

## Space, Time and Things Made "Strange": Andrei Belyi, Pavel Filonov, and Theory of Forms

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### *I. Theoretical Considerations*

The critical interest in the intermingling of forms—visual, verbal, and musical—in Russian culture during the first three decades of the twentieth century has been steadily growing through the last two years. Works like Gerald Janecek's groundbreaking examination of visual experimentation in written texts from Belyi through Maiakovskii, *The Language of Russian Literature* (1984), and Juliette Stapanian's wide-ranging book on *Maiakovskii's Cubo-Futurist Vision* (1986) established important precedents for a relatively new mode of critical inquiry. These studies, and others like them, allowed later critics to begin making interconnections in the tangled web of schismatic *-isms* used to demarcate various schools of artistic thought in these turbulent thirty years. Janecek's *Zaum: The Transrational Poetry of Russian Futurism* (1996) is one of the foremost recent examples of such endeavor, combining extensive study of the "zaumniks" with parallel discussion of the concomitant influence on, and by, painters like Kazimir Malevich. When coupled with the continuing development of semiotics and the study of "signs" and "markers" in both literary criticism and linguistics, such an approach, which likely would have been too "interdisciplinary" for many earlier critics, has led to a wealth of works that shed new light on the boldly experimental art of the "Silver Age" and the early Soviet period.

Since the early 1970s, John E. Bowlt has been perhaps the most voluminous author in this field, publishing on almost all aspects of Russian Modernist art. His publications range from collections of Formalist criticism and examinations of stage design in the Russian avant-garde theatre to broad surveys of avant-garde painting and monographs on individual artists. Most importantly, his body of work examines the art and artists of the early twentieth century across boundaries of genre and even form, an approach that is reflective of the thinking of many of the leading Symbolist, Futurist, and Formalist, etc., themselves. Often, the figures spearheading the formation of these nascent theoretical vanguards were also highly skilled practitioners of what they preached. Such was the case with the poet/novelist Andrei Belyi and the painter Pavel Filonov, both influential figures

through their prodigious bodies of creative work and their voluminous and innovative (if not always consistent) writing on the theory of art.

Building on the critical model established by Janecek, Bowlt and others, this article examines similarities in the theoretical and non-theoretical works of Filonov and Belyi. In Belyi's case, it focuses on two novels, *The Dramatic Symphony* (*Драматическая симфония*, 1904) and his masterpiece *Petersburg* (*Петербург*, 1916; revised 1922, 1928), as well as his essays from the 1900s and 1910s on literary and artistic theory, most notably "The Forms of Art" ("Формы искусства," 1902), "The Principle of Form in Aesthetics" ("Принцип формы в эстетике," 1906), and "The Future of Art" ("Будущее искусства," 1907). While analyzing selected paintings from throughout Filonov's career, my use of his theoretical writings limits itself to several of his essays from the 1910s and 20s, chiefly "Made Paintings" ("Сделанные картины," 1914), "The Basic Tenets of Analytical Art" ("Основные положения аналитического искусства" 1923) and the "Declaration of 'Universal Flowering'" ("Декларация мирового расцвета" 1923). The reason for this temporal limitation stems mainly from the relative freedom of expression that Filonov enjoyed during these years. This freedom was essentially curbed by the strong reaction against the avant-garde in the late 1920s, as well as the survivalist necessity for measured speech brought on by Stalin's repressive influence on the arts beginning in the 1930s. Filonov's critical works (and perhaps also his painting) are of questionable integrity during this later period. While this is certainly a pragmatically expedient condition, it also makes his later writing considerably less reliable as a true indicator of his beliefs concerning the nature of art. In order to establish a wider critical context for the works of Belyi and Filonov, my comparative analysis also invokes Viktor Shklovskii's theories about the use of language and the project of rejuvenating Russian literature.

The first decade of the twentieth century was remarkably productive for the young Andrei Belyi, who in that span published four "symphonies" (short novels that attempted to transfer musical technique to literature), dozens of short stories, several books of poetry, over a hundred critical articles, and a novel, *The Silver Dove* (*Серебряный голубь*). Both Vladimir Alexandrov and Konstantin Mochul'skii have thoroughly detailed his fascination and his (partial or complete) disillusionment with particular writers and schools of thought during this period, from philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer and Vladimir Solov'ev to such Russian Symbolists as Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Aleksandr Blok. Furthermore, Andrea Zink's recent *Andrej Belyjs Rezeption der Philosophie Kants, Nietzsches und der Neukantianer* (1998) is perhaps the most thorough examination of the influence of German philosophy on Belyi's writing. Belyi's earliest writings

especially bear the marks of a running dialogue with Schopenhauer's theories on the hierarchy of artistic forms and the possibilities for synthesis between forms. As Roger Keys writes:

It was Schopenhauer's contention that through music we gain access to the deepest forces underlying the universe: we are able to contemplate the noumenal Will itself. This metaphysical assertion lies at the basis of [his] hierarchical classification of the arts, in which music is supreme. For music, unlike poetry, painting, sculpture, and architecture, is "quite independent of the phenomenal world." (111)

For Schopenhauer the hierarchy of art consisted of static and discrete forms that resisted profitable combination. Keys writes of Schopenhauer: "[H]is objections to opera [as a synthetic art-form], for example, were based mainly on the empirical premise that the individual's aesthetic awareness should not be blunted through the mechanical accumulation of different kinds of sense impression" (113).

A glance at Belyi's theoretical writing on the subject quickly reveals significant connections with Schopenhauer's views. For example, in "The Forms of Art" (1902) Belyi writes: "[E]very form of art is determined by the degree to which the spirit of music is revealed in it.... If we place the fine arts in their order of perfection we arrive at the following five principal forms: architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, music" (165-66). Four years later, in "The Principle of Form in Aesthetics" (1906), Belyi still refers to the same range of artistic forms, but now ranks them according to their relation to temporal or spatial aspects of reality: "Time is the essential formal element of music, elevating the meaning of rhythm to a position of primacy. Poetry unites the formal conditions of both temporal and spatial forms of art by means of the word. The word represents in a mediated fashion. This is the weakness of poetry" (207). Although Belyi denies the notion that the forms are necessarily separate, he preserves the essential hierarchy that Schopenhauer laid out. Belyi's novelistic "symphonies," though, served as a clear practical experiment at using musical forms to elevate and reinvigorate poetry,<sup>1</sup> a technique he would refine and adapt for use in his later works. Furthermore, Viktor Shklovskii and Filonov would follow Belyi (if not explicitly mentioning him by name) down this multi-formal path in their own innovative conceptions of what art can and, perhaps, should be.

Belyi's early work prefigures many of the theories of art subsequently espoused by other Symbolists, as well as members of the Futurist and Formalist movements.<sup>2</sup> In his introduction to *Russian Formalism: A*

*Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation*, John E. Bowlt outlines his views on the genealogy of these movements:

It is legitimate that the Symbolists be mentioned in any examination of Russian Formalism since it was they, and not the Futurists, who were the essential innovators in Modernist art and criticism. Although the Futurist poets...expanded the potentials of language and drew attention to specific poetical and linguistic devices...it was such eminent Symbolist literati as Bely and Valerii Bryusov who, in artistic and critical achievement, anticipated the theoretical principles of the Formalists as such.

Bowlt follows this debatable devaluation of the Futurists' work with the less problematic assertion that "the Symbolists were firstly creators and secondly critics, whereas the Formalists were critics above all" (3). Although I disagree with Bowlt's comparatively dim view of the value of "expand[ing] the potentials of language and dr[awing] attention to specific poetical and literary devices"—largely because he limits his discussion of Futurist contribution to *verbal* innovations—I subscribe to his categorization of the Symbolists both as chiefly creative writers and as the *primary* (if not necessarily, essential) innovators in Russian Modernism. Belyi's creative works serve as a *fait accompli* demonstration of the principles that many of the Formalists, especially Shklovskii, would later advance, just as Lev Tolstoi's work was perhaps the prime model for Shklovskii's concept of "making strange" (*остранение*). The works arising from various Symbolist and Futurist groups (such as *Gilea*, *Opoiiaz*, or *Soiuz molodezhi*) similarly contain echoes of a common *Zeitgeist* that may be traced back to writers like Belyi and anticipate the variegated branches of Russian Modernist art.

Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh began writing poetry in their newly minted "trans-sense language" (*zaum* or *zaumnyi iazyk*)<sup>3</sup> as early as 1911, and the Cubo-Futurist manifesto "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" ("Пощечина общественному вкусу") followed soon after, in 1913. Many of the groups that sprang forth from this period included artists like Vladimir Mayakovskii, who worked in several different media simultaneously.<sup>4</sup> For example, Kruchenykh and Mikhail Larionov produced several volumes of Futurist poetry and prose (such as 1913's *Pomade* [*Помада*]) that were copiously illustrated with drawings and lithographs. The broadly-defined and often quarrelsome amalgamation of the Russian avant-garde also served to critically and physically intermingle artists who are primarily known for their work in visual media—e.g. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Vasiliï Kandinskii, El Lisitskii and Kazimir Malevich—with artists who were pri-

marily writers, such as Elena Guro, Kruchenykh, and Khlebnikov. Furthermore, critics like Shklovskii, Boris Eikhenbaum, Iurii Tynianov and Roman Jakobson were in direct association with many of these groups, as well, adding a very academic and theoretical coloration to the creative work produced. The multi-media nature of much of the work created by the Russian avant-garde from 1910 to 1930 is largely symptomatic of the cross-pollination of ideas among these individuals with different forms of artistic training. However, the ripe atmosphere for such experimentation stems from the ideas of artists like Belyi, who, as early as the turn of the century, sought to integrate and elevate art forms that they perceived to be stagnant. As Janecek notes in his introduction to *Zaum*, Belyi's article "The Magic of Words" ("Магия слов," 1909) was extremely important to the development of sound-sense poetry because it asserts that "the word is a theurgical conjuring mechanism based on sound" (8).

Another of Belyi's important contributions to the development of Russian Modernism is his 1907 article "The Art of the Future," in which he tackles the question of what "path" (путь) art must take in order to develop in a positive manner. He states: "The existing art forms are rushing headlong towards disintegration. The degree of differentiation among them is infinite, something to which the development of technical skill has contributed greatly. The notion of technical progress is increasingly replacing the notion of the living meaning of art" (198). He sees a solution that involves both his previously cited belief in the primacy of music among art forms, as well as the necessity of finding new forms. Firstly, he writes:

[I]f the art of the future were to construct its forms by imitating pure music, then it would bear the character of Buddhism. Contemplation through art is a means: it is a means for catching the summons to vital creation. In art subsumed by music, contemplation would become an end in itself: it would transform the contemplator into an impersonal spectator of his own experiences. The art of the future, having become immersed in music, would permanently arrest the development of all the arts. (198-99)

Later, he posits that "[i]f it is possible to build a new temple on the ruins of the old one that has apparently collapsed, we may not erect the new temple on the atomized forms in which today's forms were molded. The old forms must be discarded. In this way we divert the issue of the purposes of art from an examination of the products of creation to the processes of creation themselves" (200-201). Belyi's art of the future clearly relies on the merger of

musical forms with "lower" forms, but in a manner that does not simply imitate or attempt to revive already existent forms.

Shklovskii's 1914 essay, "The Resurrection of the Word," contains some of his earliest writing on the rejuvenation of literature, much of it conversant with Belyi's ideas. The essay opens with a clear statement of Shklovskii's viewpoint: "The most ancient poetic creation of man was the creation of words. Now words are dead, and language is like a graveyard, but an image was once alive in the newly-born word" (41). He goes on to state that the problem with contemporary usage of words is that "they have become familiar, and their *internal* (image) and *external* (sound) forms have ceased to be sensed. We do not sense the familiar, we do not see it but *recognize* it" (41-42, emphasis added). He makes a definitional distinction between poetry and prose as follows: "'artistic' perception is perception in which form is sensed (perhaps not only form, but form as an essential part)... Therefore, the word, as it loses 'form' completes the irrevocable journey from poetry to prose" (42). For Shklovskii, the artistry and forms of the word are inseparable, and as the forms are lost to apprehension, so too is the poetry possible in them. He makes an explicit qualitative distinction between "poetry" (поэзия) and "prose" (проза) that Belyi does not<sup>5</sup> in his identification of *poeziiia* as one of the five major art forms, but both writers envision an explicit association with poetry as the use of language for the purposes of artistic, rather than simply communicative, expression.

Importantly, Shklovskii makes some claims about both the past and future of literature that facilitate application of his theories to those works of Belyi that precede the publication of this particular article. He writes:

The writers of past times wrote too smoothly, too sweetly... The creation of a new, "tight" (*тугой*) language is necessary, directed at seeing, and not at recognition. And this necessity is unconsciously felt by many people.

The paths of the new art have only been indicated. It is not theoreticians, but artists who will travel those paths ahead of all others... at any rate the Futurist poets are on the right path: they have correctly evaluated the old forms.

... The realization of new creative devices, which were also met with in poets of the past—for example in the Symbolists—but just by accident—is by itself a great undertaking. And it has been accomplished by the Futurists. (47)

Shklovskii surely overreaches in claiming that the Symbolists used the innovations he discusses "just by accident." Blok, Belyi and others among the

Symbolists were rigorous theoreticians as well as practitioners of the written arts, as the above-cited excerpts from Belyi's work clearly demonstrate. Shklovskii's revolutionary zeal notwithstanding, the points he makes about the necessity of "seeing" through language are, again, remarkably similar to Belyi's transcendental musings on the power of art to induce contemplation. For both writers, the renewal of language is the process by which art can fulfill its purpose of causing active perception and cognition in those who partake of it. Both Shklovskii and Belyi deny the value of art that simply allows the viewer to passively recognize something from past experience and apply reason to derive meaning. The *zaumnyi* aspect of their theories is what makes them demonstrably similar.

Finally, Filonov's theoretical writing also shows evidence of wanting to create art that is perhaps difficult to comprehend, but is ultimately restorative by dint of that very characteristic. He sets himself apart from the mainstream in Russian art early in his career, writing in the manifesto "Made Paintings" that "[w]e...stand in the center of the global life of art, in the center of a tiny but avant-garde handful of persistent workers, the conquerors of drawing and painting" (135). He was close to Maiakovskii, collaborating with him on several projects, and also illustrated several Futurist works during the early 1910s. He formulated theories about analytical art, which he called "Universal Flowering" (Мировой расцвет). His theory described some of the principal tenets of this art as follows:

1) Painting is the artist's universal language accessible to all. This language is incorporated into the viewer's consciousness in an integral deduction that sometimes cannot be translated into words.

[...]

7) Creativity, i.e. madeness (сделанность), whatever is depicted in the painting, is, above all, the reflection and record (via material) of a struggle—a struggle for the development of a higher intellectual plane in man, for the existence and [effect] of this higher psychological art on the viewer. ("The Basic Tenets..." 145)

Filonov's conception of artistic language as potentially non-verbal links it with the transcendent knowledge postulated by Belyi and Shklovskii. Both the "higher intellectual" plane and the supra-linguistic "integral deduction" that Filonov invokes resemble the more expansive, trans-rational form of mental stimulation that Belyi and Shklovskii argue should be a necessary component of new art.

Filonov also discusses the inseparability of form and content, a subject that both Belyi and Shklovskii wrote about at length. He writes:

- 1) In my art the concept of form is conditioned by the concept of content.
- 2) The development of the form being made and its highest artistic significance are conditioned by the analytical development of this concept of content.
- 3) Form is the realization of content through material.
- 4) The content of whatever the artists is operating with in art is, first and foremost, the active force of the artist's intellect....
- 5) Content is form, i.e. the significance of form, whereas form, i.e. its significance, is content, i.e. the force in the painting that affects the viewer.
- 6) In my perception the form of art is inseparable from content in a painting.... In this sense there is no such thing as pure form. But content might be expressed in one or another version. (146)

This passage echoes much of the copious body of writing on the topic produced by Belyi and Shklovskii. Tzvetan Todorov in "Some Approaches to Russian Formalism" usefully summarizes the contrast between Symbolist and Formalist approaches to the concepts of "form" and "content" as follows:

In short, one can say that the Symbolists tended to divide the literary product into form (i.e. sound), which was vital, and content (i.e. ideas), which was external to art.

The Formalist approach was completely opposed to this aesthetic appreciation of "pure form". They no longer saw form as opposed to some other internal element of a work of art (normally its content) and began to conceive it as the totality of the work's various components. (10)

If one accepts Todorov's working definitions (which I do, with only minor reservations), Filonov's theories have more in common with the Formalists' than with the Symbolists', but other aspects of his theory and his work link him more clearly with Belyi.

Filonov examines the ways in which color is the primary determinant of form in painting, a theory that contains strong correspondences with Belyi's early theoretical work. In "The Forms of Art" Belyi maintains that the dominance of color is a means for expression in painting: "[O]f the spatial forms of art, painting is the most perfect form. ... [W]ith the aid of a small quantity of colors we attain the fullest depiction on canvas not only of a single image or group of images, but of whole events. Architecture and sculpture

are unable to depict large spaces" (170). In "The Principle of Form in Aesthetics," he explicitly expands on this theme: "Painting involves the abstraction of three-dimensional representation: it is the fate of painting to be restricted to the plane surface. But painting gains a certain richness of interpretation from this abstraction. Because of this abstraction, it elevates color to a position of primacy" (207). Filonov's view of the role of color in painting resonates with Belyi's. To wit:

7) You should operate with color while operating with form simultaneously, so that the effect of color never ceases to be the effect of form, i.e. so that, professionally, the entire work process can be reduced to the action of form, i.e. the effect of content.

[...]

11) A concept of form dictates a concept of color in a work, its degree of force and intensity of color. ("Basic Tenets..." 146)

Belyi and Filonov also agree on the desirable effect of "rhythm" on painting. Filonov states: "Rhythm is the illusory measuredness of dynamics in the consistency, form and color of the object realized in the painting" (148). Likewise, Belyi sees rhythm as the primary expression of temporality in music, and claims that this "is why music, which is a temporal form, is able to exert such an influence on the spatial forms. Music is...the latent energy of creation" (208). Although their conceptions of the nature of form and content do not overlap, Belyi and Filonov share several basic beliefs about the role of compositional elements in art.

A number of striking parallels exist between modern semiotics and the ideas that Belyi and Filonov posited about form and content more than seventy years ago. These similarities testify not only to the originality of the two avant-gardists, but also to their lasting influence on the understanding of how meaning is created and transmitted in various forms of art. For example, Jiří Veltruský's article "Comparative Semiotics" (1981) treats many of the issues addressed by Belyi and Filonov. In his discussion of why the nineteenth-century French humorist Alphonse Allais was successful in making a joke out of an entirely black canvas entitled *Negroes Fighting in a Cellar at Night*, Veltruský writes: "Allais' joke was of course based on the fact that in the pictorial sign the thematic meanings tend to predominate heavily over the rather indeterminate and diffuse meanings conveyed by the various material components...Injected into the pictorial sign from the outside, by the name it is given, they can make up for its internal diversification" (117). Veltruský also compares the semiotics of verbal art and music as follows:

Verbal art does not differ as radically from music as language per se. A literary work cannot undo the combination of phonemes into morphemes, words, etc., but its segmentation can also take place in other tiers and follow a different pattern in each. The autonomy of words can be contradicted by sound patterns, the cohesion of sentences by versification, the boundaries of sentences by the continuous undulation of intonation, the syntactic links by correspondences and confrontations between grammatical forms, the lexical meanings by grammatical meanings, and so on. (120)

Almost all of the linguistic "segmentation[s]" in the second passage cited from Veltruský are present to some degree in Belyi's work, and Filonov's painting often relies heavily on the interplay between thematic meanings provided by "outside" signs (such as associations with colors or shapes) and the "indeterminate and diffuse meanings conveyed by the various material components" of his abstract depictions. The blending of various semiotic strata described by Veltruský is essentially the same phenomenon that Schopenhauer, Belyi, and Filonov describe in their theories about the amalgamation of "forms."

## II. Inscriptions

All of the theories outlined above provide useful points of entry into Belyi's novels *The Dramatic Symphony* and *Petersburg*, especially with an eye toward a comparison with paintings by Filonov. Such an analysis shows that both Belyi and Filonov use technical elements (or at least the best simulation of those technical elements possible) that are not intrinsic to the forms in which they are working as part of an attempt to create examples of the new art expressed in their theoretical works.

Roger Keys rightly identifies the *Dramatic* (or *Second*) *Symphony* as the "most fictional" (143) of the four literary symphonies by Belyi. The *Northern Symphony* (completed in 1900, first published in 1903) and *The Return* (1905)<sup>6</sup> are regularly assessed in terms of their "superficial" novelty (Elsworth, "Introduction," 6) and "relatively firm framework of meaning" (Keys 145). Furthermore, critics usually fault the bewilderingly innovative *Goblet of Blizzards* (1908) as an overreaching<sup>7</sup> and "monstrous aberration, a true *ne plus ultra* based on a fundamental misapprehension of the semantic possibilities of verbal art" (Elsworth, "Introduction," 6) or deem it "the work in which Belyi took the structural analogy between music and literature to its furthest limit" (Keys 136). Keys characterizes the form of *The Dramatic Symphony* as a "mezhdoumok composed of poetic and prosaic ele-

ments," a mixture that "immediately places us [the readers] on our guard and makes us much more attentive to the status of what we are reading as a literary artifact." I would also add that *The Dramatic Symphony* contains artistic elements derived from visual or aural artistic techniques (i.e., painting and music), in addition to the "poetic and prosaic" ones that Keys isolates. Keys views this formal complexity as a hindrance to Belyi's overriding "intention to communicate universal...truths in his fiction" (144), but this reading largely ignores (or at least overly de-emphasizes) Belyi's statements about the intermingling of forms of art. While none of the symphonies apparently achieved a full synthesis of literary and musical forms to Belyi's satisfaction, *The Dramatic Symphony* skillfully demonstrates how certain elements of musical theory may be incorporated to create a form of verbal expression markedly separate from novelistic norms.

Among the most important of these is the use of leitmotifs in a manner that resembles the musical concept of variations. Belyi himself, in the foreword to the novel, referred to the substantial number of recurrent images as "muzikal'nye frazy" (*Dramaticheskaiia* 89), and closer examination of some of them reveals their musicality. Within the first four paragraphs, Belyi uses the phrase "tedium" (скуки) five times to create the setting of the city that lies beneath a variously colored "vault" (свод). The opening paragraph alone is a continuous whirl of primarily visual images, especially colors, many of which are examples of the musical phrases that will be repeated verbatim, or in slightly altered form, later in the novel:

1. It was a stuffy time of toil. The glitter of the road was blinding.
2. The coachmen made a racket as they turned their dark blue backs to the hot sun.
3. The janitors were raising columns of dust, undisturbed by the grimaces of the passersby, their brown-dusted faces cackling.
4. *Raznochintsy* and suspect petty bourgeois exhausted from the heat were running along the sidewalks.
5. Everyone was pale, and above everyone hung the pale blue vault of the sky, now grayish-blue, now black, full of musical tedium, eternal tedium, with the sun-eye at its center.
6. Torrents of metallic burning heat streamed from there.
7. All sorts of people were running God knows where and why, afraid to look truth in the eye.

- [1. Стояла душная страда. Мостовая ослепительно сверкала.
2. Трещали извозчики, подставляя жаркому солнцу истертые, синие спины.

3. Дворники поднимали прах столбом, не смущаясь гримасами прохожих, гогоча коричневого-пыльными лицами.

4. На тротуарах бежали истощенные жаром разночинцы и подозрительные мещане.

5. Все были бледны, и надо всеми нависал свод голубой, серо-синий, то черный, полный музыкальной скуки, вечной скуки, с солнцем-глазом посреди.

6. Оттуда лились потоки металлической раскаленности.

7. Всякий бежал неизвестно куда и зачем, боясь смотреть в глаза правде.] (90)

The "light-blue vault of the sky," the sun, the eye, and tedium all commingle in various combinations in the opening pages, much in the manner of the harmonious interplay of the various individual parts of instruments in an orchestra. Literally dozens of lines from the opening pages are repeated, either verbatim or in modified (yet recognizably similar) form throughout the remainder of the novel. Additional "phrases" introduced throughout the work similarly become a part of the larger verbal harmony.

Furthermore, individual characters in the work are more commonly referred to by somewhat abstract epithets rather than their given names. For example, we do not learn the name of the novel's protagonist, Sergei Musatov, until nearly two-thirds through the book. Until then, he is identified by colorful metonyms, such as "the golden-bearded ascetic" (золотобородый аскет—see below for the symbolic importance of the color in this identification). Variants of basic, identifiable epithets, many of which also rely on color association or metonymical links with a character trait or profession identify other personae. The love interest of the opening section, "the fairy tale" (сказка), is labeled "the fairy-tale nymph" (сказочная нимфа) or "the blue-eyed nymph" (синеглазая нимфа). She is romantically pursued by a "democrat" (демократ), also identified as a "dreamer" (мечтатель) or "dreamy democrat" (мечтательный демократ), while her husband, in turn, is described as "a good-natured sea-centaur" (добрый морской кентавр) or simply "the centaur" (кентавр). The identification of characters in this indirectly symbolic manner (yet precise in its regularity—one can readily identify individual characters by their epithets) anticipates the identification of individuals with specific musical instruments that would later be used in Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, which debuted in 1936.<sup>8</sup> The repeated use of slightly altered phrases as substitutes for names parallels the idea of variations in musical composition, such as in J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* cycle, which presents 32 different versions of the same sequence of 32 notes. While readily comparable to musical com-

position, this is by no means exclusively a musical technique, nor is it unique to Belyi, except perhaps in the pervasiveness of its use in his work. However, Belyi's unusual signifying structure makes the recognition of the characters in the novel more difficult than the simple "seeing" of name reference.

Konstantin Mochul'skii, in his unfinished biography of Belyi, first published in 1955, addresses the novelty of the effect on the reader created by Belyi's construction of *The Dramatic Symphony*. He writes:

His "phrases" pass through an entire spectrum of "moods" from poetic melancholy and mystical palpitations through revulsion, boredom, and horror—to blasphemy and cynicism. Thoughts, feelings, and moods swirl in a vortex. One feels as though one's standing in the center of a circle and along that circle a multicolored carousel is racing along with a din and clang. . . . By having splintered the world into atoms and released it, like a bolt, to revolve along the circle, the poet formally has shown the senselessness of time's flow. *The content corresponds to the form.*

[Его "фразы" пробегают всю скалу "настроений," от поэтической грусти и мистического трепета через отвращение, скуку, ужас, — до кощунства и цинизма. Мысли, чувства, настроения кружатся в водовороте. Кажется, что мы стоим в центре круга, а по кругу с грохотом и звоном мчится перстрая карусель. . . . Раздробив мир на атомы и пустив его, как болчок, вращаться по кругу, поэт формально показал бессмыслицу потока времени. *Форме соответствует содержание.*] (32 emphasis added)

Mochul'skii's assertion that "content corresponds to form" in this work recalls Filonov's conception of form as "the realization of content through material." In this case, Belyi's material is the "vortex" of language that "splinters[s] the world into atoms" by working on a number of different semantic levels (rhythmic, color symbolism, typographic., etc.—cf. Janecek "Rhythm" 90; Burkhart; Janecek *Look...* 26) that he unleashes in constructing the symphony. Also, Mochul'skii's description of the "world splintered into atoms" by Belyi's technique could just as well be applied to Filonov's heavily fragmented painting style.

Belyi refines this technique in *Petersburg*, in which names of people and things become even more confused and intermingled. For example, throughout the opening section of the book, the narrator makes mention of "the stranger" (незнакомец), or "the mysterious stranger" (таинственный

незнакомец), who is positively identified as Dudkin only later in the novel. Helena Hartman-Flyer also notes that "scattered words used with a variety of meanings are eventually crystallized into one final phrase: *sardinnitsa uzhasnogo soderzhaniiia*, the sardine can which explodes at the end of the last chapter" (122). Keys notes that Belyi's intentional narrative problematization of images and characters creates the possibility that all are "phantasms of the implied, or perhaps even of the biographical, author's own mind" (228). This view, if true, reduces characters from "people" to mere formal elements of storytelling. Similarly, the Ableukhovs are strongly associated with colored objects that often are the sole linguistic markers (in place of names) that identify them in a particular scene. For example, "the red domino" (красный домино) refers to Nikolai Apollonovich specifically when he is wearing it, but also becomes something of an independent entity when rumors begin to fly around Petersburg. Likewise, the old senator Apollon Apollonovich often becomes verbally inseparable from his black carriage, with its unicorn coat-of-arms, or the "well-appointed yellow house" (роскошный желтый дом)<sup>9</sup> in which he lives. In fact, the narrator's first detailed description of the senator consists almost exclusively of color-oriented particulars:

Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov had distinguished himself in acts of valor; more than one star had fallen on his chest, embroidered in *gold*: the Stanislav and Anna star, and even: even the *White Eagle*.

The ribbon he wore was a *dark blue* ribbon.

And recently from a *red* lacquer box there had begun to shine on the dwelling of patriotic sentiments the rays of *diamond* signs, that is, the sign of an order: of an Aleksandr Nevskii.

[Аполлон Аполлонович Аبلеухов отличался поступками доблести; не одна упала звезда на его *золотом* расшитую грудь: звезда Станислава и Анны, и даже: даже *Белый Орел*.

Лента, носимая им, была *синяя* лента.

А недавно из лаковой *красной* коробочки на обиталище патриотических чувств воссияли лучи *бриллиантовых* знаков, то—есть орденский знак: Александра Невского.] (5, emphases added)

Nearly every non-dialogue paragraph of the novel employs color terms, whether to create setting or mood, to identify characters or to form associations between characters or concepts. Such a frame of reference, simultaneously visual and verbal (since color-words themselves are not colors), pro-

vides Belyi with a means to "attain the fullest depiction...of a single image or a group of images."

The extensive incorporation of color-words into both *The Dramatic Symphony* and *Petersburg* reflects Belyi's well-developed symbology of colors, a system whose explicit expression dates back to 1903, when he wrote a brief article titled "Sacred Colors" ("Священные цвета"). There he lays bare the metaphysical metaphor that he locates in various colors. Samuel D. Cioran succinctly summarizes Belyi's complex chromo-symbology as follows: white is "the ultimate theosophical color... represent[ing] infinite possibility, the mirror of divine promise and plenitude, the fullness of being," as well as the color that represents Solov'ev's concept of "all-in-oneness" (всеединство); black is "white's alter ego," symbolizing nothingness and the destruction of goodness; gray is the "archetypal color of the specters, gloom, and mist that envelop us and distort our perspective of the genuine world.... [It] is the emblem of urban life...as exemplified in ashes, dust and factory smokestacks"; but red is "the ultimate color of catastrophic revelation" and, significantly, is "capable of assuming real being" (104-105). Later, Cioran mentions the additional importance of gold and azure, the colors that provided the title for Belyi's first volume of poetry:

More than any other colors, gold and azure, together with crimson, served both iconographic and atmospherical functions in the works of Bely.... [They] were painstakingly reserved for evoking the revelatory mystery of the Divine Sophia's presence and for iconographically depicting the rare physical attributes of this symbol of "all-in-oneness" or Godmanhood, with her fathomless azure eyes and golden hair. (109)

Armed with this palate of metaphorical color associations, Belyi begins to compose his earliest works, blending the associations supplied by visual cues together with his ideas about music and his sense of poetry.

Dagmar Burkhart, who has catalogued Belyi's usage of color, comes up with the following statistics: "The most frequently occurring colors in the novel are gray (21%), black (18%) and yellow (10%), followed by red (9.1%), blue (8.9%); in between lies green with 14%. While in *The Silver Dove* red was at the forefront with 29%, Belyi has deviated from the predominance of this color in *Petersburg*; still, it does play an important role here also: it functions as a 'symbol of the Red Terror'" (157, translation mine).<sup>10</sup> Burkhart goes on to claim that the basic colors ("Grundfarben") of gray and black represent the old tsarist order, a point she proves through a lengthy list of instances in which Belyi deploys the colors in tandem with a

person or object representing "old" Petersburg. She also discusses the juxtaposition and blending of black and yellow as part of the tragicomedy of the novel, claiming that this combination makes one "specifically think about the costume of a harlequin, patterned with brightly colored rhombuses" (158, translation mine).<sup>11</sup> Burkhart goes on to construct a color symbology that is largely parallel with that enumerated by Belyi in "Sacred Colors": green is "the color of the city of Petersburg...symbol of the poisonous, the swampy, the calamitous"; white is the color of "the victorious Christ or the angel"; silver is the color of "religious sectarianism...and the mystical"; and blue is "the magical color," which "twilight, smoke and shadow can take on" (159, translation mine).<sup>12</sup> Thus, on one level, *Petersburg* is a patchwork quilt of small parcels of metaphorical association derived from color imagery. Still, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the type Belyi envisions in his early theoretical writing requires more than just complex color imagery, especially given Belyi's overriding preference for music as an artistic form.

Ada Steinberg's *Word and Music in the Novels of Andrey Bely* (1982) treats another aspect of Belyi's work that contributes to its polyformal character. She extensively examines the "orchestration" of various vowel and consonant sounds present throughout Belyi's work. After outlining the historical view of the /u/ sound among the Russian Symbolists, Steinberg discusses its symbolic use in *Petersburg*:

The basic sound in the novel *St. Petersburg* is the unpleasant, coarse /u/, with its extreme persistence and sharp contrast to the gentle sound /i/. Such a correlation lends Belyi's 'u/-score' great tension, embodying the horror, doom and inexorable destruction of the world, the symbol of which is St. Petersburg.

St. Petersburg is a city of slimy mists, a city of 'empty nooks' [пустых закоулков] where the shoulders of pedestrians form an 'oozing sediment' [текущие гущи], where people fix their gaze 'on the bacilli-infested murky waters of the Neva' [в зараженную бактериями мутную невскую воду]. (60)

Steinberg's ten pages of examples of ominously placed /u/ sounds within the novel demonstrate the way in which they function not only as a traditional assonant poetic device, but also as "the sound...on which the musical element of the novel *St. Petersburg* is based, reflecting not only the general atmosphere of the novel but also its characters, their relations with one another and their actions" (55). For Belyi, the sound itself becomes a symbol, a note that carries underlying metaphorical meaning. To varying degrees, this kind of experimentation with the possibilities of transmitting

meaning in ways not traditionally explored by the poet or novelist is present in all of Belyi's fictional and poetic work. It is representative of his overarching desire to bring new means of expression into Russian art.

*Petersburg* consistently points out its own construction through emphasis on constituent parts of its form, whether in terms of colors, sounds or characters. These elements, though, are often elaborately mixed together in the same scene. For example, Nikolai Apollonovich begins to see the bomb with which he is supposed to kill his own father in terms of a specifically named personality, Pepp Peppovich Pepp. The name is derived from the sound of a bouncing ball that Nikolai recalls in a dream from his childhood. Sound-sense, a persona, and multiple associated objects come together in Pepp Peppovich Pepp to form something altogether new, thereby forcing the reader to take a more active role in deciphering the book's narrative. The rhythmic origin of Pepp's "name" also explicitly points out its own temporality, since rhythm relies on motion of time. Temporality was for Belyi the aspect of musical expression that made it superior, so its use here (and in many of the dozens of other instances of sound-sense that occur in the novel) contributes to the overall musicality of the novel. The overall effect of these stylistic devices is something akin to that of pointillism in painting, in that it uses the accretion of small pieces of form (with sounds, syllables, words, phrases and other linguistic building blocks forming the corollaries to texture, color, and shape in pointillist painting) to create a larger, unified work of art.

Much of Filonov's painting, especially his more abstract work, is derived from pointillism in that it uses a collection of smaller formal elements to create a larger work. However, Filonov does not limit himself solely to dots of color as the constituent parts of his paintings. Rather, the formal elements that make up his "dots" also include individual images (faces, buildings, bodies), geometric shapes, areas of texture and body parts. Also, he does not necessarily use the smaller formal parts to create a recognizable whole in the manner of the pointillist Georges Seurat.

The influence of the Cubo-Futurists is perceptible in the fragmentation of bodies and objects so characteristic of Filonov's canvasses, but he innovates beyond Cubist fragmentation by putting the pieces back together into a form that can be identified, albeit usually not through simple, unabstracted recognition. Vera Anikieva asserts that "Filonov could not fail to experience the influence of Cubo-Futurist culture....But the principles of Cubism and Futurism were never supported by him" (57). Apparently, Filonov endorsed few (if any) principles, for, as he wrote in his 1923 "Declaration of Universal Flowering," he "completely reject[s] as unscientific all dogmas in painting from the extreme rightists to the Suprematists and Constructionists,

together with all their ideologies" (167). While Filonov does not admit any theoretical or practical influence by his contemporaries—in his "Declaration" he goes on to savage just about all the major painters of the Russian avant-garde by name—his paintings nonetheless show significant affinities with many of the other schools of art active during this period.<sup>13</sup> His style blends elements of traditional painting with his own theoretical and technical concept of "analytical" art, many of which are at least conversant with, if not derived from, other Modernist schools. Like Belyi, Filonov makes a formal whole out of unusual (or, at least, abnormal) parts, thereby changing both the process of creation and the product.

Several critics have pointed out the influence of folk art, especially that of icon-painting and the *lubok* on Filonov's work (cf. Bowlt, "Pavel Filonov..." 9), and the stylistic connection is certainly important to his painting. Such influence is certainly not uncommon among Russian modernists, as clearly folkloric structures were often central to the poems of Khlebnikov or the paintings of Natal'ia Goncharova. Filonov's painting, though, is no more a simple recasting of folk art themes than is Khlebnikov's adaptation of the story of the Snow Maiden (Снегурочка) in his play *Snezhinochka* (1908), with its linguistic and stylistic fireworks (see Janecek, *Zaum* 143, for a more thorough description of this play). Filonov's work contains some of the technical features that Bowlt identifies in his introduction to *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde* as representatively neo-Primitivist, "inverted perspective, flat rendition of figures, distinct vulgarization of form, outline by color rather than line" (xxvii). However, Filonov also creates his paintings with a scientific and geometric formal complexity that exceeds that generally found in the major neo-Primitivist painters, such as Aleksandr Shevchenko or Goncharova. For example, Filonov's "A Collective Farmer" ("Колхозник" 1931) and "Holy Family" ("Святое семейство" 1914 [Figure 4]) incorporate images of rural life (peasants, animals, simple rustic structures) that may be located between the more traditional (albeit abstract) style of the neo-Primitivists and the scientific, even technological style of the more radical avant-garde, such as the Constructivists.

At first glance, "A Collective Farmer" (Figure 1) is a fairly traditional portrait of a Soviet *kolkhoznik*, complete with a scene (presumably) of a collective farm in the background. Its themes and content are not notably different from a nineteenth-century portrait of a peasant, and even the farmer's clothing does not necessarily identify the painting as a product of the Soviet era. Although not as extremely fragmented as much of Filonov's work from this period ("Narva Gates" ["Нарвские ворота" 1929], Figure 5, or "Formula of Spring" ["Формула весны" 1928-29], Figure 7), the painting



Figure 1. "Collective Farmer" (1920, 97).

breaks up both the foregrounded image of the farmer and the background into smaller pieces of varying color and texture, rather than attempting a smooth blending of color and form, as would be found in a more naturalistic depiction. Not even Marc Chagall, another Russian Modernist with strong neo-Primitivist roots, breaks up his images into smaller parts as thoroughly as does Filonov. The village in the background is comprised of several simple buildings, almost childlike in their lack of perspective and symmetry of windows. This flattened and unnatural perspective, harking back to age-old Russian religious and folk art forms, is a common formal element of Filonov's work, as is the use of buildings as a smaller compositional element (cf. "Rowdies" ["Шкетн" 1925-26], Figure 3, or "Houses" ["Дома" 1920s], Figure 2). Though reminiscent in some ways of an icon, the fragmented, geometrically abstract composition separates this painting from the mainstream of neo-Primitivist painting.

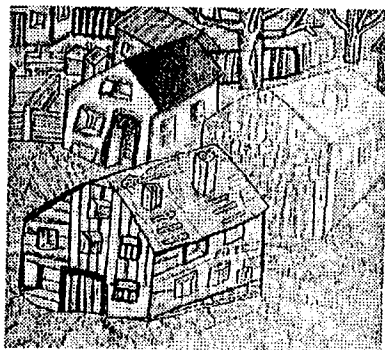


Figure 2. "Houses" (1920, 93).

Figure 3. "Rowdies" (1920, 100).



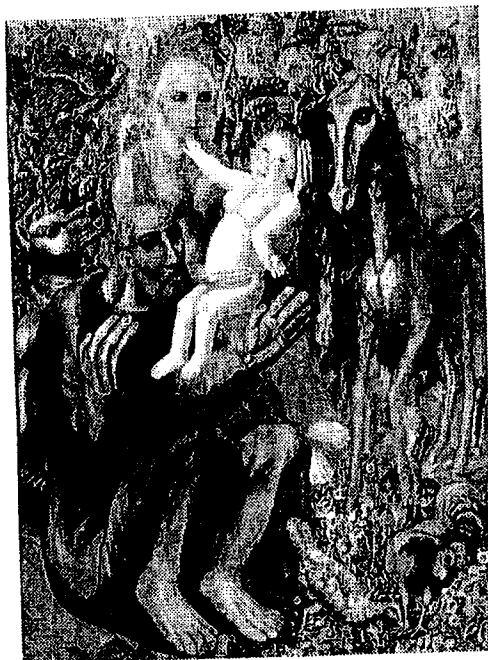


Figure 4. "Holy Family" (Mislav, 70).

seems almost to be bursting forth from the background; its eyes are focused directly upon the baby in the mother's arms, where they meet the gaze of the father in a parallel line. The background is also a fecund mélange of colors, composed of flowers, leaves and blooms of many varieties. Icon-like in both its theme and its exaggerated two-dimensional perspective, the painting nevertheless moves beyond conventional Primitivism by using smaller, non-representational formal elements, often unrecognizable as individual objects (other than shapes, perhaps) in its composition.

Even though the painting in some respects quite consciously mimics conventional Russian religious art, the figures of Jesus, Mary and Joseph have been replaced by Russian peasants, and the animals in the scene have become more typically Russian, as well. Although Filonov's transformation of the Holy Family is consistent with the long-standing anachronistic depiction of Biblical events (the same tradition allowed Fra Lippo Lippi and Fra Angelico to clothe their figures in typical Florentine dress in their fifteenth-century rendition of the Adoration of the Magi), it also demonstrates a sympathy with the more revolutionary social mode of thought of the time.

"Holy Family" likewise achieves a convergence of traditional folk art and fragmented form. The painting shows a family consisting of a crouching father and a mother holding a naked child in her arms, a scene bearing a striking resemblance to standard portraits of the Holy Family in the manger at Bethlehem. Several animals (a horse, a wolf, a rooster and a pheasant) surround and overlap with the human figures. The horse, its body (and, to a lesser degree, its head) composed almost entirely of fragments of color and shape, like the tree-trunk beside it,

Despite the boldness of Filonov's artistic pronouncements, it would certainly be an overstatement to claim that he was a devoted *political* revolutionary. Still, he was certainly a "fellow traveler," whose involvement with left-leaning or outright socialist movements remains fairly consistent throughout his artistic career.

Filonov's personal dislike for the city<sup>14</sup> may largely explain why he chose not to depict his "holy family" as urban and proletarian, characteristics that would have been more fully in keeping both with the standard revolutionary sentiment of the time and with Futurism. The particular modification he selected allowed him to incorporate familiar themes in a manner still partially in tune with the socially revolutionary ideology gaining popularity among his avant-garde compatriots. Widespread socio-political sympathy for the plight of the Russian peasantry, as, minimally, an image of the rural proletariat, made it possible for Filonov to use this visual allegory to glorify, perhaps even deify, a peasant family. The extreme state control of both art (officialization of socialist realism) and agriculture (collectivization) within a decade of the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War would have made it almost impossible for Filonov to produce this same painting ten years later, but the political climate in 1914 was still open to such moderately radical interpretations of "bourgeois" styles and themes. Viewers may "see" a painting that evokes an icon of the Holy Family (and Yurii Markin points out the presence of triangles in the composition of the painting, a common element of older Russian religious painting [24]), but its innovative technical execution and its more radical thematic elements (as interpreted via a metaphorical reading of the title) make its "recognition" as an icon well-nigh impossible. In essence, Filonov has applied a kind of *ostranenie* to the icon form in order to give it a new meaning.

"The Narva Gates" (Figure 5) similarly presents a historically-sanctioned scene (moderately abstracted human figures in traditional peasant clothing before a decidedly non-modern structure, the Narva Triumphal Gates in St. Petersburg, constructed during Catherine the Great's reign) in a considerably more abstractly represented form. The painting is an urban landscape, composed almost entirely of thousands of small blocks of color less than a square centimeter in area. The figures of the people, the statue atop the gates and the outlines of the features of the gate and wall themselves are delineated in the most rudimentary way, very much in keeping with the elements of neo-Primitivism that Bowlit mentions. The walls surrounding the gate, the ground on which the people in the foreground stand, and the remaining background are filled in with hundreds of small areas of color, with blacks and browns dominating the upper half (in which the rampant horses and an imposing human figure, both symbols of the old power, loom)

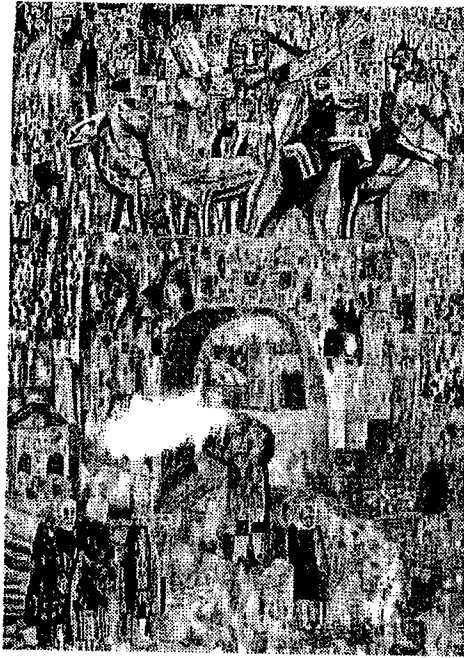


Figure 5. "The Narva Gates" (1920, 96).

and vibrant reds speckling the ground outside the gate. Working in concert with the title, the red coloration on the ground in front of the gates carries a clear symbolic link with the bloody January 1905 massacre of striking workers, which provided a spark for the ensuing larger revolution of that year. While Filonov's symbology of color is not necessarily the same as Belyi's (for example, revolution was not such a "catastrophic" concept for Filonov), the dissimilarity between the gloomy old (brown, black) Tsarist-era authority pictured above the gates and the populace (reds, blue) that moves about below it

comments on the changing post-Revolutionary times, one largely effected by the contrast of colors. The semantic pieces of this painting come together to form a recognizable scene only after some active perception on the part of the viewer (assisted greatly by the clue in the title). The painting must be decoded to some degree before the metaphorical meaning of the scene it depicts become apparent.

In a commentary on Marc Chagall's painting "The Violinist," Maria Renata Mayenova discusses the process of deciphering the metaphorical meaning in the type of artwork she calls "an iconic-visual text" (137). Much of Filonov's work—especially paintings such as "Narva Gates" and "Holy Family," which occupy a space between the severe abstractness of "Formula of Spring" or "Formula of the Petrograd Proletariat" ("Формула петроградского пролетариата" 1920-21) and the realistic style of "Portrait of E. N. Glebova, née Filonova" ("Портрет Е. Н. Глебовой, урожденной

Филоновой," 1915 [Figure 6])—can be placed in this category, as well. Mayenova writes:

The deformation [of the images] points to the character of the narrator and hence introduces a specific form of lyricism. It also makes us search for the standpoints and points of view justifying particular elements of the information. This search for motivation resembles selecting the justification for a verbal metaphor. Thus, in a case like Chagall's "The Violinist," we can perhaps speak with some justification of the metaphoric character of the visual-iconic text. The metaphoric character of such a text is possible only because of the metaphoric nature of the message as a whole and emerges on a level that is very far from that of primary meanings, whereas verbal texts permit particular elements to be metaphoric without the need for the whole to be metaphoric. (137)

Both "Narva Gates" and "Holy Family" introduce this form of metaphoric character into their composition, since the formal composition (the "deformation," on Filonov's part) of both paintings seems to imply a message that overrides the simple visual apprehension of the scene, as might be more the



Figure 6. "Portrait of E. N. Glebova, née Filonova" (1920, 103).

case with a wholly realistic painting. Filonov's choices in level of fragmentation, color, precision of depiction and contrast all add a metaphorical weight to the painting that acquires richness because of its conscious demand that the viewer notice and contemplate the reasons behind the deformations—i.e. to decipher the "struggle for development of a higher intellectual plane," about which Filonov writes in *Made Paintings*. The visual-iconic interpretive process described by Mayenova essentially mirrors Filonov's claim that the universal language of painting is "incorporated into the viewer's consciousness in an integral

deduction that sometimes cannot be translated into words." Likewise, her analysis provides a more systematic and psychological framework for understanding the similar concepts contained within Belyi's "contemplation" or Shklovskii's "seeing...not recogni[zing]."

Filonov was capable of creating works with greater or lesser degrees of abstraction. For example, his "Portrait of E. N. Glebova, née Filonova" is a realistically rendered, conventional posed portrait. At the other end of the spectrum are paintings like "Formula of Spring (1928-29)" (Figure 7), in which larger thematic or formal elements are almost entirely absent, replaced instead by a frenzy of tiny points of brilliant color with little or no recognizable (i.e., familiar) organization. It is in this latter group that Filonov's technical similarities with the formal theories of Belyi and Shklovskii are most readily apparent, since the content of such paintings is most abstracted and least easily apprehended by the viewer. The interplay of colors and textures provides these paintings with their volume, as that term is understood by art criticism. However, it also represents what Filonov defined as "rhythm" in painting, an inherently temporal (and therefore, musical) element of artistic expression. Color, form, and meaning are so closely interrelated in Filonov's conception of art ("Painting is form and the consistency that makes form, and it is made with color taken to its utmost degree of intensity" [147]) that separation of them in theory, as well as in an analysis of his paintings, is difficult. Even the more sparingly abstracted paintings, like "Holy Family" or "A Collective Farmer," contain a number

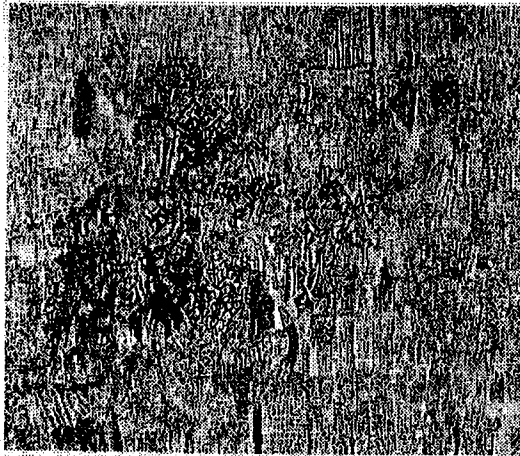


Figure 7. "Formula of Spring, (1928-29)" (1920, 95).

of the stylistic elements he takes to extremes in works like "The Principles of Spring" or "War with Germany" (Figure 8).



Figure 8. "War with Germany" (1920, 91).

The musical metaphor that Filonov uses to describe the effect of his spatial experimentation with color and form links his painting with the "musical phrases" that Belyi explicitly names as compositional elements of *The Dramatic Symphony*. Both artists find a theoretical and practical value in attempting a synthesis of modes of artistic expression that arise from ostensibly separate "kinds" of art (i.e. either painting or writing, and music). While the thematic content of the two artists' works often radically differs (throughout his career, Filonov is a much more "proletarian" artist than Belyi), both use technical experimentation and stylistic innovation in their works to explore not only the possibility and nature of a sublime, perhaps mystical connection between artist and reader/viewer, but also as an attempt to create a new kind of art capable of making such a connection more readily available.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Belyi, like Schopenhauer, uses "poetry" to stand for artistic use of the written word in all forms, not just verse. However, for both writers, the primacy of music as an art form would seem to position metrical verse as the highest form of written art, because of its reliance on rhythm and other aspects that resemble music.

<sup>2</sup> This is by no means a claim for the interchangeability of these terms. Futurists, Formalists and Symbolists are not the same, although they do share *some* ideological backgrounds and the goal of seeking a revitalization and renewal of Russian Art. These often meteoric groups of the Russian avant-garde of the 1900-30 period share enough traits, in my opinion, to warrant their qualified inclusion together here.

<sup>3</sup> The words *zaum* and *zaumnyi* are derived from the preposition *za* (beyond) and the stem *um* (mind or intellect), creating a meaning more akin to "beyond the mind" or "abstruse" than the "nonsense" into which many critics have translated it. While the language of Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh's poetry is certainly not recognizable as standard Russian, neither poet claims that there is no meaning (i.e., non-sense) in the words. The meaning is simply not apprehended through the normal application of mental processes (recognition and interpretation). It is vital to keep the distinction between the *transrationality* of *zaum* and its related concepts, as opposed to simply its *irrationality*.

<sup>4</sup> During the 1910s and 1920s, Mayakovksy wrote plays, operas, poems, essays and illustrated many of his own works. He also produced set designs and costume sketches for productions of his play.

<sup>5</sup> Belyi's "symphonies" employ many elements of poetry (repetition of image, occasional metrical passages, etc.) but are not written in verse form, so Belyi's use of the word "*poezii*" seems to be more related to strictly artistic usage of language, whether in verse form or not.

<sup>6</sup> All of the symphonies bear alternate titles, in addition to their numeral designations. The *First* is also known as the *Northern (Severnaia)* or *Heroic (Geroicheskaia)*; the *Third* is also known as *The Return (Vozvrat)*; and the *Fourth* is most commonly referred to as *The Goblet of Blizzards (Kubok metelei)*. I shall refer to them by their non-numeral names, but in quoted material shall retain the usage of the given authors.

<sup>7</sup> Belyi himself acknowledged that *The Goblet of Blizzards* indicated to him the "impossibility of creating a 'symphony' in words" (quoted in Keys 136).

<sup>8</sup> Prokofiev, already a recognized innovator in his late adolescence, emigrated during the Revolution, but returned to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. He composed a piece of music based on Formalist writer Iurii Tynianov's *povest'*, "Lieutenant Kizhe." Like many other Soviet composers, Prokofiev was persecuted in 1937 for his alleged formalism, although his association with the theorists/artists of this study is relatively slim.

<sup>9</sup> The color reference here contains an additional double meaning, since *zhelyti dom* is a colloquial term for "lunatic asylum."

<sup>10</sup> The original German reads: "Die im Roman am häufigsten vorkommenden Farben sind Grau (21%), Schwarz (18%) und Gelb (10%), gefolgt von Rot (9,1%), Blau (8,9%) und Weiß (8,9%); dazwischen liegt Grün mit 14%. Während in der "Silbernen Taube" Rot mit 29% and der Spitze lag, ist Belyi in "Peterburg" von der Vorherrschaft dieser Farbe abgekommen; doch sie spielt auch hier noch eine wichtige Rolle: sie fungiert als 'Symbol des roten Terrors'."

<sup>11</sup> The original German reads: "Man denkt unwillkürlich an das mit buntfarbenen Rauten gemusterte kostüm eines Harlekins!"

<sup>12</sup> The original German reads: "Grün und Grünlich, die Farbe der Stadt Peterburg, scheint das Symbol des Giftigen, Sumpfigen und Unheilvollen zu sein.... Weiß ist in der Offenbarung die Farbe des siegreichen Christus oder der Engel.... Silber ist anscheinend die symbolische Farbe des religiösen Sektierturns und des Mystischen.... Blau ist die magische Farbe.... und bläuliche Farbe können Dämmerung, Rauch und Schatten annehmen."

<sup>13</sup> For example, a relatively early painting, "War With Germany" (1915), in its human forms clearly shows the influence of Cubo-Futurism. Filonov, at this point in his career, was much more directly aligned with the Futurist movement, but even his later work retains some trace of the heavily geometric and disjointed elements of this period.

<sup>14</sup> Bowlt writes of Filonov's attitude towards the city:

Filonov felt uncomfortable in the big city, his tastes were simple, his behavior abrupt, his clothes home-made, and he liked to think of himself as one of the toiling masses.... [A] major theme of Filonov's art is the Russian village—not, however, an evocation of the charms of the countryside, but rather a stark description of its bareness and brutality.... Dissatisfaction with urban life and continued fascination with the Russian peasant distinguish the Russian contribution [to Futurism]; and even if Filonov's atti-

tude towards rural Russia was an uneasy one, he still admired its strength and steadfastness. ("Pavel Filonov..." 10-11)

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