитектура. Музыка. Литература. Театр. Кино. Фотография. Искусство и жизнь. Искусство и техника. Искусство и наука. Искусство и философия. Искусство и религия. Искусство и политика. Искусство и экономика. Искусство и социология. Искусство и психология. Искусство и медицина. Искусство и педагогика. Искусство и спорт. Искусство и туризм. Искусство и экология. Искусство и космос. Искусство и будущее.

POUR LE SOUS LA DIRECTION DE EL LISSITZKY ET ELIE ZWENBURG

33 1/2 KUNSTSTRAÙE BERLIN W 100 12

## 1 ИСКУССТВО И ОБЩЕСТВЕННОСТЬ



ОБРАБАТЫВАТЬ МАШИНУ ВСЕ РАВНО  
ПРЕДСТАВИТЬ  
ОБЪЕКТ НЕ ДОЛЖЕТ БЫТЬ РАДУМНЫМ  
ИДЕЯМ СВОЕГО ТЕЛА  
МАШИНА УРОК ЯСНОСТИ И ЭКОНОМИИ

ТЕХНИЧЕСКАЯ ВЕЩЬ  
ЭКОНОМИЯ

СУПРЕМАТИЧЕСКАЯ ВЕЩЬ

El Lissitzky, page in *Thing, (Object)* No. 3, 1922. Berlin.

# НОВЫЙ ЛЕФ

ЖУРНАЛ  
левого фронта  
искусств

ПОД РЕДАКЦИЕЙ  
В. В. МАЯКОВСКОГО

№ 1  
МОСКВА  
1927

ГОСИЗДАТ



Cover of the first issue of *Novyi Lef (New Lef)*, 1927. Rodchenko photographic design.

Poster for the debate "Lef ili Blef?" (Lef or Barf?) on March 23, 1927

БОЛЬШАЯ АУДИТОРИЯ  
ПОЛИТЕХНИЧЕСКОГО  
МУЗЕЯ  
Лубянский проезд 3/4  
СРЕДА

23

марта

Начало в 8 час. веч.

ДИСПУТ НА ТЕМУ:

# ЛЕФ ИЛИ БЛЕФ

ПОД ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬСТВОМ **В. М. ФРИЧЕ**

ВСТУПИТЕЛЬНОЕ СЛОВО **В. МАЯКОВСКИЙ**

ОТ ЛЕФА

ВЫСТУПАЮТ

ПРОТИВ

**Н. Асеев**  
**О. Брик**  
**В. Жемчужный**  
**М. Левидов**  
**А. Лавинский**  
**В. Маяковский**  
**Д. Перцов**  
**А. Родченко**  
**В. Степанова**  
**В. Шкловский**

**Л. Авербах**  
**А. Н. Воронский**  
**О. Бескин**  
**И. Гросман-Рощин**  
**В. Ермилов**  
**И. Нусинов**

ПРИГЛАШЕН

**В. П. Полонский**  
и все желающие из аудитории.

**ТЕЗИСЫ.** Что такое Леф? Что необходимо чтобы называться Лефистом? Где теория Лефа? Где практика Лефа? С кем Вы? „Блеф“ его пригорни и ручки. Можно ли разводить людей для плача? Лев Толстой и Леф Леф Толстой и Блеф. Александр Пушкин, как редактор. Будущее по Эдгару По. Куда идет мелефовская литература и что в нее заворачивают? Леф и инно. Формальный метод и марксизм. Значение гематитки сейчас

**ВЕЧЕР** иллюстрируется новыми стихами **ЛЕФ'ОВ**

Начало в 8 час. вечера.

ВЕСЬ ЧИСТЫЙ СБОР ПОСТУПИТ В ФОНД НУЖДАЮЩЕГОСЯ СТУДЕНЧЕСТВА I М. Г. У.

Билеты продаются ежедневно в кассе Музея от 12 - 6 час (вход с Китайского проезда, подезд № 1) в Петровской кассе (Петрова, 5 без надбавки) и во всех kiosках МХ

Кис I М. Г. У.



Rodchenko montage intended for the first edition of Mayakovsky's *About This*, but not included. First published in the Ardis facsimile edition (1973).



Mayakovsky in Mexico, 1925





Mayakovsky standing by the East River, New York City, 1925.







135713

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Ar2

Ardis anthology of Russian futurism

~~SEP 5 1981~~

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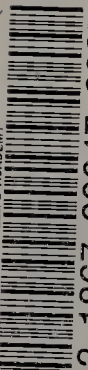
OCT 6 - 1981

OCT 25 1981

AR 12 '82

FEB 23 '87

VR 4 '91



ments by Osip Brik, Boris Eikhenbaum, Mayakovsky, Meyerhold, and Zamyatin.

Up-to-date critical articles on the period of Futurism (covering both literature and painting) are also included; Khlebnikov, Malevich, Pavel Filonov, Shershenevich and others are the subjects of these essays by American specialists.

Works included range from the first complete translation of Mayakovsky's long poem "Man," and new translations of some of Pasternak's most important lyrics to Meyerhold's observations on the modern theater, and prose and poetry by Russia's greatest eccentric genius, Velimir Khlebnikov.

Other art and literature of the Revolutionary period is examined in an important essay on the Proletarian poets, and Evgeny Zamyatin—best known for his anti-utopian novel *WE*—gives his summary and critique of Futurism, from the safety of emigration to the West after he was drummed out of Soviet literature.

An extensive essay on Futurism in the Soviet republic of Georgia is the first significant study of this subject in English.

The anthology is illustrated with many rare photographs of people, places, books, and manuscripts.

ELLENDIA and CARL PROFFER are editors of "Russian Literature Triquarterly."

Cover design by Alix Melbourne  
ISBN 0-88233-469-7

## ON RUSSIAN FUTURISM AND FUTURISTS

"Moscow, at least, was shaken by Mayakovsky. He was a formidable spectacle. Over six feet tall and built like a boxer, he lowered over everyone like a storm cloud. . . . In manner, he appeared alternately morose and exuberant, taciturn and witty, cruel and supremely gentle. But whatever his posture, his genius was unmistakable—a goad to some and an insult to others."

PATRICIA BLAKE

"Khlebnikov is a citizen of all history, of the whole system of language and poetry."

OSIP MANDELSTAM

"Of course, the poetic achievements of Khlebnikov, Mayakovsky, and Pasternak are monumental, Futurism or no Futurism."

VLADIMIR MARKOV

"Pasternak is neither a fabricator nor a magician, but the founder of a new mode, a new system of Russian poetry."

OSIP MANDELSTAM

"Mayakovsky, by contrast, is the poet of the colossal. In his world, the smallest speck of dust becomes Mount Ararat. His poetry operates on a gargantuan scale beyond the imagination of our previous poets."

YURY TYNYANOV

"During a half century of writing there were many changes and reconstructions in Pasternak's approach and style. But he remained true throughout his life to certain ideas, principles, and beliefs, which guided him in his work. One such deep conviction was that true art is always greater than itself, for it witnesses to the significance and greatness of life, and the immeasurable value of human existence."

ANDREI SINYAVSKY

"Guro's two books 'The Hurdy-Gurdy' and 'The Little Camels of the Sky' (1912), are a wonderland of delicate and unexpected expression of the thinnest tissue of experience. They will certainly be 'discovered' someday, and their author will be restored to the place to which she is entitled."

D. S. MIRSKY

"The one literary group whose members as a whole welcomed and supported the Bolshevik revolution were the Moscow Futurists, who proclaimed their readiness to celebrate it in raucous numbers. The result of this was an adventitious and short-lived alliance between Futurism and Bolshevism. The Futurists, who were installed as editors of the official journal of the Commissariat of Education . . . became the semiofficial leaders of artistic and literary life."

E. J. BROWN, "Russian Literature since the Revolution"