Vasilisk Gnedov's Futurism

Crispin Brooks

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the University of London

School of Slavonic and East European Studies

May 1998
Abstract

This dissertation is an attempt to provide the first extended analysis of the Futurist work of Vasilisk Gnedov (1890-1978), one of the most interesting and original poets of the early Russian Avant-Garde. Interest in this hitherto neglected figure has grown in recent years, most importantly with the publication of his Sobranie stikhovorenii (Trento, 1992), which has an introduction and commentaries by the scholar and Avant-Garde poet Sergei Sigei. The present study follows a pattern of increasing focus in its three main chapters: ‘World’, ‘Works’, and ‘Words’. The first, ‘World’, aims to locate Gnedov in three contexts: 1) the literary movement of which he was part, through a general survey of Russian Futurism and its less well known subset, Egofuturism; 2) the circumstances of the poet’s life, reconstructed from existing articles on Gnedov and previously unused archive materials; 3) and his bibliography and historiography, charting Gnedov’s publishing output and the increasing interest in him in the last 10 years. The second chapter, ‘Works’, is a chronologically arranged analysis of all Gnedov’s poetry and prose of the period 1913-19 (with a brief section detailing his later works), which seeks to highlight the central themes and show the development of Gnedov’s poetics. The chapter also publishes for the first time four previously unknown poems. The third chapter, ‘Words’, divides into two parts: 1) ‘Features of Gnedov’s Poetic Language: Dialectisms, Neologisms, Zaum’ describes the salient features of the poet’s innovative use of language; 2) the ‘Glossary’ provides definitions of the numerous rare words encountered in Gnedov’s writing and the most likely components of the neologisms. The dissertation is completed by a short ‘Conclusion’ and an ‘Annotated Bibliography’.
In response to a Russian acquaintance who, after reading a poem by Gnedov, sighed:

“это не Пушкин...”
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1. World</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Futurism</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) The Poet’s Life</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Publication History</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2. Works</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Works of 1913</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Works of 1914</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Poems of 1917-1919</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Later Poetry</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3. Words</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Features of Gnedov’s Poetic Language: Dialectisms, Neologisms, Zaum’</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Glossary</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annotated Bibliography</strong></td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Abbreviations

**Dal’**
*Tolkovyi slovar’ zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka* Vladimir

**Els.**

**Ozhegov**

**RF**

**Sobr. stikh.**

**SRDG**
*Slovar’ russkikh donskikh govorov*, comp. Z. Valiusinskaia et al., I-III, Rostov-on-Don, 1975-76.

**SRNG**

**SSRLIa**
*Slovar’ sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, ed. V. Chernyshev et al., 1-17, Moscow, 1948-64.

**UED**

**URS**

**Zabytyi avangard 1**

**Zabytyi avangard 2**
Note on Quotation, Transliteration, and the Order of the Works

Larger quotations from Russian sources are indented in the text and given in Cyrillic. Quotations from Gnedov’s poetry will retain the orthography of the published original; where it has not been possible to consult the original source (‘Triolet’, ‘a La tyr’), the orthography will correspond to that of the subsequently published editions. Other quotations within the text are generally translated or, for poetry, transliterated, unless any specific feature of the original wording needs to be retained. The Library of Congress system is used for all transliteration. Where numbers in brackets follow a quotation from a work by Gnedov, this corresponds to the number given to each work in the Glossary.

Because the exact date of writing is known in only one case, the order in which Gnedov’s works are analysed corresponds to the date of publication and follows that chosen by Sigei in Sobranie stikhotvorenii, with certain exceptions. In this analysis, ‘a La tyr’ (written at some point in 1913; first published 1991) has been moved so that it follows ‘Slezhit riabidii trun'ga sno—’ (published September 1913) rather than following ‘Poema Kontsa’ (published April 1913). The theoretical article ‘Glas o soglase i zloglase’ is moved to correspond with its 1914 (unspecified month) publication date. Three poems (dated end November 1917) published here for the first time are placed before ‘Roiut vam mogilu bogi’ (written end October 1917; published 1918). The fourth previously unpublished poem, ‘Ekspromt’, is in the section on Gnedov’s later works.
Preface

Like other Avant-Garde art, Futurist poetry is equally capable of provoking hostility, misconception, and wonder. Poets on the cutting edge of literary innovation have been treated as hooligans, dilettantes, and geniuses; their work is prized by some for its intractability, whilst many more avoid it for the same reason. The name of Vasilisk Gnedov came to my attention as a figure whose experiments in poetry appeared to be groundbreaking but at the same time barely studied. The more I was able to find out about the poet, the more his innovatory works intrigued. This sense of fascination has remained with me, and has perhaps grown with time. Furthermore, the way in which Gnedov faced up to the extreme burdens and misfortunes that he experienced in his lifetime is in itself a source of inspiration. This thesis attempts to provide a balanced understanding of Gnedov's contribution to Futurism as well as to help resuscitate the poet's reputation.

In some senses, I have been lucky in terms of history. I have been able to spend two years in Russia since I finished my undergraduate degree in 1993, and in that time previously inaccessible Futurist works and archive materials have become available. In addition, the increased openness in Russia has led to a boom in the study of and publications on the Avant-Garde. Part of this has been Sergei Sigei's pioneering work on Gnedov, which includes several articles and two editions of Gnedov's poetry, and the present thesis is greatly indebted to it.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the many who have helped and supported me in this research. Professors John Elsworth and David Shepherd, and Dr. Peter Doyle at Manchester University inspired me to pursue the project in the first place. Sergei Sigei, with whom I have corresponded several times, has been a source of much information and encouragement. I am also fortunate to have benefited from valuable discussions with Aleksandr Parnis, Sergei Kudriavtsev, and Jeremy Hicks. The staff of SSEES library, Birmingham University Library, the Russian State Library (Moscow), the Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (Moscow), and the Maiakovsky State Museum (Moscow) have always been extremely helpful and efficient. I would especially like to thank my family, friends, and partner, Yelena Furman, for their support. Finally, my greatest obligation is to my supervisors Robin Aizlewood and
Julian Graffy who have assisted with all matters relating to the thesis’s structure, content, and style; without the enormous amount of time and patience they have devoted to it, this thesis would have been an impossible undertaking. Any inadequacies in its scholarship are mine alone.
CHAPTER 1. WORLD

i) FUTURISM

A) General

Painted faces and garish suits with carrots in the button hole, poets shouting, spitting, and throwing tea at their audiences; poetry recitals turning into drunken brawls; anti-aesthetic or incomprehensible poems that amused, astonished, and shocked the spectating students and intellectuals—such were the images of Futurism ingrained into Russian popular consciousness in 1913-14. Behind the screen of shock and scandal, however, the movement represented a serious and consistent attempt to renovate a culture that was perceived to be dead.

Central to the Futurist rebellion was a rejection of the classics of Russian literature and of Symbolism. The Cubofuturists’ manifesto *Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu* (1912) declared that “the Academy and Pushkin are less comprehensible than hieroglyphs” and vowed to “throw Pushkin, Dostoevskii, Tolstoi etc. etc. from the Ship of Modernity”\(^1\). In terms of the Futurists’ outrageous public displays, the deliberate attempt to shock bourgeois society also served as an excellent means of self-promotion.

The history of Futurism in Russia has tended to focus upon the Moscow-based Cubofuturists\(^2\), the longest-lived and most recognisably Futurist group, which included most of the movement’s best known participants (Maiakovskii, Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, David Burliuk, Guro). Formed in 1911 and known originally as Gileia, the group’s first significant publications came at the end of 1912. The tag ‘Cubofuturist’, applied by critics in 1913 and subsequently adopted, is indicative of the


\(^2\) There is some variety in how the names of the two main Futurist groups can be spelled. The standard adopted here throughout is to capitalise both and remove any hyphen in the middle, i.e. ‘Cubofuturism’/‘Cubofuturist’ and ‘Egofuturism’/‘Egofuturist’.
group's close connection with modern painting; contemporary artists such as Kandinskii, Malevich, Goncharova, Larionov, and Filonov contributed to or illustrated their books. Many of the poets were also trained artists themselves and their enhanced visual perception led to experiments in typography, hand-written poems, and book design.

For the Futurists, new form created new content. Neologistic language was common to many Futurists seeking to reawaken the reader to the vitality of the language. An extension of this was *zaumnyi iazyk* (or *zaum*), developed by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov in two separate streams. For Kruchenykh, this meant a language of free expression, made up of arbitrary sounds and 'words' that could be comprehended 'intuitively', exemplified by his poem 'Dyr bul shchyl'; he claimed his poem made entirely of vowels was written in a "universal language". Khlebnikov, on the other hand, attempted to distil universal linguistic truths from his analysis of Slavic languages and approached *zaumnyi iazyk* as a potentially rational system that could be interpreted using his "alphabet of the mind". The principle was that the first letter of a word determines its overall meaning with the remaining letters serving as coloration and for differentiation; to each consonant Khlebnikov assigned a spatial and/or temporal movement. The approaches of the Symbolists and Futurists to the poetic word strongly contrast: for the Symbolists the word was synonymous with *logos*, a means of accessing the divine, whereas the Futurists emphasised 'the word as such'—a value in itself, with no religious or metaphysical trappings. As Shklovskii later wrote,
"[the Futurists] sought new means of transferring information [...] by creating new languages or even by rejecting language (Gnedov). But even this was a search for a new language."

In many ways, Russian Futurism before 1917 was more of a Neoprimitivist than a Futurist movement. For poets such as Kamenskii, Gnedov, Guro, and others, nature was a predominant theme; Kruchenykh printed the poems by an eight-year-old girl alongside his own work in *Porosiata*; Kamenskii wrote *Sten’ka Razin*, a novel in verse about the Russian peasant hero; and Khlebnikov used themes from Slavic mythology in his work. In the Futurists’ language, there were dialectisms, archaisms, vulgarisms, and slang. Goncharova and Larionov’s illustrations of Futurist books were influenced by traditional peasant woodcuts (*lubki*). Nilsson analyses how, in the Futurists’ talk of purity in poetic language and the lost faculty of intuition, by implication they were harking back to a mythologised past rather than a dazzling future; this trait was also displayed (although in different ways) by the Symbolists and the Acmeists, as well as being typical of Modernism as a whole.

Futurism was not indigenous to Russia. The Italian Filippo Marinetti published ‘The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’ in *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909 and his group of Futurists achieved notoriety throughout Europe; it seems undeniable that it had an influence on events in Russia. Though the Cubofuturists might choose to designate themselves *budetliane*, this is nevertheless a direct calque of the word ‘Futurists’. There are strong similarities in the use and content of their manifestos. Lawton shows strong similarities between the pronouncements of Marinetti on poetic language (*parole in libertà*) and those of Kruchenykh (zaumnyi iazyk)\(^*\). Like the Italians, the Cubofuturists asserted the community and independence of their group to show that they were the most capable of creating the new art, and like the Italians they claimed to shun popular acclaim\(^*\). The calls to destroy syntax, to prize disorder and

---

\(^*\) Concerning the influence Marinetti’s manifestos had on the Russians, see A. Lawton, ‘Russian and Italian Futurist Manifestos’, *Slavic and East European Journal*, 20 (1976), pp. 405-20.

---

\(^*\) For example, their pledge “to stand on the block of the word ‘we’ amidst a sea of whistling and indignation”, ‘Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu’, *Manifesty i programmy*, p. 51.
mystification, ugliness, and bad taste in literature, and to despise common sense all had analogies in Italian Futurist manifestos. Futurists in both countries were strongly nationalistic. The fact that several Russian Futurists shunned Marinetti during his visit to Russia is perhaps indicative of their sensitivity to charges of copying the Italians.

Yet at the same time there were very significant differences between the Italian and Russian versions of Futurism. The pre-Revolutionary stage of Russian Futurism is much less clearly defined as a movement than its Italian counterpart. Italian Futurism was perhaps more homogeneous and more focussed on painting than literature. In Russia there was next to no Futurist painting; zaum' and primitivism were emphasised rather as much as the glorification of war, technology, speed, youth, and the city. At the same time, in 1913, there were at least four Futurist groupings (rather than one in Italy) each quite different and each believing itself to be the most true representative of Futurism.

Perhaps the Futurist rebellion can be set in its social context. Unlike the Symbolists, who had tended to come from the St Petersburg or Moscow intelligentsia, the Futurists were often from a new class—the educated petit-bourgeoisie, the children of serfs emancipated in 1861—and were in the main from the provinces. Futurism came at the end of the Tsarist regime in Russia, at a time of state censorship and repression, stagnation, as well as increasing urban hooliganism and revolutionary political activity. The formation of independent anti-establishment groups, issuing manifestos and other literature that was often at odds with the censor may be held to mirror the growth of various left wing groups post 1905. Interesting too is the use of the word levyi (levizna), meaning both 'left-field' and 'left-wing', in respect of the Futurists. Furthermore, many Russian Futurists, including Gnedov, became associated with left-wing politics and the Revolution in 1917 and thereafter.

In 1914, many poets were drafted and some saw action in the War. The 1917 Revolution was welcomed by most of the Futurists who believed that their revolution in art was part of the revolution in society. Between 1918 and 1921, Kruchenykh

---

13 N. Khardzhiev, 'Poeziia i zhivopis', p. 31.
15 Levyi front iskusstv (Lef) was the name of an Avant-Garde grouping in the 1920s.
created the 41° group in Tiflis, with Zdanevich and Terent'ev, to pursue zaum'. Kruchenkykh later joined his former Cubofuturist colleagues Maiakovskii and Kamenskii, who were involved in Lef, which aimed to combine revolutionary Futurist aesthetics with revolutionary communist politics; Maiakovskii later claimed that "futurism as a united, well-defined movement did not exist in Russia before the October Revolution". Shershenevich, who had been an Egofuturist, part of the Mezonin poezii group, and the main translator of Marinetti’s writings into Russian, now began Imagism with Ivnev, Esenin, and Mariengof. A fourth movement having its roots in pre-Revolutionary Futurism was the OBERIU (from ‘Ob”edinenie real'nogo iskusstva’).

In describing Futurism in Russia, one is faced with the task of reconciling a number of contradictions. Russian Futurism was in many ways connected to its precursor in Italy, although many of the Russians rejected the name. Within its framework is a wide variety of styles and individual philosophies, accommodating writers of hugely different temperaments. In the Cubofuturist group there were writers as different as Khlebnikov, Maiakovskii, David Burliuk, Guro, and Kruchenkykh; and among the Egofuturists the gulf between the styles of Severianin and Gnedov, for example, is immense. The ‘futuristic’ aspiration to make "a utopian leap into a future totally discontinuous with ‘anything experienced hitherto’" is set against an idealisation of the primitive and the traditionally Russian. While urban themes occurred in Maiakovskii and Guro, for example, there were many more for whom modern themes like technology and speed held little interest. As Markov writes,

this complex conglomeration, in which there was not only poetry and prose, but ideology, aesthetics, literary theory, and polemics, contained elements of impressionism, expressionism, neoprimitivism, constructivism, abstractionism, dandyism, theosophy, and so forth.

In addition, there were traces of 'low-brow' literature, Slavic mythology and folklore. Russian Futurism reacted and incorporated elements of the Italian blueprint into an already existing climate of experimentation (Decadents, Symbolism) and primitivism.

17 RF, p. 384.
As such, it fits into the wider classification of the Avant-garde (1910-30) in Russia, itself a subset of Russian Modernism (1890-1930).

B) Egofuturism

The poetical and historical significance of Egofuturism in terms of the Russian Avant-garde is typically ignored or sidelined, so some clarification is required of this strand of Russian Futurism with which Vasilisk Gnedov was involved. During its relatively short existence (1911-14), the Egofuturist group produced nine collections of poetry, prose, and criticism. Each of its members produced their own publications, and poetry and theoretical articles appeared in the newspapers Peterburgskii glashatai, Dachnitsa, and Nizhegorodets, all of which were associated with Ivan Ignat’ev, the group’s latterday leader.

Egofuturism was the brainchild of Igor’ Severianin, who was the first to use the word ‘Futurism’ in Russia. Subsequently described as a “camp genius”, Severianin wrote “poezy” concerned with mysterious high-society ladies, dancing, flowers, and exotic drinks. There is no destructiveness or radical experimentation in his poetry and it may be that Severianin knew nothing of Marinetti’s ideas; nevertheless Futurist elements can be found in his use of urban themes, neologisms, references to technology, and in his desire for a new literature (“Dlia nas Derzhavinym stal Pushkin,—/ Nam nado novykh golosov!”). In late 1911, Severianin founded the ‘Ego’ poetry circle out of a mutual appreciation for the Decadent poets Konstantin Fofanov and Mirra Lokhvitskaia; the circle consisted of himself, Konstantin Olimpov (Fofanov’s son), Georgii Ivanov, and Graal’ Arel’skii. Initially, Egofuturism was far more closely linked with the Decadent stage of Symbolism that had existed in the 1890s than with Italian Futurism or Cubofuturism. The Decadent Symbolists Briusov and Sologub contributed poetry to the Egofuturists’ first almanacs, and in their early manifestos and poetic practice the values they proclaimed—intuition, theosophy,
madness, individuality—were the same as those of the Symbolism of the 1890s. Nevertheless, Severianin was acknowledged to have an original style and became one of the most popular poets of the Silver Age, let alone Futurism. For the most part, the ‘Ego’ group was made up of his imitators. However, on 1 July 1912, Olimpov published an article ‘Futurizm’, in which he called for poets to respond to new ideas, concepts, and impressions of modern life with “bold word-formations” and this has been regarded as the actual “origin of Futurism in Russia”22.

A dispute between Severianin and Olimpov over the leadership of Egofuturism led to a schism; Severianin left the movement and a new group (the ‘Assotsiatsiia Ego-Futuristov’ or ‘Intuitivnaia Assotsiatsiia’) came together in late 1912–early 1913. The presiding members of the group’s Areopagus were Ignat’ev, Shirokov, Kriuchkov (all of whom had contributed to previous Egofuturist publications) and Gnedov. The arrival of the latter was significant. Most of the provisions of the “Gramata Intuitivnaia Assotsiatsiia” (published in January 1913) were written by Gnedov23. The group became much more Futurist, attuning its poetics and public antics to those of the Cubofuturists whilst at the same time entering into polemics with them. Ignat’ev also acknowledged the influence of Italian Futurism24. The group discarded much of the theosophy and kitsch it had been associated with, now emphasising experimentation and extreme individualism; Ignat’ev and Gnedov sought to innovate and made significant contributions to Avant-Garde poetics. Unlike their Moscow counterparts, the Egofuturists were more respectful of their heritage, which they traced back through the Romantic and Decadent poets, and further to Buddha, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Herzen, Gor’kii, Ibsen, Evgenii Solov’ev, and Fichte25. It is interesting that one of Gnedov’s tirades is indicative of the new Egofuturist group’s dichotomous approach:

Шекспир — сущна, Пушкин не стоит нашего внимания, что касается Брюсова, то это — несчастный пигмей. Я был на днях у Сологуба, и сам Федор Кузьмич восторгался моими поэзами26.

24. Krusnov, Russkii avangard, p. 115.
Respect for one Symbolist is combined with hostility towards other writers of the past. Egofuturism’s solipsism was, of course, not unique, but they developed it into arrogant posturing for the sake of self-promotion and shock value\(^\text{27}\). At the same time, the Egofuturists were in the peculiar position of vigorously asserting their individual potential in a group context, “Universal Egofuturism” as exemplified in Gnedov’s phrase “Everything is in Me and My I is in Everything”\(^\text{28}\). All this directly contravened a tenet of Italian Futurism, which had proclaimed an end to the self and to “psychologism” in literature.

The Egofuturist group unexpectedly disintegrated after its leader Ignat’ev committed suicide in January 1914. The remaining members drifted into two new groupings that had formed, Tsentrifuga\(^\text{29}\) and Mezonin poezii\(^\text{30}\). Viktor Khovin continued the values of early Egofuturism and published a journal entitled Ocharovannyi strannik (1913-16). In many ways the quintessential Egofuturist, Olimpov wrote poetry in which he portrayed himself as God and later tried to reconcile this stance with Bolshevism in Tret’e Rozhdestvo Velikogo Mirovogo Poeta Titanizma Sotsial’noi Revoliutsii Konstantina Olimpova Roditelia Mirozdaniiia\(^\text{31}\). Having proclaimed madness as his aim in the poem ‘Ia khochu byt’ dushevno-bol’nym’ (1912), by the 1920s, according to contemporaries, he had apparently achieved it\(^\text{32}\). Severianin and Egofuturism also exerted an influence on the St Petersburg zaumnik Aleksandr Tufanov.

The Egofuturist group was small and not as diverse as its main rival in Moscow. For the Egofuturists, the connection between literature and the visual arts (much less Avant-Garde painting) was weaker; the rather conservative sketches of Il’ia Repin and Lev Zak adorned the covers of their collections. Egofuturist music was not

\(^{27}\) Such egoistic assertion was also a trait of Maiakovskii’s Futurist poetry.

\(^{28}\) V. Gnedov, ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi Sebe’, in Dary Adonisu. Editsia Assotsiatsii Ego-Futuristov IV, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai I.V. Ignat’eva, 1913, pp. 1-5 (p. 3).

\(^{29}\) See RF, pp. 228-75; S. Kazakova, ‘Tvorcheskaia istoriia ob’edineniia “Tsentrifuga” (Zametki o rannikh poeticheskikh vzaimosviaziakh B. Pasternaka, N. Aseeva i S. Bobrova)’, Russian Literature, XXVII (1990), pp. 459-82; S. Malakhov, ‘Russkii futurizm posle revoliutsii’, Molodaia gvardiia, 10 (1926), pp. 172-83 (pp. 172-74).

\(^{30}\) See RF, pp. 101-16.

\(^{31}\) K. Olimpov, Tret’e Rozhdestvo Velikogo Mirovogo Poeta Titanizma Sotsial’noi Revoliutsii Konstantina Olimpova Roditelia Mirozdaniiia, Petrograd, 1922.

developed to any great extent and Ignat'ev’s attempts to involve the theatre director Meierkhol’d in some capacity came to nothing. Nevertheless, despite its short lifespan, Egofuturism represents the engagement of Symbolism with the Avant-garde, a bridge between poetic movements of the end of the 19th and the start of the 20th centuries.

ii) THE POET’S LIFE

Vasilii Ivanovich Gnedov was born on 3 (18) March 1890, son of a petit bourgeois and a peasant woman, in the Man'kovo-Berezovo settlement of what is today the Rostov region. The young Gnedov was brought up in the region’s Cossack culture, finishing a secondary school in the Kamenskaia stanitsa in 1906. That year he studied to be a technician-mechanic (tekhnik-mekhanik) in the regional capital Rostov-on-Don, at the city’s Secondary Technical Academy, but was expelled in 1911 for being a “bad influence” on the other students. During his last year at the school he also attended a music-listening class at a local music college.

It is not clear when Gnedov acquired the nickname Vasilisk, but the name clearly had symbolic significance. The word vasilisk is a medieval beast whose breath turns its enemies into stone (basilisk) and at the same time is closely related to the word for cornflower, thus combining an imposing, fearsome stance with nature. Nor is there any information on Gnedov’s early literary influences. Nevertheless, Gnedov claimed that the reason he moved to St Petersburg in 1912 was to “invert, renew literature, to show new paths”.

See the letters from Ignat’ev to Meierkhol’d in RGALI, fond 998, op. 1, ed. khr. 1636.


Some additional details of Gnedov’s early life and of his parents and relatives are recounted in later poems; see Sobr. stikh., pp. 188-89.

Vasiliskis (cornflower; forget-me-not). Vasilisk is the name of a day, 22 May, when there is no ploughing or sowing, otherwise only the cornflowers (vasil’ki) will flourish, Dal’, I, p. 410. It may also be noted that the surname Gnedov is one of a group of Cossack surnames derived from colours of horses, in this case gnedoi (bay).

The Greek derivation of basilisk/vasilisk—basileus (king), basiliskos (kinglet)—may carry a hidden allusion to egoism.

Sobr. stikh., pp. 130-31; Parnis (Russkie pisateli, 1, p. 589) lists the original manuscript of this as being located in Vengerov’s archive (IRLI, fond 377).
poetry. Severianin recommended that Gnedov get in touch with Ivan Ignat'ev. The contact was to prove fruitful: in January 1913 Gnedov had his first poem published in Ignat'ev's column of the newspaper *Nizhegorodets* and Ignat'ev's Peterburgskii glashatai publishing venture put out almost all of Gnedov's works over the next year. According to Sigei, Ignat'ev also played a vital role in the development of Gnedov's cultural education, introducing Gnedov to all the "orangeries" of poetic ideas known to him and it only remained for Vasilisk to absorb and reinterpret the quintessence of culture in its most refined variant. At this time, Gnedov was reading a lot of Nietzsche, a fact that apparently astounded the literary historian Fidler.

The period 1913-14 was when Gnedov established his reputation as one of the most extreme Futurists in terms of both his literary output and his public behaviour. Reports of the poet's recitals and public outbursts in national newspapers such as *Rech* and *Den* were common, and, according to Sigei, in 1913 Gnedov "was far better known than Maiakovsky". Unlike other Egofuturists, Gnedov evidently courted and even provoked scandal to self-publicistic ends. One such occasion was a lecture given by Nikolai Kul'bin on 19 January 1913, when the speaker was detailing David Burliuk's theory of letters carrying associations of colour, in this case 3 and green: Gnedov interrupted "And chewing-gum (твачка) is also green, but it begins with the letter Ж"[43], ending the lecture in uproar and laughter. Gnedov took to the stage to publicise Egofuturism, to the point of declaring Peter the Great "the most authentic Egofuturist"[44], and read a poem of his own, "which nevertheless needed to be translated into Russian"[45]. In March, after a performance by the leading Cubofuturists, Gnedov had appeared on stage shouting "Don't believe the Muscovites. In Petersburg, there's the poet Vasilisk Gnedov, and Shirokov and Ignat'ev too"[46]. On another occasion, at a rowdy debate on theatre involving Sologub and Ignat'ev,

---

39 Letter 1 by Gnedov dated 1961, RGALI, fond 2823, Smirenskii, op. 1, ed. khr. 35.
40 Sobr. stikh., p. 19.
41 Sobr. stikh., p. 200.
43 *Den*, 21 January 1913, p. 2; reprinted in Krusanov, *Russkii avangard*, pp. 97-98. Also *Peterburgskii listok*, 20 January 1913, p. 5. This is also recorded by Matiushin in his memoirs (*K istorii russkogo avangarda*, p. 140).
Gnedov was removed from the hall after he had shouted at the audience that they were “Idiots!” for booing Ignat'ev’s denunciation of Tolstoi. The critic Dmitrii Filosofov used Gnedov’s name to symbolise Futurism as a whole. His article ‘Vasilisk i Villi’ began “Vasilisk Gnedov, in a dirty canvas shirt, spits (in the literal sense of the word) at the public, and shouts from the stage that it consists of idiots.” Filosofov took the view that the Futurists were merely supplying St Petersburg society’s demand for scandal, shock value, and bad taste. Along with the other Futurists, Gnedov enjoyed a high profile among the capital’s student population: “Young people sporting monocles and jackets tailored according to an impeccable English design go into their departments and propagandize study Vasilisk Gnedov and Igor’ Severianin instead of Pushkin.”

Gnedov was the most experimental poet in the St Petersburg-based Assotsiatsiia Ego-Futuristov (or Intuitivnaia Assotsiatsiia) and his work was given pride of place in the group’s collections. Despite the rivalry between the St Petersburg and Moscow Futurist groups, Gnedov was well acquainted with almost all the latter’s members. There are records of meetings with Maiakovskii and Nikolai Burliuk and it is likely that he got to know Khlebnikov and David Burliuk at around the same time as well. In July 1913 he stayed with Kruchenykh in Ligovo. Gnedov performed on stage

---

47 ‘Intsidenty na dispute o teatre’, Rech’, 22 December 1913, p. 4. In her memoirs, V. Verigina describes an incident where “All of a sudden Vasilisk Gnedov appeared on the stage. With his head raised proudly, he shouted (brosit) at the public: ‘Idiots!’ To our amazement, they simultaneously started to applaud him and to laugh”, V. Verigina, Vospominaniiia, Leningrad, 1974, p. 203; quoted from Sobr. stikh., p. 191.

48 D. Filosofov, ‘Vasilisk i Villi’, Rech’, 10 November 1913, pp. 2-3 (p. 2); this article is also quoted in Sobr. stikh., pp. 191-92.

49 V. Bersenev, ‘Predtechi’, Khmel’: ezhegodchik literaturno-obshchestvennyi i kriticheskii zhurnal molodezhi, 4-6, 1913, p. 33; quoted from Sobr. stikh., p. 201.

50 A note written by Gnedov in one of Kruchenykh’s ‘albums’ (RGALI, fond 1334, Kruchenykh, op. 1, ed. khr. 288, l. 51) states that he got to know Maiakovskii at Nikolai Burliuk’s flat in St Petersburg in 1913.

51 This is mentioned by Chukovskii in the 22 July 1913 entry of his diary; K. Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901-1929, text prep. and commentary E. Chukovskaia, Moscow, 1997, p. 59.
in confrontation with his Moscow counterparts but would later appear alongside them in print.

The poet was present when the Italian Futurist leader Marinetti attended St Petersburg’s Kalashnikovskai birzha on 1 February 1914. Sigei suggests that Gnedov may have performed ‘Poema kontsa’ before Marinetti at the Brodiachaia sobaka (Stray Dog) nightclub in St Petersburg, a place that was central to the pre-war Russian cultural scene. This was the place where Gnedov had saved Maiakovskii’s life by wrestling away a bottle from the hand of someone who was just about to smash it over Maiakovskii’s head. On 23 February 1914, the club arranged an ‘Evening of Lenten Magic’ to raise money for Gnedov who was allegedly suffering from tuberculosis. Later, the poet claimed the reason for the fund-raising on his behalf was actually because he had no money and nowhere to live. Shklovskii would later recall that Gnedov’s poverty was such that he wore borrowed boots. Gnedov left St Petersburg for Yalta in the Crimea the day after the fund-raising evening, on 24 February.

Pavel Shirokov and Sergei Bobrov corresponded with Gnedov, urging him to submit poems to the collection ‘Rukonog’ of the Futurist collective known as

---

52 Gnedov recalls participating in the two debates on theatre with Nikolai Kul’bin on 19 January and 9 November 1913; Sobr. stikh., p. 131. The newspaper Den’ (12 November 1913, p. 6) announces a futurist evening to be held at the Higher Women’s Courses. In one section Kruchenykh, Maiakovskii, Buriuki, Khlébnikov would perform; and the second section would play host to the Ego futurist Igor’ Severianin, Vasilisk Gnedov, Rjurik Ivanov (sic), and M. (sic) Kriuchkov. Gnedov later remembered reading his poetry here alongside Severianin; RGALI, fond 2823, Smiren kii, op. 1, ed. khr. 35, letter 1.

53 Gnedov’s article on new approaches to rhyme ‘Glas o soglase i zloglase’ was published on the scroll Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov (St Petersburg, Svirel’ga, 1914) alongside theoretical pieces by Kruchenykh and Kul’bin. In 1918, Gnedov published ‘Roiut vam mogilu bogi’ in Vremennik 4-i: Gnedov, Petnikov, Seleginskii, Petrovskii, Khlébnikov, ‘Vasilisk i Ol’ga’, Moscow, 1918, p. 1, and ‘Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno’ in Gazeta futuristov, 15 March 1918, p. 2 (together with poems by Maiakovskii, Kamenskii, David Buriuki, and others).

54 As attested by the photo recording the event, which is reproduced in B. Livshits, Polutoraglazyi strelets, Leningrad, 1989, the section between pp. 544-45.

55 Sobr. stikh., p. 22.


58 See Livshits, Polutoraglazyi strelets, p. 697, note 39.

59 V. Shklovskii, Poiski optimizma, Moscow, 1931, pp. 94-95.

60 Gnedov’s fellow Ego futurist Pavel Shirokov puts the date at 1 March 1914; see Shirokov’s letter to Bobrov dated 5 March 1914, RGALI, fond 2554, Bobrov, op. 1, ed. khr. 73.
Tsentrifuga\textsuperscript{61}. In Yalta, Gnedov stayed with the composer Nikolai Roslavets, who earlier in 1914 had set Gnedov’s poem ‘Kuk’ to music. During this time, the two reputedly began work on an opera called ‘Semigorbyi verbliud’, which was never finished and seems not to have survived. Together they gave an evening of Futurism and new music in Taganrog on 6 May. Gnedov recited “Sredmir’e” (‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’), ‘Kolovorot’, ‘Pridorogaia dum” and other works; Roslavets lectured on new music and performed the music to ‘Kuk’; and they were joined by Viktor Shklovskii who read a version of his article ‘Voskreshenie slova’. The attention of the local press was also caught by the strange garb the three wore on a stroll around the town on 9 May\textsuperscript{62}.

On 7 August 1914, three days after war was declared, Gnedov was conscripted and left for the front\textsuperscript{63}. Serving as an irregular in the 420th Poltava detachment, he spent two years in an advanced unit fighting in General Brusilov’s campaign first in Bukovina and then in Galicia, and won the George Medal for bravery. In 1916, Gnedov was sent to the Chuguevskoe Military College. Upon graduating in February 1917 as an ensign, he was sent to Moscow to join the 192nd regiment stationed at the Spasskie barracks in the Sukharev Tower. His presence there coincided with the February Revolution and Gnedov gravitated towards the revolutionary elements in his regiment. Two days after Tsar Nicholas II and the Royal family were deposed, he was appointed chief officer of the Kremlin arsenal guard\textsuperscript{64}. In Moscow, Gnedov began to reestablish some of his Futurist connections. On 26 March 1917, he performed alongside Maiakovskii, Kamenskii, and Tatlin in the ‘Pervyi respublikanskii vecher iskusstv’ at the Ermitazh Theatre. Later that year, he corresponded with Kruchenykh\textsuperscript{65}.

Gnedov was perhaps more actively involved than any other Futurist in the October Revolution. We know about his participation through his association with the

\textsuperscript{61} RGALI, fond 2554, Bobrov, op. 1, ed. khr. 27; and fond 2554, Bobrov, op. 1, ed. khr. 73.

\textsuperscript{62} See Sobr. stikh., pp. 23-24; and Kruzanov, Russkii avangard, pp. 248-49

\textsuperscript{63} Khlebnikov noted this in a letter to an acquaintance dated 11.10.1914; see V. Khlebnikov, Neizdannye proizvedenia, eds. N. Khardzhiev and T. Grits, Moscow, 1940 [Reprint: V. Khlebnikov, Sobranie sochinenii, 4, Munich, 1970], p. 371.

\textsuperscript{64} See Sobr. stikh., pp. 24-25, which is based on a letter dated 5 August 1977 from Gnedov to Sigei.

\textsuperscript{65} One letter (dated 15 September 1917) is slightly mysterious in that it is laid out in verse form: “Kogda poluchish’ otvechai/ Budu vremia ot vremeni tebia/ kak teper’ vyrazhajutsia informirovat’/ o chem budu osvedomlen sam”; RGALI, fond 1334, Kruchenykh, op. 1, ed. khr. 1085.
Bolshevik activist Ol'ga Vladimirovna Pilatskaia, whom Gnedov married in 1918, as well as through later unpublished poems. The Bolshevik conquest of Moscow came within a few days of the takeover of Petrograd. In late 1917, with the Bolsheviks having been turned out of the Kremlin by the *junkers* (students from the military academies who defended the Constitutional Government) and with the breakdown of negotiations between the two sides, fierce house-to-house fighting began. On 29 October 1917, located at Romanov’s Tavern in the Sukharevskii district, Gnedov liaised between the 192nd, 56th, and 251st regiments, and was heavily involved in engagements with the *junkers* around the Nikitskie vorota area. This was the backdrop to one of Gnedov’s last published poems, ‘Roiat vam mogilu bogi’.

After the 1917 Revolution, Gnedov resumed his literary activities but in a much less active way. He attended a performance by Severianin at the Polytechnical Institute in Moscow, and they spoke alone before the start and during the break at great length. An appearance at a Futurist nightclub with Maiakovskii, Kamenskii, David Burliuk, and Gol'shchmit was followed by his appearance in *Gazeta futuristov* in March 1918. Also in 1918, Gnedov published *Vremennik 4-i* under the name ‘Vasilisk i Ol'ga’, and his poem ‘Roiat vam mogilu bogi’ appeared alongside pieces by Khlebnikov, Aseev, Petnikov, and Petrovskii. Khlebnikov made Gnedov a member of his society ‘Predsedateli zemnogo shara’.

From this point on information about Gnedov’s life and whereabouts becomes more and more sporadic, the poet Dmitrii Petrovskii providing seemingly the only source. Gnedov lived with Ol'ga Pilatskaia in the Sokol'niki district of Moscow and

---

66 See ‘la srazhalsia v Moskve v te oktiabr'skie dni’ (undated) and ‘U Nikitskikh vorot’ (27.1.59), from Gnedov’s archive in the Maiakovskii Museum in Moscow; also ‘U Nikitskikh vorot: epizod vo vremia boev v Oktiabr'skie dni 1917 goda’ (dated 27.11.59) published in the commentaries of *Sobr. stikh.*, pp. 163-64.


69 RGALI, fond 2823, Smireniskii, op. 1, ed. khr. 35.

70 RF, p. 394, note 37. This performance was probably at the Kafe Poetov (founded by Maiakovskii, Kamenskii, and David Burliuk), where David Burliuk hailed Gnedov as “Generalissimus ruskogo futurizma”; see *Zabytyi avantgard 1*, p. 18. Gnedov used this ‘title’ once again in ‘Ekspromt’, an unpublished poem written in 1960, which is preserved in a scrapbook of poems kept by Smireniskii; RGALI, fond 2823, Smireniskii, op. 1, ed. khr. 88. On Kafe Poetov, see B. Jangfeldt, ‘Russian Futurism 1917-1919’, in *Art, Society, Revolution. Russia 1917-1921*, ed. N. Nilsson, Stockholm, 1979, pp. 106-37 (pp. 106-09).

was a people’s judge for the district. Petrovskii and Kamenskii often visited them. Gnedov owes his last appearance in print to Petrovskii, who took his poem ‘To skachushchii lebed’ against Gnedov’s will and sent it for publication in the journal *Puti tvorchestva*. There may have been more poems from this period, but, according to Petrovskii, Gnedov burnt a book of poems that he had written. Gnedov had sustained shell-shock in the fighting in Moscow, and Shklovskii suggests that this was why he wrote less and less and was soon to disappear from literary circles. Gnedov left Moscow with Pilatskaia in 1921 to convalesce, first moving to the Lukianovskii district in the Nizhnii Novgorod province where they spent two years, and then to Dnepropetrovsk in the Ukraine.

Gnedov remained committed to the cause that had compelled him to fight as a Red Guard in the October Revolution, and in 1925 he joined the ranks of the Communist Party. In 1930 he graduated from the Technological Institute in Khar'kov and worked as an engineer. The revolutionary credentials of Gnedov and Pilatskaia did not spare them from the Stalinist purges. In 1936, upon her return from a Comintern trip to London, Pilatskaia was arrested and later shot for “counter-revolutionary” activity. Gnedov was also arrested for his association with her and spent the next 18 years in a labour camp (1936–1954). After his release, Gnedov received a personal pension. He was able to retire, and lived first in Kiev and latterly in Kherson in southern Ukraine. He married a second time, to Mariia Nikolaevna Sobolevskaia. In 1958, he recalled giving an impromptu lecture on Futurism at a tourist resort in Nalchik. In the 1960s and 1970s, Gnedov reestablished contact and corresponded with his former Futurist colleagues. There exist several letters to Bobrov, Petnikov, Kruchenykh, and Shklovskii from this time. Gennadii Aigi recalls a performance by Gnedov in 1965 at an evening for the 100th anniversary of Khlebnikov’s birth.

For the remainder of his life, Gnedov wrote poetry on a daily basis, creating a sizeable body of work in a variety of styles. Gnedov’s favourite poet was Rimbaud.

---

72 “Vasilisk Gnedov fought at Nikitskie vorota when a building was blown up in the fighting. He grew numb to poems (onemel na stikhii)”, V. Shklovskii, *Tret’ia fabrika*, Moscow, 1926, p. 50.
73 See RGALI, fond 2823, Smirenskii, op. 1, ed. khr. 35, letter 1.
75 In 1976, Gnedov wrote a poem ‘Rembo liubil i budu liubit” (1976), *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 120. Sigei notes a similarity in the short burst of poetic activity of both poets. In 1965, Gnedov listed his “reading
In this period, he befriended and corresponded in poetry with the scholar Nikolai Khardzhiev. Khardzhiev recalled that “[Gnedov] firmly believed in the medicinal power of the sun, the Black Sea waves, herbal and other brews. [...] He wanted to live a very long time, to live anew and in his own way the decades taken from him”\textsuperscript{76}. Gnedov died at the age of 88 on 20 November 1978, within weeks of the death of his second wife. A few years previously, he commented ironically on his obscurity: “Incidentally in New York they interred me long ago, in an article devoted to the anniversary of D.D. Burliuk, confusing me with Ignat'ev. It was probably [...] Burliuk who thought that up”\textsuperscript{77}. Gnedov lived longer than any other Russian Futurist.

\textbf{iii) PUBLICATION HISTORY}

A) Publication of Gnedov’s Work

In his lifetime, Gnedov was published in Russia only between the years 1913 and 1919. He stopped publishing or was unable to publish, and it is only recently that there have been efforts to reprint his work on any scale. Gnedov’s bibliography can be divided into three periods. The first is the year 1913, Gnedov’s most prolific period and a time inextricably linked to the poet and publisher Ivan Ignat'ev. The second period covers the years 1914–19, after Ignat'ev’s death, when Gnedov published a number of poems in a variety of places before withdrawing from the literary world. Third, renewed interest in Gnedov has been promoted by Sergei Sigei, who has republished Gnedov’s Futurist works and much previously unknown later poetry (from the late 1950s-1978).

Gnedov’s literary debut was rather low-key. On the back page of the provincial newspaper \textit{Nizhegorodets} (Tuesday, 15 (28) January 1913) was ‘Triolet’\textsuperscript{78}, a short and rather conservative poem. However, a spate of works published by Peterburgskii glashatai in 1913 established Gnedov’s reputation as one of the most extreme experimenters in Futurist poetry. At the end of January of that year came \textit{Gostinets}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{76}Sobr. stikh., p. 205.
\textsuperscript{77}Letter to S. Bobrov dated 17 December 1970; RGALI, fond 2554, Bobrov, op. 2, ed. khr. 481.
\end{flushright}
sentimentam\(^9\), featuring four poems ('Letana', 'Kozii slashch', 'Pridorogaia dum', and 'Muravaia') using neologistic language, and the prose poem 'Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy'. Gnedov's self-glorifying 'Zigzag priamoi sred'mirnyi' opened the fourth Egofuturist collection Dary Adonis\(^{10}\), which was published in late February—early March; the closing poem, 'Gurebka proklenushkov', subtitled a 'pauznaia poeza', was also written by Gnedov but under the pseudonym Zhozefina Gant D'Orsail. Gnedov continued to write in a zaum'-like style in his next works. In the second week of March, two poems ('Na vozle bal'\(^{11}\) and 'Kuk') and two prose works ('Marshegrobaia pen'ka moia na mne' and 'Svirel'ga') rich in unusual coinages were carried in Zasakhare Kry\(^{12}\), the fifth Egofuturist collection. Gnedov's best known work Smert' iskusstvu\(^{13}\), which contained 15 short 'poems' ending with the infamous text-less poem 'Poema Kontsa', was published in the first week of April 1913. Just when Gnedov seemed to be at the peak of his Futurist experimentation, he contributed the stylistically and thematically traditional poem 'Pechal'naia skazka' to Immorteli\(^{14}\), a non-Futurist collection which appeared towards the end of June 1913. Gnedov returned to a radical and neologistic style later that summer. In the eighth Egofuturist collection Nebokopy\(^{15}\) published in August 1913, there were eight works by Gnedov—six poems made up of neologistic word-lines ('Pti'okmon', 'Zubatyi'volk', 'Vchera Segodnia Zavtra', 'Khitraia Moral', 'Pervovelikodrama', and 'Azbuka vstupaiushchim'), one piece of experimental prose ('Kolovorot'), and a final poem written in imitation Ukrainian ('Ognianna svita').

---

\(^9\) V. Gnedov, Gostinets sentimentam, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai, 1913.

\(^{10}\) V. Gnedov, 'Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi' (pp. 1-5) and [Zhozefina Gant d'Orsail] 'Gurebka proklenushkov' (p. 15), in Dary Adonisu.

\(^{11}\) A variant of 'Na vozle bal' laid out as prose is cited in I. Ignat'ev, Egofuturizm, St Petersburg, 1913, p. 9.

\(^{12}\) V. Gnedov, 'Na vozle bal', 'Kuk', 'Marshegrobaia pen'ka moia na mne', and 'Svirel'ga', in Zasakhare Kry. Ego-Futuristy V, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai, 1913, pp. 10-12.

\(^{13}\) V. Gnedov, Smert' iskusstvu. Piatnadtsat' (15) poem, 'Preslovie' I. Ignat'eva, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai, 1913.

\(^{14}\) V. Gnedov, Pechal'naia skazka', in Immorteli. Sbornik stikhov i prozy, Moscow, Zhizn', 1913, p. 63.

almanac, Razvorochenye cherepa, carried one heavily neologistic poem by Gnedov, 'Slezzhit riabidii trun'ga sno—' 86.

Ignat'ev had the habit of filling the back covers of Peterburgskii glashatai editions with fascinating 'hoaxes' as well as actual publication information. For example, no one has ever managed to locate Gnedov's books Kozyi slashch and Futurnaliia (as advertised on the back cover of Dary Adonisu), Ego-Futurnaliia (from Zasakhare Kry), Gory v cheptsakh (from Razvorochenye cherepa and Ignat'ev's Eshafot), Vertikal'niia guby (from the Mezonin poezii's first collection Vernissazh), and Eksessniia dei (from the Mezonin poezii collection Pir vo vremia chumy)87. Both the Egofuturists and Cubofuturists would also on occasion use deliberately unreliable dates and information for their publications.

Evidently, in the final months of 1913, Peterburgskii glashatai got into financial difficulties and publishing activity ground to a halt. On 14 January 1914, the day after his wedding, Ignat'ev committed suicide. The collapse of the publishing house precipitated the disintegration of the Egofuturist group and Gnedov was forced to look for new connections and new outlets for his work. In early 1914, Gnedov and Shirokov's book Kniga velikikh88 was published by B'eta and featured one poem by Gnedov, 'Poema nachala'. In March that year, three more new poems ('Eroshino', 'Sumerki na Donu', 'Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot' i vshei uviadan'ei') were printed in the Futurist group Tsentrifuga's collection Rukonog89. At around this time, the Avant-Garde composer Nikolai Roslavets set Gnedov's poem 'Kuk' to music along with works by Severianin, Bol'shakov, and David Burluk, in Chetyre sochineniia dla peniia i fortepiano90. Also, the scroll Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov appeared, with Gnedov's theoretical piece 'Glas o soglase i zloglase'91 placed next to

86 V. Gnedov, 'Slezzhit riabidii trun'ga sno—', in Razvorochenye cherepa. Ego Futuristy IX, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai, 1913, p. 9.
87 On the back cover of Dary Adonisu, it was announced that Marinetti would participate in the fifth Egofuturist collection "Zasakharennaia Krysa". Kniga velikikh (published by B'eta) by Gnedov and Shirokov gives notice of a second edition of Smert' iskusstvu illustrated by Nikolai Kul'bin and with two forewords by Ignat'ev and Shirokov, but this never materialised.
88 V. Gnedov and P. Shirokov, Kniga velikikh, St Petersburg, B'eta, 1914.
89 V. Gnedov, 'Eroshino', 'Sumerki na Donu', 'Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot' i vshei uviadan'ei', in Rukonog, Moscow, Tsentrifuga, 1914, pp. 7-9.
90 V. Gnedov, 'Kuk', in N. Roslavets, Chetyre sochineniia dla peniia i fortepiano. No. 4. Vasilisk Gnedov "Kuk", Moscow, Sobstvennost' avtora, 1914.
91 V. Gnedov, 'Glas o soglase i zloglase', in Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov [published in the form of a scroll].
essays by Kruchenykh, Kul'bin, and Artur Lur'e. The scroll was published by ‘Svirel'ga’, the name of two of Gnedov’s poems, indicating that the poet had a hand in the publishing process. Gnedov’s literary activity was brought to an abrupt halt in August, when he was drafted and left St Peters burg for the front.

In 1917, after the War and after finishing military college, Gnedov was stationed in Moscow and by the following year was publishing once again in Futurist publications: ‘Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno’ appeared in the first edition of Gazeta futuristov92 and ‘Roiut vam mogilu bogi’ in Vremennik 4-i93. The last poem Gnedov published in his lifetime was ‘To skachushchii lebed’ , which appeared in the journal Puti tvorchestva in 191994.

Subsequently, Gnedov was to suffer complete obscurity as a poet. He would not see any more of his work published in Russia in his lifetime, and over 40 years passed before anything by him was published anywhere. In the West, it was only through the research of Vladimir Markov that Gnedov’s name began to surface once again, although none of Markov’s articles nor those by other Western critics were devoted exclusively to Gnedov’s poems or analysis of them. Markov’s article ‘Odnostroki’ (1963) included Gnedov’s ‘Grokhlit’95, and this seemingly was the first time anything by Gnedov had been published in any format outside Russia. In 1966, an anthology of twentieth century Russian poetry edited by Markov and Sparks contained both an English and Russian version of ‘Poema Kontsa’96. The following year the theoretical article ‘Glas o soglase i zloglase’ resurfaced in Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov, compiled by Markov97. Russian Futurism (1968) by Markov featured a transliteration of ‘Segodnia’ and a facsimile of ‘Ognianna svita’98. In 1973, Robin Milner-Gulland translated ‘Poema Kontsa’ in a catalogue for an exhibition of Tatlin’s works99. In 1981, Nikolai Khardzhiev published a later poem by Gnedov,

93 V. Gnedov, ‘Roiut vam mogilu bogi’, Vremennik 4-i [single sheet publication].
‘Apollonom Bel’vedirskim Maiakovskii ne byl’, in an article on Maiakovskii\(^{100}\). The poet Gennadii Aigi republished ‘Letana’, ‘Pridorogaia dum’, and the poems of the collection \textit{Smert' iskusstvu} to accompany a 1989 article on Gnedov in \textit{V mire knig}^{101}.

Sergei Sigei is almost singlehandedly responsible for the revival of interest in Gnedov. He first published sections of a number of Gnedov poems in his article ‘Ego-futurnaliiia Vasiliska Gnedova’\(^{102}\) in 1987. He used a later poem by Gnedov, ‘zheltyi/ krasnyi/ goluboi/ krasnykh’, in a 1991 article in \textit{Severnaia gileia}, a supplement to the newspaper \textit{Bumazhnik}\(^{103}\). Sigei then organised the booklet \textit{Ego-futurnaliiia bez smertnogo kolpaka}\(^{104}\) (1991), a selection of 15 of Gnedov’s poems and the first collection of the poet. In this edition, ‘Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno’ was republished, ‘BA’ (an embryonic version of Poem 9 of \textit{Smert' iskusstvu}) and ‘a La tyr’ were Futurist-era poems published for the first time, ‘Vse chto my vidim tol’ko son’ was from 1938, and the remaining previously unpublished poems dated from the 1950–70s. Sigei was also involved in the only major edition of Gnedov’s work to date: \textit{Sobranie stikhotvorenii} (1992), published by the University of Trento and edited by Nikolai Khardzhiev and M. Marzaduri. Sigei initiated the project and wrote an introduction and commentaries for it in 1989. All the poems in \textit{Ego-futurnaliiia bez smertnogo kolpaka} are published again here, and it contained numerous unpublished later works that are either undated or from the period 1959–78. The edition also published for the first time a version of ‘Poema nachala’ corrected according to Gnedov’s instructions. However, the texts of \textit{Sobranie stikhotvorenii} cannot be relied upon. At some point during the volume’s publication, alterations were made to normalise the ‘incorrect’ spelling, and, despite the efforts of the editors, there remain textual errors in almost all of the Futurist works\(^{105}\).

Also in 1992, the second volume of the \textit{Zabytiy avangard} series included a reprint of ‘Glas o soglase i zoglase’\(^{106}\). The anthology \textit{Russkaia poezia serebrianogo

\(^{100}\) Khardzhiev, ‘Iz materialov o Maiakovskom’, pp. 274-76 (p. 275).

\(^{101}\) Aigi, ‘Russkii poeticheskii avangard’, pp. 30-31.

\(^{102}\) Sigov (Sigei), ‘Ego-futurnaliiia Vasiliska Gnedova’, pp. 115-23.


\(^{106}\) \textit{Zabytiy avangard} 2, p. 63.
veka 1890–1917 contained Gnedov’s ‘Azbuka vstupaiushchim’ and the poems of Smert' iskusstvu. Two of Gnedov’s poems from Rukonog, ‘Eroshino’ and ‘Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot' i vshei uviadan'e’, were published in a book on the “41°” group (1995). In 1994, the Smert' iskusstvu poems and ‘Letana’ were published in an analysis and collection of Russian experimental poetry and zaum’ by the poet Sergei Biriukov. In 1996, Smert' iskusstvu was reprinted as a booklet, published by Agro-Risk and with a commentary by D. Kuz'min. Most recently, a previously unpublished later poem in memory of Khlebnikov, ‘Ot Leningrada do Pamira’, was published in the 27 May 1997 edition of the newspaper Knizhnoe obozrenie.

There are several more poems that await publication. In addition to the above, the present study publishes the texts and provides analysis of three previously unpublished poems dating from 1917, found in the Maiakovsky Museum in Moscow. Gnedov’s archive there is small, but contains another 36 later poems dating from 1956-73, the majority of which have never been published. There are two unpublished poems held in RGALI, one of which is published in the present study. Finally, Sergei Sigei has written to me that, in compiling the Sobranie stikhotvorenii, he used only two thirds of Gnedov’s manuscripts in Nikolai Khardzhiev’s collection.

112 Archive of S. Bobrov, items 29963, 29964, and 29965.
113 Items 28930-28965.
114 The poem ‘Zoilu’ (1970), RGALI, fond 2554, Bobrov, op. 1, ed. khr. 481; and ‘Ekspromt’ (1960), fond 2823, Smirenskii, op. 1, ed. khr. 88.
115 Sigei refers to unpublished "memoir notes" dating from the 1960s and 1970s that subsequently belonged to Khardzhiev. L.F. D’iakonitsin in Moscow has the originals of two Gnedov poems: ‘Pomniu v 1913 godu v Peterburge’ and ‘la i Marinetti’, the second of which was apparently published in the samizdat journal Transponans in the early 1980s. Sigei also believes there to be owners of further unpublished manuscripts in Kherson, where Gnedov spent the last years of his life (undated letter, 1995). There is considerable mystery surrounding Khardzhiev’s archive so it seems unlikely that any further materials will appear in the near future from that source.
The reaction of contemporary critics to Gnedov’s work was for the most part hostile. Gnedov’s first book, *Gostinets sentimentam*, received a negative review from the poet and critic Sergei Gorodetskii who suggested that such work would adversely affect the Decadent Symbolists involved with the Egofuturist group. However, in their time, the Decadents had been considered quite experimental themselves and they seemed to find some affinity with the Egofuturists. Sologub contributed poetry to the third Egofuturist collection *Orly nad propast’iu* in 1912 and participated in public discussions on the arts alongside Ignat’ev and Gnedov in early 1913. Before Gorodetskii’s negative reaction appeared, Sologub had felt moved to write an impassioned defence of Gnedov against philistine critics, borrowing many motifs from ‘Zigzag priamoi sred’mirnyi’ (from the Egofuturist collection *Dary Adonisu*)

Briusov, whose work had appeared in the Egofuturist collections *Oranzhevaia urna* and *Orly nad propast’iu*, wrote about Gnedov in an article in *Russkaia mys’*.

He compared the forcefully individualistic ideas behind ‘Zigzag priamoi sred’mirnyi’ to themes explored earlier by Maksim Gor’kii, Leonid Andreev, and the Decadents. Briusov considered the Futurists’ main achievements to be in renewing the language through word creation and zaumnyi iazyk. The “meaningless sound combinations” in the poem ‘Gurebka proklenushkov’ were compared to Khlebnikov’s poem ‘Bobeobi pelis’ guby’ and ‘Dyr bul shchyl’ by Kruchenikh.

An article by D. Levin and Shemshurin’s book *Futurizm v stikhakh V. Briusova* related Gnedov’s single-line poems in *Smert’ iskusstvu* to earlier monostichs by Briusov.

---

116 While indebted, in its location of sources, to research carried out by Aleksandr Parnis (see *Russkie pisateli*, I, p. 590) and by Sergei Sigei (particularly *Sobr. stikh.*, pp. 198-205), this section represents the first chronological historiography of Gnedov and his work.


120 Briusov, ‘Novye techeniia’, p. 387.


'Poema Kontsa' attracted a great deal of critical attention. Aleksandr Benua\textsuperscript{124} and L'vov-Rogachevskii\textsuperscript{125}, for example, found it unacceptable; newspapers, and later memoirists, provided a number of descriptions of the poem's on-stage performance\textsuperscript{126}. On the other hand, opinion was divided on 'Poema nachala', Gnedov's contribution to\textit{Kniga velikikh}. The arts journal\textit{Zlatotsvet} had dismissed Shirokov's poems but commented that this was "a shame for Vasilisk Gnedov – he is undoubtedly talented"\textsuperscript{127}. But the reviewer of the newspaper\textit{Utro Rossii} found the book overall highly amusing, and, unable to make sense of Gnedov's 'Poema nachala', commented that "[Gnedov], with all his completely unconnected mutterings 'made in liberty' (\textit{vyvedennymi na svobode}), is the most absolute zero"\textsuperscript{128}.

The overviews of Futurism that were published in 1913–1914 treated Gnedov variously. In some he was marginalised: a survey by Briusov, for example, expended only a footnote describing the performance of 'Poema Kontsa' as a "rhythmic movement"\textsuperscript{129}. In others, Gnedov's poetics was treated as having the hallmarks of insanity. E. Radin in his\textit{Futurizm i bezumie} connected Gnedov's forward dating of his poems in\textit{Nebokopy} to Bergson's notion of the fourth dimension\textsuperscript{130}. Because of his emphasis on experimentation and neologisms, Gnedov was connected with the Egofuturists' rivals in Moscow. In\textit{Futurizm bez maski}, Shershenevich wrote that Gnedov was "in fact closer to the Cubofuturists"\textsuperscript{131} and would later recall with some disdain in his memoirs that Gnedov was an even more radical extremist than

\textsuperscript{124} A. Benua,\textit{Rech'}, 12 April 1913; quoted from\textit{Sobr. stikh.}, p. 201.
\textsuperscript{125} V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, 'Simvolisty i nasledniki ikh',\textit{Sovremennik}, 6 (1913), p. 276; quoted from\textit{Zabytyi avangard} 2, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{127}\textit{Zlatotsvet}, 3 (1914), p. 16; quoted from\textit{Sobr. stikh.}, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{128} S. Krechetov, 'Sredi knig',\textit{Utro Rossii}, 22 February 1914, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{129} V. Briusov, 'God russkoi poezii. April' 1913–aprel' 1914 g.', in his\textit{Sredi stikhov}, pp. 430–52 (p. 435, note 1).
\textsuperscript{130} E. Radin,\textit{Futurizm i bezumie}, Moscow, 1913, p. 36; quoted from\textit{Sobr. stikh.}, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{131} V. Shershenevich,\textit{Futurizm bez maski}, Moscow, 1914, p. 87, note 2.
Similarly, Kornei Chukovskii believed that Gnedov's arrival heralded the end of a recognisable Ego futurism. Gnedov is called “a Kruchenykh in disguise, a secret Cubofuturist, Burliukist, in no way connected with the traditions of Ego futurist poetry”. For Chukovskii, total nihilism defined Gnedov's poems 'Ognianna svita' and 'Poema Kontsa'. The critic Renskii could see only the destruction of the Russian language and “the whimsical, agrammatical construction of phrases” in the Ego futurists’ methods. Tasteven's book on Futurism treated Kruchenykh and Gnedov together. Rytsari bezumia (1914) by Zakrzhevskii devoted considerable space to Gnedov, and the author viewed Gnedov, Ignat'ev, and Kruchenykh as the real 'knights of madness', and Gnedov as the most extreme of all. The book highlights the importance of Nietzsche and Dostoevski to the Ego futurists' philosophy. Both Tasteven and Zakrzhevskii also noted Mallarmé as an important forerunner to the poetics of the more experimental Futurists. In 1915, Gnedov was listed in Vengerov's Kritiko-biograficheskii slovar' russkikh pisatelei i uchenykh.

After the Revolution, Gnedov no longer published new material and he quickly fell from prominence; mentions of his name cropped up rarely, in memoirs and works on recent literature. L'vov-Rogachevskii listed Gnedov in his 1919 Noveishaia russkaia literatura, and Doroshkevich located Gnedov’s ‘Ognianna svita’ in the context of Ukrainian Futurism. One-time Ego futurist Georgii Ivanov gave a brief description of Gnedov—“then there was Vasilisk Gnedov... broad shouldered, once killed a wolf with his fist”, and in Vstrechi (1929) Vladimir Piast recalled a performance of ‘Poema Kontsa’ at his Brodiachaia sobaka nightclub.

---

133 Chukovskii, ‘Ego-futuristy i kubofuturisty’, pp. 120, 130; also Chukovskii, ‘Obraztsy’, pp. 141, 142.
134 Renskii, ‘Skrizhali Ego-Poezii’, Khmel': ezhevesmichny literaturno-obschehestvennyi i kriticheski zhurnal molodezhi, 4-6, 1913, p. 31; quoted from Sobr. stikh., p. 200.
135 G. Tasteven, Futurizm (Na puti k novomu simvolizmu), Moscow, 1914, p. 23.
137 S. Vengerov, Kritiko-biograficheskii slovar' russkikh pisatelei i uchenykh, 1, Petrograd, 1915, p. 184.
138 V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, Noveishaia russkaia literatura, Moscow, 1919, p. 134.
140 G. Ivanov, 'Kitaiskie teni', Zveno, 218, 1927; quoted from Zabytiy avangard 2, p. 67.
141 Piast, Vstrechi, p. 263.
From 1930 for at least the next thirty years, the poet’s name all but disappears from view. A footnote in Neizdanny Khlebnikov (1940), edited by Khardzhiev and Grits, repeated the view that Gnedov’s “word-creation tendencies and epatazh make Gnedov closer to the Cubofuturists”\(^ {142} \). Even after Gnedov’s release from prison in 1954 and the onset of the Thaw, however, the poet still commanded only very occasional references in print. In Stilistika i stikhoslozenie (1959), Boris Tomashevskii located the single-letter poem ‘Iu’ (Poem 14 of Smert’ iskusstvu) in the context of Futurist experiments in zaumnii iazyk, but erroneously called the poem ‘Poeza kontsa’\(^ {143} \).

In the West, efforts to provoke interest in Russian Futurism were centred around Vladimir Markov. Markov and Sparks’s 1966 anthology briefly described ‘Poema Kontsa’ as well as republishing it. In 1968 Markov’s Russian Futurism provided the first lengthy description of Gnedov’s writing to appear outside the Soviet Union, as well as listing reliable bibliographical details. Gnedov’s Futurist publications are dealt with individually. Introducing the poet as “a new futurist genius discovered by Ignat’ev”\(^ {144} \), Markov assesses Gnedov as a “Khlebnikov of ego-futurism” and compares him to Kamenskii and Kruchenykh as well\(^ {145} \).

In the period before perestroika, little information was available concerning Gnedov’s life or poetics. In 1970, in Poeticheskaia kul’tura Maiakovskogo, Khardzhiev and Trenin reiterated that neither Ignat’ev nor Gnedov were connected with Egofuturism in the Severianin-mould and that both were closer to the Cubofuturists in poetic temperament\(^ {146} \). The linguist Panov placed Gnedov’s word-line neologisms in Nebokopy in the context of archaisms\(^ {147} \). In the ninth volume of Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia (1978)\(^ {148} \), which listed writers that had previously been deemed unacceptable, Aleksandr Parnis related Gnedov’s experiments to the later ‘absurdist’ work of the Oberiu. Aleksei Gan was shown to have repeated

\(^{142}\) V. Khlebnikov, Neizdannyye proizvedeniia, Moscow, 1940, p. 478.

\(^{143}\) V. Tomashevskii, Stilistika i stikhoslozenie, Leningrad, 1959, p. 182.

\(^{144}\) RF, p. 78.

\(^{145}\) RF, p. 79.


\(^{147}\) M. Panov, ‘O chlenimosti slov na morfemy’, Pamiati akademika V. V. Vinogradova, Moscow, 1971, p. 178; quoted from Sobr. stikh., p. 155.

the slogan “Smert' iskusstvu”; ‘Poema Kontsa’ was connected with Malevich’s ‘Chernyi kvadrat’ and the American composer John Cage’s silent works 4′33″ and ☐ ☐ ☐. The entry also gave detailed secondary sources for research on Gnedov.149

Khardzhiev’s 1981 article on Maiakovskii described the incident from 1913 when Gnedov saved Maiakovskii’s life in the Brodiachaia sobaka nightclub150. Parnis and Timenchik (1985) mentioned Gnedov in passing, in terms of his involvement in Brodiachaia sobaka151. Gerald Janecek’s article ‘A Zaum’ Classification’ (1986)152 viewed Gnedov as a writer of zaum’, as demonstrated in the analysis of ‘Kobef Gor’ (Poem 4 of Smert' iskusstvu). In 1989, Parnis’s updated article on the poet in the first volume of Russkie pisateli 1800–1917153 added some new information to his 1978 encyclopaedia entry from his private correspondence with Gnedov, and provided references to pre-Revolutionary newspaper reviews. In an article from 1989, the poet Gennadii Aigi provided an introduction and some interpretations of Gnedov’s work154. Both volumes of Zabytyi avangard155 (1991, 1993), which collect hard-to-find materials relating to the Russian Avant-Garde, have extensive sections on Gnedov. In general, over the last 10 years, the number of articles and books on the Avant-Garde in both Russia and the West has grown substantially as archive materials have become more available and the subject as a whole has become more respectable.

Sergei Sigei, who is himself an experimental poet as well as a scholar, is the leading expert on Gnedov and without his work Gnedov would have remained obscure. Drawing from a wealth of previously unknown information as well as his own insight as a poet, he has almost singlehandedly made Gnedov into a serious subject of

149 Parnis developed these ideas into the lecture ‘K interpretatsii poniatia “nul’ form” u Malevicha’ given in Leningrad in December 1988. According to the note in D. Sarab’ianov and A. Shatskikh’s Kazimir Malevich. Zhivopis’ i teoriia (Moscow, 1993, p. 189, note 36), Parnis gave written evidence of Malevich’s interest in ‘Poema Kontsa’. Chronologically, ‘Chernyi kvadrat’ seems to postdate ‘Poema Kontsa’ by two years (i.e. it was painted in 1915), and Malevich’s blank canvasses were not exhibited until December 1919.
153 Russkie pisateli, 1, pp. 589-90. Although listed by Sigei in V. Gnedov, Egofuturnaliia bez smertnogo kolpaka, I have been unable to locate the article “Ego” Vasiliska Gnedova’ by a V. Palii in the Kherson newspaper Leninskii prapor (37, 16 September 1989).
155 Zabytyi avangard 1, pp. 17-20; and Zabytyi avangard 2, pp. 63-71.
study. Sigei’s 1987 article ‘Ego-futurnaliia Vasiliska Gnedova’ in *Russian Literature* analyses several of Gnedov’s poems and cites contemporary critical reaction to them. Gnedov’s innovations in neologistic language, in particular his ‘word-alterations’ (*slovoizmeneniia*) and word-line experiments, are highlighted; but for Sigei, Gnedov’s ‘Poema Kontsa’ is of crucial significance because it marked the cross-over point between poetry and performance art. The collection *Ego-futurnaliia bez smertnogo kolpaka* (1991) contained an introduction, footnotes, and a short bibliography of sources on Gnedov, by Sigei. Also that year Sigei published the article “‘Tsy’ Vasiliska Gnedova’, where he compared a poem by Gnedov to (a translation of) one by Mao Tse-Tsung. The most important study yet of Gnedov is Sigei’s introduction and commentaries in *Sobranie stikhotvorenii* (1992). Sigei managed to correspond with Gnedov, and his introduction provides the most detailed account of Gnedov’s life as well as locating his Futurist poetry in the context of Egofuturism. The commentary to the edition gives useful information on almost all of the poems and interpretations of some of them; the poems of *Smert’ iskusstvu* and *Nebokopy* receive particularly detailed analysis. The volume also contains copies of Gnedov’s drawings and photographs of the poet. More recently, Sigei has continued to make observations about Gnedov’s poetry and its importance to him.

Other recent works have tended to focus exclusively on ‘Poema Kontsa’, rather than Gnedov’s other pieces. Janecek’s article on Minimalism in contemporary Russian poetry (1992) cites ‘Poema Kontsa’ as an early if unintentional example, and shows how the poem disrupts and re-focusses the reading process. D. Kuz’min’s detailed commentary to the 1996 reprint of *Smert’ iskusstvu* examines the book’s history and mistakes made in previous publications. The poet Ry Nikonova has recently written on ‘Poema Kontsa’ as part of her concept of “literary vacuum”.

---

157 In the same year, the book resulting from a conference on Severianin contained Sigei’s paper ‘Igor’ Severianin i Vasilisk Gnedov’ (*Ob Igore Severianine: nauchnaia konferentsiia k stoletiiu poeta*, Cherepovets, 1987, pp. 36-38) but unfortunately I have not been able to see it.
162 R. Nikonova-Tarshis, ‘Ekologiia pauzy’, *Urbi. Literaturnyi al’manakh*, 6 (1996), pp. 36-42. Another article by Nikonova, ‘Slovo – lishnee kak takovoe’, was found at the Internet address:
publications have also provided significant new information on and analysis of Gnedov. A. Krusanov’s historical study of the Russian Avant-Garde has unearthed a wealth of contemporary newspaper sources, and there are several that concern Gnedov directly\[^{163}\]; and Janecek’s important study of zaum’ has a section on Gnedov\[^{164}\].

As a poet, a general picture has formed of Gnedov as a Futurist in the Kruchenykh mould, some of whose experiments still seem radical today. His use of neologistic language has been related to Cubofuturist experiments and zaum’; and other aspects of his poetics are connected to Decadent Symbolism. Sigei’s analyses are by far the most advanced and the present study is much indebted to them and seeks to expand upon them. Having established the general outlines of Gnedov’s literary environment, his biography, bibliography, and historiography, the analysis proceeds to focus in detail upon the poet’s works.


\[^{164}\] Janecek, *Zaum*, pp. 101-104.
CHAPTER 2. WORKS

i) WORKS OF 1913

Nizhegorodets

For Gnedov and for Futurism as a whole, 1913 was the year of flowering and dramatic experimentation. However, Gnedov's first published poem, 'Triolet', had little in common with his subsequent Futurist practice:

Для вас, неги южного неба,
Слагаю я гимны при вьхге...
—«Там ярко пылали колеса у Феба
Для вас—неги южного неба,
Как были вы небом на юге...
—«Там ярко пылали колеса у Феба
Для вас—неги южного неба...»

Gnedov arrived in St Petersburg from Rostov-on-Don in 1912 and it is noteworthy that 'Triolet' is a paean to the southern sky, hence to some extent a poem of exile. In the cold of the north, the lyric subject sings praise as he recalls the warming circles of the southern sun ("tam iarko pylali kolesa u Feba"). The recurrent phrases are enclosed in quotation marks as they form part of the 'hymn'—a poem within the poem. The southern sky is hallowed, and in comparison the northern sky pales—it is only an 'echo', a reminder to the poet of his home.

The poem has no neologisms or Futurist devices but words such as *v'ugu* and the reference to Phoebus (another name for Apollo the sungod, i.e. a poetic word for

---

1 Given the difficulty of Gnedov's work and the limited amount of research done on it, the approach taken here is a relatively straightforward one. Whilst Sigei's work has laid the foundations for this study, the focus here is on a consideration of each of the works in turn. The at times tentative nature of the analysis will be understood to be necessary with poetry of such intractability and because the study of Gnedov is still at an embryonic stage. Brief descriptions of how neologisms are formed and what they mean will be provided if appropriate; otherwise, full details of both can be found in the third chapter, 'Words'.

the sun) suggest a Symbolist influence, as does the triolet verse form, which was 
employed by Symbolists like Sologub as well as by the Egofuturist Severianin. The 
connection of the Egofuturists to the Decadent Symbolists and the influence of the 
latter on Gnedov is suggested by the poem. Although unexceptional in terms of form 
and language and a stark contrast with what was to come, ‘Triolet’ is significant in the 
development of Gnedov’s poetry. Sigei’s refusal to let the poem start Gnedov’s 
Sobranie stikhovorenii gives an artificial picture of the poet’s entry into literature. In 
between his radical Futurist experiments, Gnedov intermittently wrote poems that 
seem almost antithetical to Futurism (‘Triolet’, ‘Pechal’naia skazka’, ‘Poema nachala’), 
and this creates a minor parallel track in his early work.

**Gostinets sentimentam**

In the analysis of Gnedov’s first booklet of poetry Gostinets sentimentam, the 
poems are considered according to theme rather than in the strict order in which they 
appear; where it is unclear, numbers in brackets corresponding to the numbering in 
the Glossary will indicate which poem is being cited.

The booklet contained five works (‘Letana’, ‘Kozi slasch’, ‘Skachek Toski— 
Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’, ‘Pridoroga dum’, and ‘Muravaia’) and what makes them more 
Futurist than ‘Triolet’ is primarily Gnedov’s idiosyncratic use of language. First of all, 
the title of the booklet has the unusual combination the slightly archaic word 
“Gostinets” and the French borrowing “sentimentam” in the title. Elsewhere, Markov 
found the language to be “a [...] display of rustic neologisms and primitivistic shouts”.

For some readers, the consistent use of unusual coinages was confusing and was 
subject to parody:

---

3 References to Apollo can also be found in the poem ‘Prosnuvshis’ ia gotov borot’sia s kem ugodno...’ (1972), and those to other figures from classical mythology in the undated later poem ‘Khotia b ko mne ivilas’ feia...’, Sobr. stikh., pp. 103, 75.

4 See Sobr. stikh., p. 140.

5 V. Gnedov, ‘Letana’ and ‘Kozi slasch’ (p.1), ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’ (pp. 2-3), ‘Pridoroga dum’ and ‘Muravaia’ (p. 4), in Gostinets sentimentam. The works are republished in Sobr. stikh., pp. 31-35.

6 RF, p. 79.
In his humorous review of *Gostinets sentimentam*, Sergei Gorodetskii recounts his impression:

Как отдыхает ум и сердце на этой безпритязательной чепухе! Кажется, что погружаясь в сфере чистого идиотизма, что особенно приятно после умных стихов Вадима Гарднера. Итак отдыхаем вместе...

The evaluation is clearly a negative one, but it is interesting that Gorodetskii, a leading early exponent of Primitivism in literature who had been very much in favour of the creation of neologisms, was able to derive some kind of absurd enjoyment from the book.

Two works in *Gostinets sentimentam* are concerned with flight, interest in flight at the start of the century was reflected in Futurism and Avant-Garde poetry; furthermore, one of the Cubofuturists, Vasilii Kamenskii, had left the literary world between 1911 and 1912 to become one of Russia’s first aviators. However, Gnedov’s work here is not the kind of glorification of technology that was prominent in Marinetti’s writing. In ‘Letana’, flight is portrayed against the backdrop of nature, and the poem’s protagonist is in fact able to fly; in ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’ the protagonist makes a metaphorical flight to the top of a mountain on top of a mythical flying horse. In both cases, flight is associated with the poetic ‘I’. Given the association of flight with freedom, Gnedov’s identification with flight is in keeping with his concern for renovating the language.

---


8 S. Gorodetskii, ‘Puchina stikhovaia’, *Rech*, 18 February 1913, p. 3. Vadim Gardner (1880-1956) was a poet of Acmeist orientation (and therefore closer to Gorodetskii in poetic temperament); see *Russkije pisatele*, I, p. 523.

In his first booklet, Gnedov shows himself to be a nature poet, and the source for his depictions may well be his native Don region. ‘Letana’ depicts a creature flying in a grassy environment. The first two lines of the poem describe taking off and flying at grass level and the movement of wings through the grass:

Уверхую лёто на муравой
Крыло уверхую по зеленкë.

A possible interpretation is that the “Letana” is in fact a bee, with “Lëto-dom” (line 5) referring to the insect’s body. Gnedov’s neologism resembles the Don region dialect word *lëtnaia* meaning “a bee collecting honey”, and the word “Letka” (line 8) may be connected with beehives. At the same time, a later poem ‘Ia uletaiu v Letu’ (1972) may echo the title and first line of ‘Letana’. The second poem, ‘Kozii slashch’, apparently describes the joy in the production of goat’s milk. In the first stanza, the meadows have given the grass which has become goat’s milk:

Козой вымной молочки
Даровилю хозяйь луга!
Луга-га!
Луга-га!

The races mentioned in the second stanza may well be a reference to a ritual to celebrate or encourage fertility, and the last stanza seems to depict someone’s cry during which the sweet goat’s milk foams around the person’s mouth. The subject of ‘Pridorogaia dum’ is the oak tree, “the most widely worshipped of all trees”; the title words may allude to names of plants, for example, *pridorozhnaia igla* (wild geranium). The poem can be viewed as a meditation on an oak tree viewed from the wayside; or the ‘pridorogaia dum’ may be the tree itself, personified (“Vlastnik”, “Listnik”) and

---

10 In a similar way, Kamenskii wrote about his native region (the environs of the river Kama), and the Cubofuturist group Gileia was named after a region where the Burliuk family had an estate.
11 SRDG, 2, p. 113.
12 Note letka (“shelf in front of an entrance to a beehive”, SRDG, 2, p. 113) and letka (“entrance (in beehive)”, Els., 1, p. 467). At the same time, letka is listed as a Latvian Russian dialect word meaning “spring wheat and rye” (SRNG, 17, p. 17).
13 Sobr. stikh., p. 102.
capable of thought, movement, and sound. The tree’s appearance ("Kust") is connected with thought and music, and the movement of its branches is described as a dance.

The panpipes (svirel’) are a visual metaphor representing the tree’s branches; the instrument is also associated with poetry and was of some significance to Gnedov, as evinced by his later coinage “Svirel’ga”. In ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’, the description of nature is very different from the three poems described above. The work apparently concerns the transformation from one emotional state, “Toska”, to another, “Schast’e”. “Toska” and the complex emotions experienced by the poem’s subject are given an almost geophysical reality: the subject floats about “na vysi skal” and “na dno”, and there are further evocations of steep slopes and cliffs, poor weather conditions ("Nenast’e”), whirlwinds, dramatic skies, and a mountain.

In addition, the song-like format and the description of a celebration of nature in ‘Kozii slashch’ exemplify an interest in rural folklore. ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’ introduces various mythical, religious, and philosophical elements. Gnedov was apparently influenced by the fairytales of M. Chulkov and V. Levshin, from where conventional folkloric figures like the flying horse “Zlatokopytok” and the Sorcerer are drawn. The various capitalised ‘characters’ (“Begun-Toska”, “Maliutka Ogne-Lavy”’), places (“Zlatokoniushnia”, “Krug Schast’ia”), and events (“Beg sviatoi”) create a confusing picture. The movement from emotional confusion to a state of being fully in control is described in terms of a leap from the abyss (“Bezdna”) to the top of the Holy Mountain (“Sviataia Gora”). At the same time, the scene depicted at the end of ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’ carries strong overtones of Nietzsche, and the piece may be a description of a kind of personal ‘overcoming’:

Вверху Зигзаг—Маяк в Рукб...
Стою... стою вверху... Царю!

---

15 Sobr. stikh., p. 142. The personification of grief (here “Toska”, “Begun-Toska”) is also a typical feature of folk songs; Handbook of Russian Literature, ed. V. Terras, New Haven, 1985, p. 147.
On the other hand, according to Sigei, "the 'Poet – Pegasus – Parnassus' is perceived as the core of the plot (siuzhetny sterzhen'), and around it breathes the 'life-after-death' story (fabula)\textsuperscript{16}. In this connection, Cirlot provides an interesting passage concerning the idea of inversion:

> According to Schneider, the continuity of life is assured by the mutual sacrifice which is consummated on the peak of the mystic mountain: death permits birth; all opposites are for an instant fused together and then inverted. What is constructive turns to destruction; love turns to hate; evil to good; unhappiness to happiness; martyrdom to ecstasy\textsuperscript{17}.

The theme of inversion is present in other works by Gnedov, particularly 'Poema Kontsa', and also in his disruptive poetics as a whole.

In 'Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy', the boundary between poetry and prose is blurred. The dashes that separate the words and phrases of the poem may be perceived as a substitute for line breaks or may indicate pauses. In any event, the work seems indebted to Andrei Belyi's four *Simfonii* (1902-1908)\textsuperscript{18}. The mixture of melodramatic and symbolic language and themes led Markov to describe Gnedov as "a half-baked Nietzschean, indulging in symbolism of the worst kind"\textsuperscript{19}.

'Muravaia' is the last poem in the collection and the least penetrable. Sigei suggests that it develops the murder-mystery motifs of Igor' Severianin's poem 'Piatitsvet II', except that "there is far more of the abstract, far more economy"\textsuperscript{20} in Gnedov's piece. 'Muravaia' is only nine words long, limiting itself to mentioning the most salient elements of what could be a crime:

\textsuperscript{16} Sobr. stikh., p. 140.
\textsuperscript{18} The word "Golubiashchii", apparently referring to the sky in the work, may also carry the suggestion of doves (golubi), and hence Belyi's novel *Serebriany golub* (1910). Furthermore, it is part of Slavic folk belief that "at death, the soul turns into a dove", Cirlot, *Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{19} RF, p. 79.
Line 4 gives a medium for the crime ("Travoi otravoi"). The references to green and grass in the last two lines are similar to those in ‘Letana’. The brevity of the poem makes it rather intractable, and in this it is similar to the poems in Smert' iskusstvu (1913) and to ‘V boku klok sena’ (1917).

_Dary Adonisu_

Gnedov’s ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’ and ‘Gurebka Proklenushkov’ were published in the fourth Ego futurist almanac Dary Adonisu, and the two pieces opened and closed the book. The first five pages of the almanac were occupied by ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’, a polemical work full of self-affirmation and written in a very direct prose style achieved by frequent exclamation and very infrequent use of adjectives, with the exception of the central notions “Prizemisty” and “Sred'mirnyi”. There is also a great deal of confusing imagery that seems at times rather intractable, so this analysis will not attempt a plot synopsis but will try to explain the central concepts.

The title, ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’, is both oxymoronic (a zigzag cannot be straight) and neologistic: the adjective “sred'mirnyi” is formed from _seredina mira_ or _sredi mira_. According to Sigei, the “Sred'mir” can be understood as the equivalent of the ‘the middle way’. Gnedov dedicates the work to himself and it is about himself. Here, the ‘I’ is an anomaly in the world constructed in the text and the zigzag is its effect on an uncomprehending world; hence it is capable of a seemingly paradoxical type of movement:

Въдь Зигзагъ скользить эмь Кругомъ, Ведь...

---

21. V. Gnedov, ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’ (pp. 1-5) [Zhozefina Gant d'Orsail], 'Gurebka proklenushkov' (p. 15), in Dary Adonisu. The works are republished in Sobr. stikh., pp. 36-39.

It is tempting to assume that the “Zigzag” refers to Gnedov or to his poetry. At the same time, the zigzag is also lightning, and hence there are suggestions of a scene in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: “Behold, I am an herald of the lightning and an heavy raindrop from the clouds: but that lightning is named *Superman*”23. Gnedov’s perception of Egofuturism is encapsulated in the following statement:

Все во Мдо и Я Мое во Всем.24

The individual is both a microcosm of the universe and is the universe at one and the same time. Equally, this can be viewed as an arrogant statement of the writer’s ability to express truths. The tone of ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’ is characterised by the lyric subject gloating over his own superiority and taunting the inadequacy of the “Prizemisty”. The “Prizemisty” is defined in opposition to the ‘I’ of the text; the word means a ‘stout’ or ‘squat’ person, but also one who is *pri zemle*—associated with the earth’s surface—rather than one who experiences extremes of height and depth, i.e. shallow. The “Prizemisty” is one who cannot see, feel, or understand as keenly as the ‘I’25. In contrast to the “Prizemisty”, the lyric subject is ‘in the happiness of height’ (“v Schast’i Vysoty—Gde la tsarit’”). On page 3, the lyric subject declares haughtily:

Царю! Царю и рёю надо всём

These words are echoed in the last lines too:

Орлы! Орлы! Вся синь!
Средмёрная:
Я!
Царю! Царю!

---

24 Gnedov later claimed that he wrote most of the Egofuturists’ *Gramata intuitivnoi assotsiatii* (January 1913); *Sobr. stikh*, p. 197, and Sigov (Sigei), ‘Egofuturnaliia Vasiliska Gnedova’, p. 118.
25 In an article in the journal *Teatr i iskusstvo*, Fedor Sologub developed the concept of the “Prizemisty” to describe critics unable to appreciate great works of art but nevertheless form judgements on them; F. Sologub, ‘Prizemistye sudiat’, *Teatr i iskusstvo*, 7 (17 February 1913); quoted from *Sobr. stikh*., p. 19. However, Sologub would later speak of the Futurists (Severianin excluded) as untalented and false and did not believe that Futurism was the art of the future; Krusanov, *Russkii avangard*, p. 291.
The entire final scene that Gnedov creates is very similar to the ending of ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’. The ecstatic language and depictions of heavens, mountains, eagles, and so on, has very strong resonances of Symbolism. In turn, such imagery can be found in Nietzsche (the eagle and the serpent are the symbols of the ‘Superman’ in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*) and is also common to Romanticism in general.

Gnedov’s second contribution to *Dary Adonisu* was the poem ‘Gurebka Proklenushkov’, which he wrote under the pseudonym Zhozefina Gant d’Orsail. According to the poet, this “mystification” was intended to reflect the Egofuturists’ connections with high society with the hoax French-sounding name based on a well-publicised brand of French perfume. However, the pseudonym’s implication of urban sophistication is quite at odds with the rustic setting of the poem.

‘Gurebka Proklenushkov’ is subtitled a “pauznaia poeza”; the reason for this is not at all clear, although it may be a way of describing the effect of the exclamations that punctuate the poem:

A-a! A-a! Zelenyi v'ytki
Xlestaite, igraite v'ya boka.
A-a! A-a! A-a! Y-y-y!!

These exclamations are cries of pain, but it can be noted that the sound “au” is a call so as not to lose one another in a wood, and there are further sounds in the second line of

---

26 Also Severianin’s poem ‘Prolog III’ (1912), which contains the line “la v nebesakh nadmenno reiu”; Severianin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1, p. 174.

27 It is not clear whether ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’ was really written in Rostov-on-Don in 1911 as claimed at the end of the piece. For Sigei, this is deliberate mystification: the phrase “orlenie nad bezdnoi” comes from *Orly nad propast'iu*, the name of the third Egofuturist almanac published in November 1912, that is, before Gnedov joined or was known to the Egofuturists (*Sobr. stikh.*, p. 143). This may be disputed: as we have seen, mention of eagles and abysses is hardly unique to the Egofuturists.

28 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 144.

29 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 144; and RF, p. 78. The pseudonym may also have been indebted to another recent literary hoax: the poet E.I. Vasil'eva used the *nom de plume* Cherubina de Gabriac for a series of poems in the journal *Apollon* (1909-10). See A. Parnis, ‘Gnedov Vasilisk’, and V. Glotser, ‘Vasil'eva Elizaveta Ivanovna’, in *Russkie pisateli*, I, pp. 589, 394.

30 As is Vadim Shershnevich’s poem ‘Liubovnost’ on the opposite page, but there the similarities end.
stanza 3 ("Gua-gua-a-ga-oil!") as well as at the end of the fourth and fifth stanzas. The exclamations caught the attention of Briusov, who compared them to the zaum' of Kruchenykh's 'Dyr bul shchyl' poem and 'Boboobi pelis' guby' by Khlebnikov.

The first word of the title, 'Gurebka', seems to be a form of gur'ba. The second word is more problematic, but seems to involve the verb proklinat' prokliast' and perhaps klen (maple tree). For losing the "igolochku-slezku", the protagonist ("Proklenushk") is cursed and beaten by his mother, and he cries out in pain and in anguish. He is cast out and wanders in the forest:

Прокленушек сабтлыый,
Прокленушек въ зелении,
На матерный кличъ неотвтыйный,
Братьямь останешься врён-ли?...
А—гу—а!

At the end, the protagonist and his brothers (who presumably together make up the "gurebka proklenushkov") have sown their "tear-needles" through the forest:

Пораж'яли мы, бздные,
По лесу иголочки-сlezki
А—гу—а!

Because the exact nature of the "Proklenushki" and the "igolochki-slezki" is difficult to ascertain, interpretation of the poem remains somewhat fluid. In a letter to Khardzhiev, Gnedov stated that he wrote the poem "on the basis of a folk superstition held in Ukrainian (non-Cossack) villages in the Don region". Unfortunately Gnedov did not indicate which particular belief he was basing his poem on. It may be that the family described in the poem is not a human one. Given the forest setting, the "Proklenushek" and its brothers might be trees, whose branches whip their own sides

31 Note also the sounds made by dogs in the forest ("Gau, gau! Ga-ga! Ga-ga!") in the tenth section of Khlebnikov's 'Tiran bez Te' (1922); V. Khlebnikov, 'Tiran bez Te', Tvoreniia, ed. M. Poliakov, comp. V. Grigor'ev and A. Parnis, Moscow, 1986, p. 353.
32 V. Briusov, 'Noye techenia', p. 388.
33 With the 'ia' changed to 'e' in line with a possible dialect pronunciation.
34 The idea of "losing tear-needles" might refer to crying; a tear running down a cheek might be imagined as resembling a needle, and the eye of the needle a tear.
35 Sobr. stikh., p. 144.
(in stanza 1). In the earlier ‘Pidorogaia dum’, there was a suggestion of the personification of an oak tree.

Gnedov’s two poems in Dary Adonisu are both about outcasts but in very different situations. In ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’, the outcast is an individual who claims such genius that he is beyond the comprehension of all those around him. The work is a forceful expression of romantic solipsism; the individual is viewed in relation to the entire universe. In ‘Gurebka Proklenushkov’, the outcast and his brothers are pitiable creatures who inhabit the smaller environment of a forest and who are punished. The poem also contains further evidence of Gnedov’s interest in nature and folklore, both of which were apparent in Gostinets sentimentam.

The impact of Gnedov’s entry into the Egofuturist group was felt in Ivan Ignat’ev’s poetry in Dary Adonisu. His second poem was entitled ‘Vasilisku Gnedovu’, and it borrowed the words “sred'mirnaia” and “sred'mir’e” from ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’36. In a subsequent article reviewing the progress of Egofuturism, Ignat’ev reiterated Gnedov’s importance for the entire movement:

Эго-Футуризму суждено было пройти «Пути василисковые»37.

Zasakhare kry

The fifth Egofuturist collection Zasakhare kry38, which derived its name from a cycle that Gnedov apparently wrote but never published39, contained four works by the poet: ‘Na vozle bal’, ‘Kuk’, ‘Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne’, and ‘Svirel’ga’. Markov notes that Gnedov’s works are “the most radical” in Zasakhare kry, and he compares Gnedov to three Futurists (Khlebnikov, Kamenskii, and Kruchenykh) of the rival group Gileia in the same paragraph40.

According to Ignat’ev, in ‘Na vozle bal’ Gnedov showed himself to be a “great master in the area of Egofuturist prose” and was attempting to ignore theme41. To

38 V. Gnedov, ‘Na vozle bal’ and ‘Kuk’ (p. 10), ‘Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne’ (p. 11), and ‘Svirel’ga’ (p. 12), in Zasakhare Kry. The works are republished in Sobr. stikh., pp. 40-42.
39 Sigov (Sigei), Ego-futurnaliia Vasiliska Gnedova’, p. 119
40 RF, p. 79.
41 Ignat’ev (Ego-futurizm, St Petersburg, 1913, p. 9) quoted from a prose version of ‘Na vozle bal’ with certain textual alterations (“neveselii” - “neveselei”, “snotekivoi” - “na Tekivoi”, “bereziam
achieve this, Gnedov resorted to breaking down standard syntax, as in the two prepositions of the title, and made the work more consistently neologistic than any of the pieces he had published thus far:

Cjesteki невеселей заплакулись на Текивой,
Боро гатали веселыми—березнячыми охотниками—

Веселочемь сапало перебродое Грохло
Голоса двоенлись на двадцать кричаков—

Засолнило на развигой листя—
Обхватена цыловами бьетая ненасытна,—

A rough synopsis of the poem can be attempted. On the “Tekivaia” (perhaps a river), unhappy people have burst into tears. In line 2, people shout happily and perhaps abruptly; birch-tree flesh is hunted. Line 3 describes a crashing or banging sound that is capable of liquid-like movement, which is being carried out with happiness. Line 4 seems to describe voices echoing. In line 5, sunlight starts to appear through moving leaves, and in line 6, something rather unclear (“b’etaia nenasyta”) is covered in kisses. The neologisms are difficult to decipher, but an impressionistic picture seems to emerge of a noisy and boisterous occasion, perhaps at the edge of a wood, where there are both sad and happy revellers.

In contrast with the rest of the poem, the final couplet is fully comprehensible, consisting of two phrases in standard Russian. Gnedov’s recurrent stress on the verb ponimat’/poniati’ indicates that he was well aware of the difficulty readers face in comprehending his works and, in the penultimate line, he seems almost to taunt them:

И Вы понимаете ли в этом что-нибудь
Слезетеки эта—плакуха—изволите—Крыса...

veseliach'i okhotei' - "veseliam—bereziach'iām okhotei", "Veselodchem" - "Veseloch'em", and "grokhlo" - "Grokhlo"); here, the potential for blurring the boundary between prose and poetry is emphasised.

42 The direct address of the reader is also a trait common throughout Maiakovskii’s poetry (e.g. ‘A Vy mogli by?’).
By revealing in the last word of the poem that the rat is the real meaning of the poem’s first word “slezeteki”, Gnedov changes the tone of the entire piece. The result of this incomprehensible collection of neologisms is something unpleasant and unwanted, a rat. Sigei contends that for the Futurists the rat was a substitute for a muse and develops a thesis that, in ‘Na vozle bal’, Gnedov is ridiculing art:

In addition, the depiction of a ball in ‘Na vozle bal’ may allude to the kind of Egofuturism typified by Severianin, and as such the piece may be a parody.

In ‘Kuk’, Gnedov once again shows himself to be a nature poet, depicting birdlife in a forest. Although it involves four species of bird (cuckoo, little bustard, quail, and jackdaw), the poem is primarily concerned with the cuckoo.

For Gnedov, the sound “Kuk!” was that of the female cuckoo calling the male, who answers “Ia!”; as Sigei notes, “the poem is in fact a dramatic scene: a dialogue
accompanied by stage direction". Along with the dialogue between the male and female cuckoos, there is also the monologue of the expectant little bustard nestlings ("strepetki"). Their unanswered cry, which recalls 'Gurebka proklenushkov', ends this poem on an uncertain and worrying note—a nothing where the response of the absent parent should be.

The neologisms in the poem are more restrained than those in ‘Na vozle bal’, but the use of abbreviated forms and dialect words here is typical of Gnedov’s use of language as a whole. The sound “Kuk” is a shortening of the standard kuku; the interjection “Guk” seems to come from the Don region dialect verb gukat’ (“to call”) and represents the different sound made by the jackdaws encamped in a beech tree. Representation of birdsong was quite common amongst other Futurists: Kamenskii mimics the sounds of doves (“Ag-gurl”) in ‘Razvesnilas’ vesna’ (1910), nightingales (“Chok-i-chok / Chtrrrrr”) in ‘Solovei’ (1916), and woodland birds in ‘Tsia-tsint” (1917). Khlebnikov would later develop ‘ptichii iazyk’ in Zangezi (1921), and, in his 1922 poem ‘Sinie okovy’, Khlebnikov alluded directly to Gnedov’s poem:

Кук! Кук!

об этом прежде знал Гнедов.

In 1914, the composer Nikolai Roslavets set ‘Kuk’ to music, alongside three other poems by Severianin, David Burliuk, and Konstantin Bol’shakov. Roslavets was then developing ‘sintetakkordy’ (synthetic chords), a non-diatonic harmonic ordering, and was at the forefront of the Avant-Garde in music.

‘Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne’ is a prose work related to ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’ and ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi’. These pieces are different from the poems in their general ‘metaphysical’ concerns, and they share an

---

44 Sobr. stikh., p. 146.
45 SRDG, I, p. 117.
46 It should also be noted that the dictionary of Don dialects lists kuka as a “water-tiger” (SRDG, II, p. 97), and the verbs kukat’ (SRDG, II, p. 97) and bukat’ (SRDG, I, p. 46) refer to the sounds made by a water beetle; so there may be a curious secondary level of animal behaviour and sound being described in the poem.
47 ‘Tsia-tsint” is a neo-primitivist poem in some ways very close to ‘Kuk’.
assertive lyric subject, short exclamatory phrases, and other preoccupations. In the
title, “marshegrobaia” combines marching and coffins, and, according to Sigei,
“pen’ka” combines pesnia and pen’kovaia verevka, creating a concept similar to
Morgenstern’s Galgenlieder (Songs of the Gallows)\textsuperscript{50}. The impression from the title
may be of the piece’s protagonist carrying or dragging his/her coffin on a long journey.
In one section, there may be an identification of the lyric subject and Christ:

я Стезя—Я свой гробь—Я и марши маршу—на плечах Я свой Гробь и себя
уношу.—Я свой Гробь и Себя оскелплю въ травь

This reinforces the title’s suggestion of the image of a pallbearer and is reminiscent of
Christ carrying his cross up Calvary. The image of the lyric subject being a coffin,
being inside the coffin, and carrying the coffin at one and the same time relates to the
idea of the multiple existence of the ‘I’ expressed in the phrase “Vse vo Mne i Ia Moe
vo Vsem” (‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi’). The portrayal of the ‘I’ as a Christ-like
figure is also similar to Maiakovskii’s Vladimir Maiakovskii. Tragediiia. The
sometimes agrammatical sentences describe writing on white cliffs (“Zapishu na
skalakh belykh napisei Rok”) and there follows a grave inscription (“Zdes’ lezhit”) and
the commands (“‘Ne khodite k Mechu’”, “‘Polozhaite Serdtsa na Dolanakh!’”). The
contrast of the lyric subject who writes on cliffs and the rest of the world in the valleys
below is close to scenes in ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi’ (“Prizemisty” as opposed to
“Sred’mirnyi”). Similarly, in the final four lines, the clash of emotions causes one to run
to the grave while the other “sobs in the heights”\textsuperscript{51}:

Два подгоря и счаста расшились на клетки, клеть одежа побежала въ могилу,
другая на выши рыдаять.

The associations of grief–depth and happiness–height are similar to those in ‘Skachek
Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’.

The title-word of Gnedov’s last poem in Zasakhare Kry, ‘Svirel’ga’, was one of
his most used coinages: it is the title of the third poem in Smert’ iskusstvu as well as the

\textsuperscript{50} Sobr. stikh., p. 157.
\textsuperscript{51} Based on the verb \textit{rydat’}, “rydachit’ is a verbal neologism meaning ‘to do the actions of a ‘rydak’
(a neologism, but ‘someone who sob’)’, or formed by analogy with \textit{rybachit’}, \textit{rybak}. 
name of the venture which published the scroll Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov in 1914. Pan-pipes (svirel') are traditionally connected with poetry (Pan was the god of poetry)\textsuperscript{52}. The grafting-on of the -ga might be perceived as giving the word a folksy quality or perhaps creating an association with pustel'ga (kestrel).

'Svirel'ga' is at least partially a nature poem, although rather an unusual one. First of all, Gnedov continues to experiment with language, particularly the techniques of non-agreement and the juxtaposition of nouns in the nominative case, for example:

Гд! Поэтъ блюститель—раскрылена нейроша сна,
Распознали Лебедь—беззаботка задорка Крашень...
Колеса развращенная спина,—вертогераный дню небоклонь...

The listing-type effect of the juxtapositions leads to a partial breakdown of the syntax and bears some similarity to Marinetti’s ‘parole in libertà’ (where verbs were given only in the infinitive, and there were no adjectives or adverbs). Secondly, the content of the poem is rather unclear, and this lack of clarity is intensified by the neologisms. After the first three lines given above, the poem appears to describe a journey to a winter dacha at the edge of a forest; there seems to be an almost sensual relationship between poet and forest:

Назовляя я тебя дорога-дога—рукой еловито люблють.
Передолчу къ тебяли на Дачу,—буду ласками лять...

However, the neologistic descriptions of the circular motion of cartwheels on the journey through a forest and the surrounding wildlife (burdock, rushes, a squirrel, etc.) are suddenly interrupted. As in ‘Na vozle bal’, there is a direct address to the reader (“Eva! Milostivye Gosudari — skazhitе — v kotorom ukhe u menia zvenit kamerton”) written in completely standard language after a passage of neologisms; this is followed by an unexpected and seemingly unmotivated shift from the wintry forest environment to a backdrop of desert and groaning camels\textsuperscript{53} in lines 13-16. Furthermore, the exact

\textsuperscript{52}This is also present in Russian literature, for example, in Pushkin’s poem “I v shume sveta liubi, Adel’, moiu svirel'”.

\textsuperscript{53}A line in ‘Vchera’ (Nebokopy, 1913) also contains an allusion to camels (“staneteverbluudymi”), as does Gnedov’s later poem ‘Maiakovskii i Esenin’ (1976), Sobr. stikh., p. 116. Elena Guro’s “nebesnyе verbliuzhata” were a metaphor for clouds.
nature of the poem’s addressee ("Ту Поэт belosnezhii") is rather unclear; whether the poet himself, the snow-covered forest, or perhaps the mountain at the end of the poem:

Уверху златоплящу полую—диванъ подъ Горою стоялъ.
Ты Поэтъ belosnezhий,
Раскрытое жало у Пжжи...
Стоноему тебя цѣлювалъ...

The theme of whiteness is significant for subsequent poems by Gnedov. Here the white of the snow is connected to the poet, who is compared to a swan in line 2. The identification of swan and poet will later be central to the poem ‘To skachushchii lebed’ (1919). ‘Svirel’ga’ continually forms images and metaphors involving various creative acts: music (“Svirel’ga”, “kamerton”), graphic art (“Guasho”, “karton”, reinforced by mention of various colours), and dance (“Krugopliash”, “zlatopliashu”). References to plants, dancing, sleep, horizons (and the word “dno”), and splashing all occur elsewhere in Gnedov’s poetry.

Gnedov’s contributions in Zasakhare kry reinforces the impressions created by his first works. Nevertheless, the use of language continues to be a radical departure from literary norms, in that it is consistently neologistic and exclamatory throughout, and Gnedov has begun to experiment with syntax (‘Na vozle bal’, ‘Svirel’ga’). The subject matter of the poems often contrasts with the extreme experiments of the language, as for example in the placid nature scenes depicted in ‘Kuk’ and Svirel’ga’. At the same time, in ‘Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne’ the poet continues the strident lyric subject and the more ‘metaphysical’ concerns seen in two previous works.

Smert’ iskusstvu

Gnedov’s best known and most studied work is Smert’ iskusstvu, published in the first week of April 1913\(^5\). The booklet contains fifteen poemy, an ironic designation intending both to amuse or shock the reader and draw attention to the

---
\(^5\) V. Gnedov, Smert’ iskusstvu. Ignat’ev’s foreword was called a “preslovie”, seemingly a combination of predislovie and preslovutyi as if to attract further attention. The cycle has been republished several times: in Aigi, ‘Russkii poeticheskii avangard’, p. 31; Sobr. stikh., pp. 43-48; Russkaia poeziia “serebrianogo veka”, pp. 514-15; S. Biriukov, Zevgma, p. 61 (unfortunately I have not been able to see this version ); and V. Gnedov, Smert’ iskusstvu (1996), pp. 3-17.
significant abbreviation in poetic language and form in the cycle. None of the poems is longer than a single line, two poems consist of a single word, two more poems consist of a single letter, and the last poem is made up of just the title ‘Poema Kontsa’\(^55\) and a blank page. According to Markov, this final piece “made Gnedov a celebrity”\(^56\).

Previous analyses have tended to focus on individual *Smert' iskusstvu* poems out of context, so here an attempt has been made to consider the poems together as a cycle as well as in terms of their individual significance. The length of the poems facilitates a deepening of the analysis, and each poem will be quoted in full. Before proceeding to the analysis, it should be noted that, in contrast to the radical content, the layout is traditional and there is no typographical experimentation. However, the format of the poems is interesting; it has been organised so as both to differentiate the poems from each other and to differentiate the different elements within each poem from each other. Hence, apart from the final three, each poem consists of a poem number, the title in capital letters followed by a full stop, and the text (mostly) in lower case letters.

ПОЭМА 1.

Польщается—Пепель Душу.

The first poem introduces the idea of destruction that is important for the whole cycle. Janecek considers the title-word “Stonga” to be made up of *ston* and *shtanga* (bar-bell weight), meaning “a heap or weight of groans”\(^57\). The first word of the poem is the neologism “Polynchaetsia”, formed from *polyn’* (wormwood) or *polynka* (“wormwood fumes”\(^58\)), the ‘k’ in the latter accounting for the ‘ch’ in the coinage\(^59\). The evocation of powder or smoke connects with the following word ‘Pepel’e’, formed from *pepel*, and meaning something like “a state of being or becoming ash”\(^60\). Kuz’min has

---

\(^{55}\) Note that, in the original version, the first letters of both words are upper case (‘Poema Kontsa’); subsequent reprints have been incorrect in standardising the title by making the ‘k’ lower case.

\(^{56}\) *RF*, p. 80.

\(^{57}\) Janecek, *Zaum*, p. 103. The neologism of the title can also be compared with Gnedov’s earlier coinage “stonocem”.

\(^{58}\) *Dal’*, III, p. 160.

\(^{59}\) Janecek’s suggestion (*Zaum*, p. 103) that, apart from *polyn’*, the word consists of *polynat’*, *poliniat’*, and *lynchevat’* seems less likely.

\(^{60}\) Janecek, *Zaum*, p. 103.
paraphrased the poem as the “groan of an incinerated soul”\textsuperscript{61}. Wormwood has well-known ominous connotations, and in the poem it may be that wormwood poisons the soul. Alternatively, it could be the wormwood itself which is being burnt and its soul that groans, an idea developed later in this analysis. In either case, there is plausibly a connection between the dying cry of the soul in this poem and the death of art proclaimed in the booklet’s title.

ПОЭМА 2.

КОЗЛО.

БУБЧИГИ КОЗЛЕВАЯ—СИРЕНА. СКРЫМЬ СОЛНЦА.

Like Poems 4 and 6, ‘Kozlo’ is a particularly intractable poem. The title-word seems to be a neologism from \textit{kozel}, but it is unclear what part of speech it is: a noun (along the lines of \textit{gryzlo}, for example), an adverb or neuter short-form adjective, a neuter past-tense verb, or a shortened form of the adjective \textit{kozlovyi}. According to Dal', there is in fact a type of ball game called \textit{k zo lo}\textsuperscript{62}, but this seems inappropriate here. ‘Kozlo’ recalls the earlier ‘Kozii slashch’, a poem which appeared to have ritualistic resonances.

There are two sentences in the poem, and they contain some unusual neologisms. In the first, “bubchigi” seems to be made up of \textit{buba} (which Gnedov defined as “any grain, wheat, bean, etc., in general anything round”\textsuperscript{63}) and \textit{ichig}, “a type of heel-less light shoe on a soft sole”\textsuperscript{64}; “kozlevaia” is a misspelling of \textit{kozlovaia}, and “sirenia” is not an existing form of either \textit{siren’} or \textit{sirena}. The non-agreement of the neologisms further complicates the picture; Sigei’s view that “bubchigi” refers to the “lapti of the Buba, that is Baba Yaga” (who might be described as a siren?) is unclear\textsuperscript{65}. In the second sentence, “Skrym” is probably a mixture of \textit{skryt’} and \textit{Krym}\textsuperscript{66},

\textsuperscript{61} Kuz’min, ‘Kommentarii’, p. 18. Since there is another reference to the soul in Poem 5, “Dushu” is unlikely to be the dative singular of \textit{dush} or the first person singular present tense of \textit{dushit’}, as Janecek suggests; Janecek, \textit{Zaum}, p. 103.

\textsuperscript{62} See Dal’, II, p. 236.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Sobr. stikh.}, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{SSRLIa}, 5, p. 600.

\textsuperscript{65} Letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97.

\textsuperscript{66} A formal analogy can be made with the word \textit{skryn’} (“area of a pond that touches a dam and is separated by a frame”, \textit{SRDG}, III, p. 126).
perhaps suggesting a place where the sun is hidden or the absence of sun from a place
where it should be, but it is not obvious how this relates to the first sentence.

ПОЭМА 3.

СВИРЬЛЫГА.

Разломчено—Просторчевее... Мхи-Звукопась.

As has already been noted for the eponymous poem in *Zasakhare kry*, the coinage
“svirel'ga” is closely connected to the idea of poetic creation and the poet.
Furthermore, the words “Razlomcheno—Prostorechev'e...” (i.e. *prostorechie razlomano*)
are almost a programmatic statement of the poet’s attitude towards poetic
language: Gnedov incorporates colloquial and dialect forms of Russian and
deliberately disrupts them. The imagery of the words “Mkhi-Zvukopas” connects the
poet to nature. The notion of a ‘herder of sounds’ is formed by analogy with *konepas*,
*svinopas*, and so on, and herdsmen are also often depicted with a pipe (*svirel’*).
The hyphenation “Mkhi-Zvukopas” is less clear, but Gnedov may be implying the
personification of nature or a direct association of the natural world and the process of
creating poetry.

ПОЭМА 4.

КОБЕЛЬ ГОРЬ.

ЗАТУМЛО-СВИРЬЛЬЖИТ. РАСПРОСТИТЕ.

The title of the fourth poem contains a male dog (*kobel’*) and a curious form of *gore*,
looking forward to the title of Poem 9. The connection with the previous poem is felt

---

67 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 146.
68 There is some irregularity in the punctuation of “Mkhi-Zvukopas” and “Zatumlo-Svirelzhit”. Both
halves of Gnedov’s previous compounds have comprised nouns equivalent in number and case (e.g.
“peredumki-svireli”, “duby-beliaki”, “rzhaveleni-dubtys”, and “veti-gudtys” in ‘Pridorogaia dum’).
Kuz’min claims that these hyphens are actually hand-written and should have been dashes (Kuz’min,
‘Kommentarii’, p. 21), and his edition makes the resulting changes. The change does not significantly
alter the meaning, but it brings the two phrases into line with similar syntactic structures in poems 1,
2, 5, 7, and 12. Nevertheless, “Zatumlo-Svirelzhit” may be hyphenated along the lines of “zelenko-
muravoi” (line 5 of *Muravaia*), where the first element is an adverb modifying the second.
69 There may be a pun on *gora*, genitive plural *gor*. Gnedov plays on the homonymic possibilities of
gore, *gora*, and *goret’*, e.g. “goravyi” (‘Letana’), “K Gore! K Gore! Goriu na Nei s Konem svoim
Letuchim...” (‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’).
in the similarity between the titles ‘Svirel’ga’ and ‘Kobel’ gor’, and reinforced by the verb “svirel’zhit” (where the noun “svirel’ga” has softened to give the stem “svirel’zh-”\textsuperscript{70}), another veiled reference to poetry. Here, the musical or poetic creation is rather gloomy: “zatumlo” seems to be a neuter past tense verb formed by shortening zatumanit\textsuperscript{71} or an adverbial neologism. The third word “rasprostite” is a variant of rasprostit’sia made transitive, as if to describe a situation where the addressees are leaving or have been ordered to leave. Together, there seems to be some connection between the grief, the gloomy pipe-playing, and departure, but it is difficult to say more than that Gnedov’s poetry may be involved in the death or departure of the soul (and therefore, perhaps, the destruction of art).

ПОЭМА 5.

БЕЗВЕСТЬЯ.

Пойму—поиму—возьмите Душу.

The title ‘Bezvestia’\textsuperscript{72} is ironic: it predicts a lack of information in the poem when the words, with one exception, are straightforward. After four difficult-to-understand poems, the lyric subject professes understanding but the poem is in some ways just as difficult as those preceding it: here and in Poem 12, Gnedov highlights “the relativity of opposing ‘meaningful’ and ‘meaningless’ sound complexes, ‘real’ and ‘artificial’ words”\textsuperscript{73}. In the text of the poem, there is a kind of homonymic punning: the first word is the first person singular of poniat\textsuperscript{74} but alteration in the spelling of the second word (й to и) deliberately causes some indeterminacy, to create a neologism that combines the ideas of understanding and catching/capturing (e.g. поима). Thus, “voz’mite” may be an order to prevent the soul, which was in the process of being reduced to ash in Poem 1, from leaving or transmigrating.

The increasing alliteration of the sound ‘u’ in the cycle as a whole should be noted: in the title \textit{Smert’ iskusstvu}, in important positions in Poems 1-4 (symmetrically

\textsuperscript{70} Note the verb \textit{svirelit’} (“to play the pan-pipes”; \textit{Dal’}, IV, p. 65).

\textsuperscript{71} There is no morpheme ‘tum’ and there is no noun (or verb) ending ‘-tumlo’.

\textsuperscript{72} “Bezvestie” appears to be a misspelling of the plural of \textit{bezvestie} (“the absence of news”, \textit{Dal’}, I, p. 149).

\textsuperscript{73} Kuz’min, ‘Kommentarii’, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{74} Or the accusative singular of \textit{poima} (flood-lands).
patterned as the last word of Poem 1, the first of 2, the last of 3, and the first of 4), and
four times in ‘Bezvestia’. The alliteration continues in Poems 9 and 10, and culminates
in the single-letter Poem 11.

ПОЭМА 6.

РОБКОТЬ.


‘Robkot’ is perhaps the most obscure poem of Smert’ iskusstvu. There are two
possible ways of interpreting the title-word. Either it combines the clashing concepts of
roboz' and roko, where the allusion to sound continues the theme exemplified in the
title-words ‘Stonga’, ‘Svirel’ga’, and ‘Grokhlit’ (Poem 8), or it is a fusion of robkii and
kot, the cat of this title matching the dog of Poem 4. In the poem, “Som” and “Somka”
(probably a diminutive, or a female, by analogy with samka) refer to the sheat-fish, a
large, predatory, fresh-water fish, upon which, according to one superstition, water
spirits ride55. The phrases “а — ви — ка” (а vykhodi-ka?) и “а — вил — до” (а viliai
do?), however, are very unclear. It is not obvious whether this is intended as the cat in
the title-word trying to entice the fish out of the water, whether water spirits are
involved, etc. While the poem carries references to nature, ‘Robkot’, like ‘Kozlo’,
does not obviously fit in with the themes of the dying soul, art, and the creation of
poetry, that have been present in the cycle thus far.

ПОЭМА 7.

СМОЛЬГА.

Кудри — Вышл я Мораль.

The word “smol'ga” is based on smola (or smol’), so the hair mentioned in the poem
may be black; it might also contain the suggestion of falling silent (smolkat’), the
gradual enacting of which is central to the cycle. The ‘-l'g-’ sound of the title-word
picks up that of the earlier titles ‘Svirel'ga’ and ‘Kobel' gor’. That which was leaving

55 “This fish is the devil’s steed, the water spirit rides on it; therefore in certain localities it is not
recommended to be used as food. However, one must not scold the caught sheat-fish, lest the water
spirit hears and decides to avenge it”, E. Grushko and Yu. Medvedev, Slovar’ russkih sueverii,
zaklinanii, primet i povertii, Nizhnii Novgorod, 1996, p. 444.
for good ("rasprostite") in Poem 4 may have finally left here ("vyshlaia"). The rather mysterious aphorism that curls ("kudreni" rather than kudri) are a 'moral that has gone' is on one level an allusion to baldness, and on another, the words "vyshlaia moral' seem to express Gnedov's attitude towards old or passé art.

ПОЗМА 8.

ГРОХЛИТБ.

Сереброй Нить—Коромыся. Брови. 77

'Grokhlit' continues the portrait of a head alluded to in 'Smol'ga'78. The neologism "serebroi" seems to be either a masculine adjective modifying the feminine noun nit', or the instrumental singular of a feminine noun-neologism "serebra" (i.e. "as silver, a thread...")79. The poem is almost in the form of a riddle, with the last word supplying the 'answer': the silver-coloured thread that yokes the eyes is the eyebrows. The idea of a riddle would connect with the 'moral' in 'Smol'ga'80. The way in which two apparently separate impressions are connected by the last word is also reminiscent of haiku. It is not known whether this Japanese verse-form bore any direct influence on Gnedov, as it did in the West at around this time on poets such as Ezra Pound. Nevertheless, Ignat'ev seemed to allude to haiku in relation to this poem, finding in it an "electrified, extended impressionism, especially characteristic of Japanese poetry"81. Although none of the Smerf iskusstvu poems fit the 5-7-5 syllable definition of a haiku poem, the fact that they are short, unrhymed, enclosed depictions of a scene makes the comparison tenable; and furthermore haiku were originally written on a single line.

The noise evoked by the title-word, however, seems in complete contrast to the silent depiction of the poem. "Grokhlit" may be derived from the feminine or neuter past tense of grokhnyt' and is similar to the word "Grokhlo" in 'Na vozle bal'82; it is

---

76 The adjective vyshlyi is a synonym of vyshedshii, Dal', 1, p. 796.
77 'Grokhlit' has been republished in V. Markov, 'Odnostroki', Vozdushnye puti, 3 (1963), p. 258.
78 Sigei draws a comparison with Khlebnikov's portrait-poem 'Bobeobi pelis' guby'; Sobr. stikh., p. 146.
79 Alternatively, if robkii and kot combine to form "robkot", the coinage might be a noun consisting of serebrianny/serebristy and roi.
80 Nilsson has regarded riddles, incantations, and so on, as features of Primitivism; Nilsson, 'Primitivism', p. 478.
81 Ignat'ev, Ego futurizm, p. 13.
82 "Veseloch'em sypalo perebrodoe Grokhlo", Zasakhare kry, p. 10.
not clear whether the neologism is a third person singular verb or a noun\(^{83}\), and it could be an abbreviated form of *grokh literatury*\(^{84}\). The crashing or banging noise might well produce a concerned expression, where the eyebrows form the shape of a yoke. ‘Grokhlit’ marks a turning point: whereas Poems 1-8 have been of similar length, there is a dramatic reduction in Poems 9-15; furthermore, the initial ‘b’ of “brovi” heralds the alliteration of that sound in the next two poems.

ПОЭМА 9.

БУБАЯ ГОРЯ.

Буба. Буба. Буба.

The word “bubaia” is a neologistic adjective from *buba*, as was the earlier coinage “bubchigi”. For Gnedov, *buba* meant a grain or in general something circular\(^{85}\). Like that of Poem 5 (“Kobel’ gor”), the title of Poem 9 involves a noun combining *gor* and *gora*: “goria” is the standard genitive singular or nominative/accusative plural form, but *gora* would agree with the feminine adjective. The poem itself consists only of the word “Buba” repeated three times, each time followed by a full stop. The triple repetition of the single word “Buba” hints at an incantation or the casting of a spell. There is a record of an earlier version of the poem, drawn from a performance Gnedov gave a month prior to the publication of *Smert’ iskusstvu*:

Ба,
ба-ба,
ба-ба,  
goden буба,
буба,
ба!\(^{86}\)

\(^{83}\) Nouns ending ‘-lit’ are all of foreign origin: (people) *mitropolit, kosmopolit*, (objects) *megalit, monolit, (minerals) paleolit*, etc.

\(^{84}\) Ironically, the 17-volume Academy dictionary suggests *glavlit* (head administration for the affairs of literature and publishing houses), the main body for literary censorship in the Soviet Union, as a later model for this type of abbreviation (*SSRLIa*, 6, p. 259).

\(^{85}\) *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 20. Dictionaries list *buba* as a “*prianik, bublik*”, “berry; pea” (*SRDG*, 3, p. 232), and also a “tumour, bruise, swelling, sore” (*Dal*’, I, p. 329).

\(^{86}\) *Den’,* 24 March 1913. Subsequently republished in (and cited here from) V. Gnedov, *Egozaturnal’ia bez smertnogo kolpaka*, p. 5; and *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 198.
The interchange of 'buba' with *baba* creates a number of possible mythological associations: the latter refers to a woman, Baba Yaga, and 'baba' the cloud woman\(^\text{87}\). Connections might be made between grain (or circles in general) with fertility and women. Baba and Boba are both words used in Eastern Europe for the last sheaf of the harvest, often made into an effigy of a woman\(^\text{88}\). The folklorist Felix Oinas also notes that *baba* is "a taboo term [which] has certain connections with the realm of the dead, and has also the meaning 'cake' [...] such cakes are] sacrificial offerings [...] to the spirits of the dead"\(^\text{89}\). Eighteen years after it was published, Shklovskii remembered 'Bubaia goria':

Был еще в полотняной куртке Василий Гнедов, написавший собрание сочинений страницы в четыре.
Там была поэма "Буба-буба".
На этом она и кончалась\(^\text{90}\).

Another possibility is that the poem is made up of the most basic, repetitive, and desemanticised sounds a baby might make\(^\text{91}\). The reduction of poetry to such sounds comes in preparation for further deconstruction into even smaller sound units also emphasising 'u', and 'Bubaia goria' marks the start of the reduction that culminates in 'Poema Kontsa'.

Позма 10.
Юбкрану.

The title 'Vot' almost commands the reader to look at the poem. At the same time, because it is followed by a full stop, the title functions as a self-enclosed unit; in 1987,  

---

\(^{87}\) Note also that *babá* is a dialect word meaning a 'pelican' (*SRDG*, I, p. 8).


\(^{89}\) F. Oinas, 'Golubev and Some Notions of the Soul', *Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology*, Columbus, Ohio, 1985, pp. 77-86 (pp. 83-84).

\(^{90}\) Shklovskii, *Poiski optimizma*, pp. 94-95; quoted from *Zabytyi avangard 1*, p. 18.

\(^{91}\) The infantile aspect to the poem is reinforced by another similar, dialect word *boba* ("a child's toy"; *Dal*, I, p. 247).
Vsevolod Nekrasov echoed Gnedov’s work by publishing a poem consisting only of the word ‘Vot’ with a dot in the middle of the letter ‘о’.

The poem comprises the single neologism “ubezkraiu”, which can be separated into prepositions у and без and the noun край. The word may function in a variety of ways—as a first person singular verb indicating unconstrained movement, or a formation of two prepositions and a noun (similar to ‘Na vozle bal’) indicating the poet’s location at the edge of a place that has no edges. However, the most appropriate explanation may be that “ubezkraiu” describes the creation of endless ‘у’ sounds, the alliteration of which is a central feature of the cycle; at the same time “у” without an edge” might describe the next poem in the booklet. In the cycle, the poem looks both backwards and forwards—backwards there is also an inverted echo of the “бу” of буба in the previous poem, and forwards because the first and last letters (‘у’ and ‘иу’) are those of Poems 11 and 14, respectively. The ‘иу’ of “ubezkraiu” is also repeated in the title of Poem 11, ‘Poiui’. In addition, the reduction continues as the poem (title and number aside) now consists of only one word.

ПОЕМА II.

ПОЙ.

The title of poem 11 seems to be a combination of the first person singular поиу and the second person singular imperative пой. So, the lyric subject simultaneously describes what he/she is doing while compelling him/herself to carry on doing it. Alternatively, поиу might also have been combined with the singular imperative воити, making the act of singing much more confrontational.

This is the shortest poem in the booklet so far, and, if read in order, the shortest poem thus far in Russian literature (until Poem 14!). The presence of this letter in a poem on its own underscores the idea that Смерть искусству is dominated by this sound. In standard Russian, у is a preposition governing the genitive case. As a

---

93 In Ukrainian, ‘убец-’ is equivalent to the Russian prefix ‘обес-’. Note Konstantin Olimpov’s neologism “обезкраинил”: “Електрически пламен’ миружа/ Обезкраинил кудрияве спазмы”; K. Olimpov, ‘Interliudiia’, in his Zhonglery-nervy, St Petersburg, 1913, p. 3.
verbal or substantival prefix, 'u-' carries a number of interesting associations: removal/movement away (ubegat', uekhat', unosit'), removal of part/reduction in quantity (udelit', urezat'); completion of an action (upast'), completion despite adverse circumstances (uberech', uderzhat', usidet'); containment (ulozhit', umestit', upisat'); and others. It is interesting that the meaning of the preposition and prefix seem to contrast ('near' and 'movement away from'). It is also a verbal suffix, denoting the first person singular of the verb. The letter is used on its own in exclamations of fear, reproach, shame, and (as a synonym of ukh!) surprise or tiredness. The sound 'u' evoked various semantic impressions for Viacheslav Ivanov ("gloominess"), Andrei Belyi ("unearthliness"), Khlebnikov ("submissiveness"), and David Burliuk ("'u' is empty (utvar', uroba)"). For Taranovskii, the narrow vowel 'u' represents "incompleteness, loss of inner balance, weakness, even distress, – the emotions which may be summed up by the common term instability." Such gloominess, emptiness, and instability is appropriate in the cycle, the letter 'u' was originally associated with the soul ("Dushu"), and so this poem may represent the final departure and disintegration of the soul that was felt in Poems 1-5.

The long dash that follows the 'U' is significant, suggesting that the punctuation mark is the start of something, that the poem is part of something larger. The lack of finality is emphasised by the absence of a full stop after the dash. As Tomashevskii and Nilsson have shown, the single letter of Poem 11 is the start of a verb that is ended in Poem 14, i.e. the two poems form the first and last letters of numerous first person singular present tense verbs. Thus, according to Nilsson, the reader is left to make a free and intuitive choice of verb, making the two single-letter poems "a programmatic statement of Ego-Futurism". The space between Poems 11 and 14 can be filled by various possible verbs: u-leta-iu, u-bega-iu, u-polza-iu, u-vleka-iu, u-tochnia-iu, u-nichtozha-iu, u-mira-iu, u-prazdnia-iu, u-tverzhda-iu, u-

---

94 Grammatika russkogo iazyka, eds. V. Vinogradov et al., 1, Moscow, 1960, pp. 922-23.
95 Dal', IV, pp. 907, 1115.
96 Sobr. stikh., p. 148.
98 Tomashevskii, Stilistika, p. 182.
molka-iu, and, of course, the word “ubezkrai” from Poem 10 could be included here too.

Finally, Poem 11 is also illustrative of the process of reduction: from the repetition of the word “buba” (Poem 9), to the repetition of the ‘u’ (u-bez-krai, Poem 10), to the single letter. Furthermore, this reduction is reinforced visually. On page 6, leaving aside the right-aligned poem number indicator and centre-aligned title, Poems 9, 10, and 11 together form a triangular shape, e.g.:

Буба. Буба. Буба.
Убежкаю.
У —

With the exception of the one in Sobranie stikhotvorenii, all subsequent republications of Smert' iskusstvu have ignored this typographical feature.

Поэма 12.

ВЧЕРАЕТь.
Моему Братцу 8 лёт.—Петруша.

After the single-letter Poem 11, this poem has expanded to a single line, before the contraction once again to a single letter in Poem 14. “Vcheraet” conflates vchera and vecheret', to create a present tense verb for the state of being yesterday or the drawing to a close of yesterday. The poem is written in standard Russian. It is interesting that the words ‘Moemu Bratstu 8 let.—Petrusha’ of the last discursive poem in the cycle seem to be an inconsequential statement. ‘Petrusha’ is a diminutive of the name Petr, presumably referring to the brother or the writer whose brother is eight; it is also close to Petrushka, a character from Russian puppet theatre. Petrusha is, of course, also the word for parsley. The poem repeats the sound ‘u’ three times, once again highlighting its importance.

---

100 Sobr. stikh., p. 148.
Позма 13.

Poem 13 has no title: the process of reduction is accelerating. It is the second poem to have only one word as its text and it lies opposite the other one—'Vot' (Poem 10) on page 6. The message of this word, however, is quite different. Gnedov may be foregrounding the booklet's scandalous intention: "izdevat" may be a contracted, non-reflexive form of izdevatsia, or an abbreviation of izdevatel'stvo. Another interpretation might be a combination of iz and the verb devat', implying a 'doing away' type of action: from Poem 9, elements of poetry have been discarded and this poem has lost its title. Poems 14 and 15 complete the process.¹⁰¹

Позма 14.

Ю.

Like Poem 13, this poem has no title (just a number) and consists only of the capital letter and a full stop. It was the shortest poem ever written until Vsevolod Nekrasov's full-stop poem.²⁰² A certain M. Mogilianskii, mistakenly believing the poem to be by Kruchenykh, described a stage performance at the same club: "[Gnedov] paused and then threw both arms upwards, [...] a hole of about two vershoks in width formed between the end [of his waistcoat] and the start of his trousers, and he inspirationally cried out: - Iu!".³⁰³ The letter 'iu' alone carries a wealth of associations. The critic Boris Tomashevskii believed the poem should be considered as a first person singular verb ending.⁴¹⁰ Janecek lists further possibilities:

In addition to its being a verb ending, yu serves as a noun ending... including both genders.
In terms of articulation, the extremes of front glide (y) and back vowel (u) are combined.
And it is the only letter that has this diphthong nature reflected in its graphic shape, which combines the opposites of the line and the circle or, in numbers, the 1 and the 0.⁵¹⁰

¹⁰¹ A final possibility is that "izdevat" might even be perceived as iz deviat, i.e. that this poem is 'made out of' Poem 9 (the repeated 'u' sounds that end in 'iu').
¹⁰² See Janecek, 'Minimalism', p. 405.
¹⁰³ M. Mogilianskii, 'Kabare "Brodiachei sobaki": tipazhi i nravy kabare', RO GPB im. Saltykova-Shchedrina, fond 1080, ed. khr. 4, l. 4, quoted from Sigov (Sigei), 'Ego-futurnaliia Vasiliska Gnedova', p. 120.
¹⁰⁴ Tomashevskii, Stilistika, p. 182.
¹⁰⁵ Janecek, Zaum, p. 103.
The numbers ‘1’ and ‘0’ could represent something and nothing, so within the letter itself is an indication of the relation of Poem 14 to Poem 15. Jensen has noted that it is also the second last letter of the Russian alphabet before ‘ia’, which, by association, adds a new dimension—that of egoism—to ‘Poema Kontsa’. However, in pre-1917 orthography the letter Я was succeeded by the letters Θ and θ, so unfortunately Jensen’s theory loses some of its weight.

In the Futurist Vasilii Kamenskii’s poem ‘Solovei’ (1916), the letter ‘iu’ is highlighted throughout—it is derived from the sound of the nightingale’s song and becomes an entity in itself. At times, Kamenskii’s poem seems very close to Gnedov’s work (“I ia poiiu Iu/ Liubliu/ Iu”) and it ends:

Ю—для меня—только песня поэта.
Ю—невеста—мечта—бирюзовый.
Ю—легендами счастья одет.
Ю—извечная зовь.

Poem 14 lies opposite its counterpart one-letter poem (‘Poiui’, Poem 11), although there is even less of this poem—here there is not even a title. With the letter ‘iu’ and a full stop, all potential first person singular verbs that started with the ‘U—’ in Poem 11 have come to an end. The triangular pattern of the poems on page 6 is duplicated by the poems on page 7, increasing the visual expression of the process of reduction in Smert’ iskusstvu:

Моему Братцу 8 днЬ.—Петруша.
ИздВватЬ.
Ю.

---

106 In addition, iu was the Old Russian for the accusative/genitive female personal pronoun ee. Perhaps “Iu.” could even be an abbreviation of iug, instructing the reader to look down to the next page (?!).
107 K. Jensen, ‘La poetica del lettore (La poetica ‘zaum’ dei futuristi russi)’, il verri, 29-30, 1983, pp. 7-14 (pp. 11-13); referred to from Janecek, Zaum, p. 103.
108 V. Kamenskii, ‘Solovei’, in his Stikhotvorenii a i poemy, intro., text prep., and notes N. Stepanov, Moscow, 1966, p. 75. Also quoted in this context in Sobr. stikh., p. 149.
The letter ‘iu’ is the last repetition of the sound from “ubezkraiu” and ‘Poiui’. In repeating the ‘iu’ of “ubezkraiu”, the complete end of that word is emphasised. The desire to go beyond the limits of poetry is acted on in the last poem in the cycle.

Poema Konča (15).

In the centre of page 8 of Smert' iskusstvu are the words ‘Poema Konča’, the poem number in brackets, and a full stop. Elsewhere on the page there is the logotype of “Tipo-litografiia T-va Svet” (featuring an emblem with its name, address, and the year 1913) and the page number in the top right-hand corner. The reader looks for more text but there is nothing else; the opposite page is the inside back cover of the book, blank and crimson-coloured. Attention is drawn to the way this dénouement has been set up. In the previous poems, the poem titles are written in capital letters, whereas the actual poem and the poem-number designation (e.g. “Poema 12”) are lower case; the title cannot be considered to be a verse in the poem and the numbering ensures each poem remains independent. The way ‘Poema Konča’ is written (lower case letters, centre alignment, use of the word “Poema”) is a combination of title, designation, and poem.

A common view of ‘Poema Konča’ was expressed by Kornei Chukovskii, that the poem is “simply a blank sheet of paper”\textsuperscript{109}. Other critics have noted that the poem consists of its title\textsuperscript{110}. Clearly, there are things written on page 8 of Smert' iskusstvu, but the question is which elements are essential to the poem and which are not. The title is necessary for the reader to anticipate a text, and perhaps the full stop too, to emphasise the poem’s finality; the context-providing elements—the poem number, page number, and printer’s stamp—are not\textsuperscript{111}. In the original publication, however, all these elements (whether accidentally or not) became part of the text. As Janecek points

\textsuperscript{109} K. Chukovskii, ‘Russkie futuristy’, Russkoe slovo, 19 November 1913; quoted from Zabytyi avangard 2, p. 64. The same view is expressed in Aigi, ‘Russkii poeticheskii avangard’, pp. 28-31 (p. 30).


\textsuperscript{111} For example, the poem number is correct only if ‘Poema Konča’ is printed after the other 14 poems of Smert' iskusstvu, and obviously the page number is not always going to be 8.
out, the expectation set up in the title creates a frame which focuses on every element on the page\textsuperscript{112}.

The confusion as to the substance of the poem is reflected in its subsequent republications. The version of ‘Poema Kontsa’ discussed above is the first one, published in the original edition of \textit{Smert' iskusstvu} by Peterburgskii glashatai in the first week of April 1913. Two recent editions—one accompanying the article by Gennadii Aigi in \textit{V mire knig}\textsuperscript{113} and another found in the anthology \textit{Russkaia poeziia “serebrianogo veika”}\textsuperscript{114}—attempt to put all 15 poems together on a single page. Here, ‘Poema Kontsa’ is no longer highlighted as an independent entity with its own page and it loses its impact. In \textit{Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie}, Orlitsskii holds that M. Shapir, by including the name of the publisher and translator in his publication of ‘Poema Kontsa’ in the journal \textit{Daugava}\textsuperscript{115}, has created a new text that “is saturated with more than three times the verbal information of the [original] poem”\textsuperscript{116}. In fact, the poem changes with each republication. Kuz'min has looked at mistakes in the various publications, and considers his own edition of the cycle the most authentic, more so than the original in fact, but this claim is not borne out\textsuperscript{117}. The poem has twice been translated into English\textsuperscript{118}.

What is the significance of ‘Poema Kontsa’? First of all, the poem needs to be looked at in the context of the cycle. On one level, ‘Poema Kontsa’ is a perfectly logical name for the last poem on the last page in the book, the poetic equivalent of putting ‘Konets’ (The End) at the end of a novel. In terms of \textit{Smert' iskusstvu}, the poem represents the logical outcome of the process of reduction, where one-line poems have been broken down into single words, letters, and finally, a poem where there is actually no poem at all. The gradual abbreviation and deconstruction of the

\textsuperscript{112} See Janecek, ‘Minimalism’, pp. 402, 403, 407. Following this logic, we should note that the original page number is also an intrinsic part of the original poem.

\textsuperscript{113} Aigi, ‘Russkii poeiticheskii avangard’, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Russkaia poeziia “serebrianogo veika”}, p. 515.


\textsuperscript{117} Kuz'min, ‘Kommentarii’, p. 21. By putting all the poems on their own page, Kuz'min’s republication ignores the triangle shapes formed by Poems 9-11 and 12-14; furthermore, unnecessary decorative diamonds are added on each page (apart from ‘Poema Kontsa’).

poems (the ‘killing of art’) culminates in ‘Poema Kontsa’ (its ‘death’). In his foreword to _Smert' iskusstvu_, Ivan Ignat'ev pictures art in crisis: “Surely the agony of the Present, of the vulgar past, was clear for each Art? The Art of the Day has died...”

‘Poema Kontsa’, and _Smert' iskusstvu_ as a whole, has been viewed as devoid of any real significance, as existing for shock value alone. Those for whom Futurism was offensive found ‘Poema Kontsa’ to be an attention-grabbing gimmick—something that was done because it could be done and because it had not been done before—and nothing more. Even for fellow Egofuturist Vadim Shershenevich, the poem was only a short-lived stunt. Pavel Florenskii examined ‘Poema Kontsa’ in a survey of Futurist experiments of ever-smaller size (from zaum’ words to letters and punctuation marks) and questioned Gnedov’s motivation: “no-one dares [...] speak of his subjective insincerity or of his propensity for mystification”. Given the socio-political context of the time, it is perhaps not surprising that Chukovskii viewed ‘Poema Kontsa’ as an unremittingly negative statement, playing on nihilistic and destructive tendencies in the Russian psyche:

Вот воистину последнее освобождение, последнее оголение души. Это бунт против всего без изъятия, вечный, исходящий, коренной российский нигилистический бунт, вечная наша нежавешива, и это совершенная случайность, что теперь прикрылась футуризмом.

Had ‘Poema Kontsa’ been written in 1917, of course, it would have acquired quite different political connotations. A variety of other religious, mystical, and philosophical associations can be related to the concept of nothingness exemplified in the poem.

---

120 Shershenevich, ‘Velikolepnyi ochevidets’, p. 495. Shershenevich never approved of Gnedov’s poetry. In his 1914 book on Futurism, he refused to consider Gnedov a significant contributor to Egofuturism (Shershenevich, _Futurizm bez maski_, p. 87, footnote 2).
121 P. Florenskii, ‘Antonomia iazyka’, _Studia Slavica Academicae Scientiarum Hungaricae_, 32, 1-4, 1986, p. 153; quoted from _Zabytyi avangard_ 2, p. 71. Note that Florenskii incorrectly states that ‘Poema Kontsa’ consists only of the word ‘shish’; that was in fact the poem by Kruchenykh in imitation-Hebrew lettering on the last page of his booklet _Vzorval_ (1913).
122 Chukovskii, ‘Ego-futuristy i kubofuturisty’, p. 130.
123 These range from the nothingess of Nirvana in Zen Buddhism; a Cabbalian anagram in Jewish mystical thought serving to corroborate the idea that “in each transformation of reality [...] the abyss of Nothingness is spanned [...] by demonstrating that ‘nothing’ in Hebrew is _Ain_, and that the same letters form the word for ‘I—_Ain_’ (Cirlot, _Dictionary of Symbols_, p. 230); to the theme of nothingness in Sartre and Existentialism.
For Ignat'ev, the word was losing its power to signify, and he viewed intuitive wordless communication as an ultimate ideal, a re-establishment of the communication Man had once had with God in Paradise\textsuperscript{124}. ‘Poema Kontsa’ may also be connected with the theme of whiteness, in the sense of a blank page (in Russian, belaia stranitsa). The fear of the empty whiteness of a page before writing is a concern for Mallarmé\textsuperscript{125}, but, for Gnedov, the blank page is an end in itself rather than a point of departure. This is significant in Gnedov’s subsequent poems, particularly ‘Poema nachala’, which has the subtitle “(Beloe)” and whose central theme is whiteness. Ironically, the poem with the least verbal information can be seen to have huge signifying potential.

It is often the case that ambiguities in a poem find a possible resolution through its public recital: the intonational patterns or auxiliary gestures chosen give strong indications of a poem’s meaning. However, in this case, the poem if anything only becomes more ambiguous. There are several accounts of Gnedov performing ‘Poema Kontsa’ on stage, and evidently it differed considerably from occasion to occasion. In the foreword to \textit{Smert' iskusstvu}, Ignat'ev gives the following description: “[Gnedov’s] hand drew a line: from left to right and vice-versa (the second cancelled out the first, as a plus and minus equals a minus). ‘Poema Kontsa’ is indeed a ‘Poem of Nothing’, a zero as it is depicted graphically”\textsuperscript{126}. Similarly, Shklovskii recalled a criss-cross movement\textsuperscript{127}. However, a performance witnessed by poet and memoirist Vladimir Piast at St Petersburg’s Brodiachaia sobaka nightclub consisted of a hook-like gesture, where a hand was “raised quickly in front of his hair and sharply downwards, and then sideways to the right”\textsuperscript{128}. Another performance was more elaborate. Gnedov started by adopting a defiant pose, hands on hips, “then, standing on his left leg and folding his left arm behind, with his right hand he silently made some kind of upwards gesture and left the stage”\textsuperscript{129}. As Janecek has noted, the recited performance of zero in literature

---


\textsuperscript{125} For example, in ‘Brise Marine’, nothing will stop the poet from departing to sea (i.e. creating poetry): “Rien [...] ni la clarté déserte de ma lampe/ Sur le vide papier que la blancheur défend”; S. Mallarmé, \textit{Selected Poetry and Prose}, ed. M. Caws, New York, 1982, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{126} Ignat'ev, ‘Preslovie’, \textit{Smert' iskusstvu}, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{127} Shklovskii, \textit{Poiski optimizma}, pp. 94-95; also quoted in \textit{Zabytyi avangard 1}, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{128} Piast, \textit{Istrechi}, p. 263.

would logically be complete silence\textsuperscript{130}. Indeed, all the performances of ‘Poema Kontsa’ were silent, except for one witnessed by the literary critic Georgii Adamovich:

На литературных вечерах ему кричали: «Гнедов, поэма конча!»... «Василиск, Василиск!» Он выходил мрачный, с каменным лицом, именно «под Хлебникова», долго молчал, потом медленно поднимал тяжелый кулак — и вполголоса говорил: «ВОЛЧА»\textsuperscript{131}.

Thus, a gesture of finality followed by its verbal equivalent. Other accounts are less specific\textsuperscript{132}. Sigei is interested in which hand Gnedov used to perform the gesture, noting that in Mayan writing the hand was symbolic of zero, and in primitive drawings it was apparently a representation of God without a face\textsuperscript{133}. The on-stage version of ‘Poema Kontsa’ was the first gesture poem\textsuperscript{134}; in combining poetry with performance art\textsuperscript{135} or dance\textsuperscript{136}, Gnedov achieved a form of the synthetic art to which the Egofuturists aspired\textsuperscript{137}. Krusanov suggests that at this meeting-point, we are dealing not with “the death of art, but its very sources”\textsuperscript{138}.

The use of or concern with blank pages in literature does not originate with Gnedov. Sigei has pointed out that, in prose, there are blank pages in Lawrence Sterne’s \textit{Tristram Shandy} (written 1759-67). One interrupts Chapter 38 of Volume VI
and is completely blank, whereas the other two in Volume IX carry the words “Chapter Eighteen” and “Chapter Nineteen” and thus, in a formal sense, are closer to ‘Poema Kontsa’. In poetry, Parnis has noted two possible predecessors\(^{139}\), if not exact equivalents. Mallarmé’s ‘Un Coup de Dés...’ (first published only in 1914) has a page consisting only of the words “N’ABOLIRA”. In the book *Natura Naturans. Natura Naturata* (1895) by the Decadent Symbolist poet Aleksandr Dobroliubov, the title page of one poem consists only of the letter “I”.\(^{140}\) Subsequently, Marina Tsvetaeva’s *Poema kontsa* (1924), on the other hand, was a full-length *poema* about a more concrete kind of end, that of a relationship. Two recent poems that, like Gnedov’s, consist of only a title exploit the visual side of the blank page: Gennadii Aigi’s ‘Stikhotvorenie-nazvanie: Belaia babochka, pereletaiushchaia cherez szhatoe pole’ (1982)\(^{141}\), and ‘Camouflage Poem’ (1998) by John Barlow\(^ {142}\).

‘Poema Kontsa’ was an important predecessor of the concept of the ‘literary vacuum’, as discussed by the poet Ry Nikonova. The substance of this idea seems to be that a text can exist in many environments and many forms, not just in terms of words on a page in a book. The vacuum is a “text of the absence of a text”\(^ {143}\). The page and the title of ‘Poema Kontsa’ are the last contacts with book-oriented literature, as this act precedes a move into space. Literature has started to leave the page, creating a ‘text-shaped hole’.

The idea of the reduction of the essential elements to nothingness expressed in ‘Poema Kontsa’ and *Smert’ iskusstvu* has a resonance outside poetry. Most prominently there is Malevich’s painting *Chernyi kvadrat* (a black square surrounded by white) and his Suprematist paintings from 1915 onwards, although Compton insists that Malevich “was not imitating” Gnedov\(^ {144}\). In a strict sense, an equivalent of ‘Poema Kontsa’ in painting would be a titled blank canvas. However, Nikonova argues that *Chernyi kvadrat* can be viewed “as a literary collapse, containing in itself every word


\(^{143}\) R. Nikonova-Tarshis, ‘Ekologiya pauzy’, p. 36.

\(^{144}\) Compton, *World Backwards*, pp. 111-12.
of every language of every time and people"\(^{145}\); the inference of a myriad of infinite possibilities is equally possible for ‘Poema Kontsa’. In reflecting associations connected with whiteness, the poem can be related to the numerous white canvasses, blank except for minimal amounts of contouring, that have been painted between the 1950s and the present day\(^{146}\). In a lecture given in Leningrad in 1988, Aleksandr Parnis put forward the idea that ‘Poema Kontsa’ was the first in a line of ‘nothings’ in art: others were Malevich and Rodchenko’s paintings and, in music, John Cage’s \(4'33\)\(^{147}\) and \(0'00\)\(^{147}\).

The brevity of the Smert' iskusstvu poems is striking\(^{148}\) and may have shocked contemporary readers. Before the twentieth century, single-line texts had existed in Western literature in forms such as epigrams, aphorisms, and so on, but were not generally considered to be poetry; even today it may be difficult to accept 'U—', 'Iu', and ‘Poema Kontsa’ as such. It is possible, as has been suggested here, that Gnedov may have been influenced by Japanese short verse-forms (haiku), or even riddles. Not that Gnedov was the first to write monostichs—Briusov’s scandalous poem ‘O, zakroī svoi blednye nogi’ (1895)\(^{149}\) is one predecessor; and Markov’s 1963 article ‘Odnostroki’ shows that Bal’mont and some Futurists wrote them too\(^{150}\); but Smert' iskusstvu was a more consistent display than had previously been seen in Russian literature. As we have seen, until recently, Poems 11 and 14 were the shortest poems ever written in any language.

While audiences responded to ‘Poema Kontsa’ and the other Smert' iskusstvu poems with a mixture of astonished laughter and bewilderment, critical reaction was


\(^{147}\) Parnis gave written evidence of Malevich’s interest in ‘Poema Kontsa’. Chronologically, Chernyi kvadrat was painted in 1915, two years after Gnedov’s poem was published, and Malevich’s white canvasses were not exhibited until December 1919 (Sarab’ianov and Shatskikh, Kazimir Malevich, p. 189, note 36; see also Parnis, Kratkaiia literaturnaiia entsiklopediia, p. 233; and Parnis, Russkie pisateli, 1, pp. 589-90).

\(^{148}\) Ignat’ev (Ego futurizm, p. 13) referred to Gnedov’s technique as “stenography”.

\(^{149}\) Shemshurin, Futurizm v stikhakh V. Briusova, p. 21; and Rech', 11 April 1913; quoted from Sobr. stikh., p. 201.

hostile. The booklet incensed L'vov-Rogachevskii, for whom this was “the masterpiece of an ‘insolent cretin (obnaglevshei bezdari)’”\(^{151}\), and the newspaper *Birzhevoye vedomosti* described its contents as the “ravings of a frontliner (bred peredunchika)”\(^{152}\). The title alone provoked scorn. Aleksandr Benua believed that the emphasis on death was causing the lack of creativity in culture at the time:

```
Какой может быть разговор о жизни, когда в основе всей современной культуры
лежит смерть не только искусства, как об этом законнически вешает книжка г.
Гнедова, но просто смерть «всякого духа»?\(^{153}\)
```

More mundane associations were made by another critic, D. Levin, who found himself reminded of an advertising campaign slogan: “death to flies, cockroaches, etc”\(^{154}\).

The title and the theme of *Smert' iskusstvu* seemed to capture the zeitgeist. The idea of the death of poetry was implicit in the condensing of language and in the attacks on beauty and art made by the Italian Futurists. As the painter and critic Soffici wrote in *Primi Principii di Una Estetica Futurista* (1920): “Art’s final masterpiece will be its own destruction”\(^{155}\). In the 1860s, Russian Nihilist writings such as Pisarev’s *Razrushenie estetiki* had contemplated the end of art because of its subjectivity and absence of utilitarian purpose. Eight years after the publication of Gnedov’s booklet, in 1921, Aleksei Gan recycled its title as a Constructivist slogan. Art should be killed off because it was “a product of extreme individualism”, a product of bourgeois culture inappropriate to the times:

---

\(^{151}\) L'vov-Rogachevskii, ‘Simvolisty i nasledniki ikh’; quoted from *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 201; and *Zabytyi avangard* 2, p. 65.

\(^{152}\) *Krusanov, Russkii avangard*, p. 116.

\(^{153}\) A. Benua, *Rech’,* 12 April 1913; quoted from *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 201. During his visit to Russia, Marinetti gave his opinions on the difference between Italian and Russian Futurism in a newspaper article from 2 February 1914. While the Italians “are tightly forged together with life, and will not spurn it for anything”, the Russian Futurists “have their heads in the skies, do not love ‘the earth’, deny life” (*Den’,* 2 February 1914, p. 4; quoted from *Krusanov, Russkii avangard*, p. 172). Might Marinetti have been influenced by having seen Gnedov perform ‘Poema Kontsa’ the night before at St Petersburg’s Kalashnikovskaiia birzha?

\(^{154}\) D. Levin, *Rech’,* 11 April 1913; quoted from *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 201.

At around the same time, Dada artists in Berlin and Paris were practising ‘Anti-Art’: “Art has been ‘thought through to a conclusion’; in other words it is eliminated. Nothing, nihil, is all that is left”. Hence, the intention of Marcel Duchamp’s infamous Mona Lisa with a moustache was “to administer a strong purgative to an age riddled with lies”. Another later echo was the situationist slogan daubed on the walls of the Sorbonne during the student demonstrations of the 1960s, “Art is dead, let us create everyday life”.

However, Smert’ iskusstvu is much more than just a piece of Avant-Garde provocation. In a general sense, it shares its central theme with Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring, that something has to die for there to be new life. To some extent, the cycle is based on South Russian folk rituals involving the last sheaf of the harvest. Sigei writes:

Such a reading seems justified. A precedent for Gnedov applying his interest in folklore and ritual can be found in ‘Gurebka proklenushkov’, and there may well be some connection between the race described above and that in the second stanza of ‘Kozi slashch’. Sigei’s theory can be developed with particular regard to Poem 1. As we have seen, among the Slavs this sheaf is often made into an effigy of a woman that was held to carry the spirit of the field (the “buba” of Poem 9). It was either revered or

---


158 Richter, Dada, p. 91.

159 Letter from Sigei, dated 5.10.97. Also see Sigei, ‘besedy v blizine mirgoroda’, p. 44; and Sobr. stikh., p. 20.
beaten to get rid of the spirit; in Bulgaria, for example, the Corn-mother was "burned and the ashes strewn on the fields, doubtless to fertilise them"\textsuperscript{160}. Wormwood is held to be the cause of a poor harvest\textsuperscript{161}, so it may be that the poem is an impression of just such a ritual, where the soul of the burning wormwood emits a groan ("Stonga"). In Poem 9, the repeated single word "Buba" might be seen as a chant or incantation as part of such a ritual\textsuperscript{162}.

Clearly, there is still much work that can be done on \textit{Smert' iskusstvu}. Interpretations of the cycle as a whole remain tentative because of the obscure and elliptical nature of some of the poems. The lack of clarity and/or ambiguities in the language can result in an almost endless variety of interpretations: 'death to art' might also be understood as the handing-over of the texts entirely to the reader, to the context in which a given poem is read. The complexities of Gnedov's neologistic writing brought the poet back to the first and most simple stage of writing, the blank page. As Shklovskii wrote: "[the Futurists] sought new means of transferring information [...] by creating new languages or even by rejecting language (Gnedov). But even this was a search for a new language"\textsuperscript{163}.

\textit{Immorteli}

Whether viewed as a faltering of his conviction to experiment or as a determination to diversify, Gnedov's reaction to implications of \textit{Smert' iskusstvu} was to vary his writing considerably. Vasilisk Gnedov was the only representative of Futurism in the miscellany \textit{Immorteli} (end of June 1913)\textsuperscript{164} and his 'Pechal'naia skazka' itself is strikingly un-Futurist. The poem contains no neologisms and no lexical peculiarities. The metre is an entirely regular trochaic tetrameter maintained throughout the poem's four stanzas, but broken up by a refrain after each one. All the

\textsuperscript{160} See Frazer, \textit{Golden Bough. Part V}, 1, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{161} See Grushko and Medvedev, \textit{Slovor' russkikh sueverii}, p. 371.
\textsuperscript{162} Sigei has also compared \textit{Smert' iskusstvu} to Karesansui, the garden of stones in the Ryoanji Buddhist temple in Kyoto. The garden has 15 rocks, which are placed so that only 14 are visible at one time; the last becomes visible to the mind's eye as a result of spiritual enlightenment gained from deep meditation. The connection is perhaps no more than coincidental, although clearly both Zen Buddhism and 'Poema Kontsa' share a concern with non-verbal communication. \textit{Sobr. stikh.}, pp. 147-48.
\textsuperscript{164} V. Gnedov, 'Pechal'naia skazka', in \textit{Immorteli}, p. 63. The poem is republished in \textit{Sobr. stikh.}, p. 50.
rhymes are masculine, and the final-syllable stress gives the poem a repetitive quality. Nevertheless, ‘Pechal’naia skazka’ concerns the death of a poet and the refrain after each stanza may well carry an allusion to Smert’ iskusstvu:

Возлеб руки терем-домь,
В терему томь золотомь
Блэдный юношь лежить
Вечнымъ сномъ заснуль,—и спить

Умеръ блэдный поэтъ!
Умеръ блэдный поэтъ!

There may well be some identification between Gnedov and the poem’s protagonist; the suggestion of romantic and tragic solipsism in the poem conforms with the vision of the poet put forward by the Egofuturists, and the emphasis on the experience of extreme melancholy is reminiscent of ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’. Interestingly, there is a reversal of roles in the poem: it is the poet rather than the maiden who is imprisoned in the tower, the maiden who comes from outside to rescue him (from his loneliness), and the poet that dies a tragic death. That apart, the poem is characterised by conventional, generalised features common to the Western European, rather than the specifically Russian, tradition.

_Nebokopy_

After a brief excursion into extremely traditional poetry, Gnedov produced some of his most radical and unusual works. It is possible that his stay with Kruchenykh in Ligovo outside St Petersburg in July 1913 had provided an appropriately experimental climate. Gnedov published ten pieces which dominated the eighth Egofuturist almanac _Nebokopy_ (published at the end of August 1913): ‘Pti’okmon’, ‘Zubatyi’volk’, ‘Vchera’, ‘Segodnia’, ‘Zavtra’, ‘Khitraia Moral’, ‘Kolovorot’, ‘Pervovelikodrama’, ‘Azbuka vstupaiushchim’, and ‘Ognianna svita’. Gnedov’s is the only poetry and prose in the collection, the remainder of which is made

166 V. Gnedov, ‘Pti’okmon’, ‘Zubatyi’volk’, ‘Vchera’, ‘Segodnia’, ‘Zavtra’ (p. 1); ‘Khitraia Moral’ (p. 2); ‘Kolovorot’ (p. 3); ‘Pervovelikodrama’ (p. 4); ‘Azbuka vstupaiushchim’ (p. 5); and ‘Ognianna svita’ (p. 16); in _Nebokopy_. The works are republished in _Sobr. stikh._, pp. 51-58.
up of a letter to the editor by Shershenevich, and articles by Anastasiia Chebotarevskaia and Viktor Khovin. Because of the difficulty and frequent intractability of the works in *Nebokopy*, a line-by-line analysis of each work in turn is not especially fruitful here; instead, the poems are considered thematically, and in so far as they illuminate aspects of Gnedov’s poetics. The Glossary should be consulted for a comprehensive break-down of the poems into their likely constituent parts.

Gnedov’s most conspicuous innovation in *Nebokopy* is the creation of a new unit of poetry. By eliminating the spaces between words, and eliding words, he formed a verse-line that was at the same time a word. These ‘word-lines’ (*slovostroki*) feature in eight of his ten contributions to the collection. Close reading shows the following (often overlapping) stages in this process:

1) an entirely comprehensible phrase of syntactically correct standard words, which has been run together:

Толпобрядилзбой (30);

2) as 1), except with irregular syntax:

одназамотьноодночепраком (36);

3) the elision or compression of words:

Овотдброслоиймореплавосва (36);

4) the elision of words, within which there may be a variety of possible additional words can be perceived:

бабушкакуликазелен (32);

5) where the word boundaries are completely blurred, creating a variety of possible but unclear constituents in the line:

лечтаграчичеленыхськоромысл (30).
Furthermore, on occasion, the word-lines form (or are modelled on) parts of speech in themselves. For example, all the word-lines in ‘Ptï’okmon’ seem to function as adverbs, either ending in ‘-kom’ (like tselikom, bosikom, etc.):

удалекойпрашкком (29);

or ‘-о’:

спадошноспано (29).

The intended process is that the constituent parts of the word-lines are to be perceived and read as a whole, thereby fusing the complex associations or metaphors already existing in a verse-line into a single word. The situation is further complicated because the word-lines do not just contain standard words, but also various compressed formations, neologisms, dialectisms, Ukrainianisms, and so on. But on no occasion do the word-lines become the kind of entirely abstract zaumnyi iazyk of Kruchenykh’s ‘Dyr bul shchyl’ or ‘xenoglossia’: Gnedov remains within a potentially recognisable lexical framework.

Three other techniques are apparent in Gnedov’s Nebokopy works. First, the poet plays with the placement of hard and soft signs. In the pre-1917 orthography, the rule was for hard signs to be placed after every word ending in a hard consonant. To experiment with this rule is a logical consequence of the challenge to standard word divisions posed by the word-lines. Gnedov often omits the hard sign from the end of such words or puts a soft sign there instead; he also places hard signs randomly in the middle of words. Soft signs are deliberately misplaced, often after vowels, as in the following example (which should correctly read porvalas’ uzda):

Порвалас’ узда (33).

In one instance, line 2 of ‘Pervovelikodrama’, there is a soft sign immediately after a hard sign. And on occasion, hard and soft signs are placed correctly! Second, the placing of the letter й is also interesting: it is used in conjunction with both soft and
hard signs, and also appears to be a substitute for ы. Third, by putting absurd future
dates after his works in Nebokopy (e.g. “2-i god posle Smerti”, 2549, 1999, 1980,
38687), Gnedov seems to be implying that these are poems of the future that are
inaccessible to present-day comprehension. The correct dating of ‘Azbuka
vstupaiushchim’ (“1913 g. po R. Kh.”) suggests that this poem is the beginning of the
path towards comprehension.

The primary concern of Gnedov’s work in Nebokopy is the expression of
newness through Futurism. This is the implication of the title ‘Pervovelikodrama’.
The epigraph seems to state at the outset that the number of acts and characters and
the duration of the drama is zero (“deistvOil/ / litsOil/ / vremiadlen’iaOil”!), and it is
significant that the first word line of ‘Pervovelikodrama’ starts with a reference to
whiteness (“bel’ia’ta”), as if to represent the blank page before the onset of words:

Георгий Бергсон, "Futurizm i bezumie", p. 36; quoted from Sobr. stikh., p. 203.
168 Ironically, Gnedov’s first venture into drama is to all intents and purposes a poem.
169 In the original publication, after each of these three initial lines is an ‘S’-shaped figure on its side,
the effect of which is unclear.
170 For Sigei, "Pervovelikodrama is imprinted with the idea of Time, which not so much moves as
spreads. It does not divide into identical sections, but appears as a space capable of expanding
(infinity) and contracting (zero)"; Sobr. stikh., p. 156.
171 Particularly a twisting or winding movement (“viliuchi”, “zamoty”, “izvilo”, and
“zavivaiZavivai”) and an evocation of lips (“usty”, “ustyesty”).
In line 3, it is stated that the reader will become a camel; in contrast, in line 4 the lyric subject is a higher being, a lion who is in pursuit ("ia-vyshe-lev-pogon'ga"), or he has left in order to pursue ("ia-vyshel-(e)v-pogon'ga"):

Явящелевогоныга

‘Segodnia’ represents the current state of literature. The first line contains the title of the collection Nebokopy in connection with freedom (privol'e) and is a reference to the Egofuturists, who are by implication the representatives of modern literature:

Небокопыталыревольвь

‘Zavtra’ sets the scene for the literature of the future.

Порваласуэда
посленасмемри
Всврыгнутыышелба
Огоньпивиитассательвь

The first line describes the tearing of a bridle, the removal of something oppressive. In line 2, either there are two prepositions next to a noun (as in ‘Na vozle bal’) or a preposition juxtaposed with the adverb nasmer’t. Either way, the sense is of life beyond the grave, or perhaps after Smert’ iskusstvu. In line 3, after death people will be able to ‘jump higher than the forehead’, will be able to reach new heights beyond reason. The last line is less clear but seems to refer to a fire that saves, possibly viewing Futurist literature as just such a cleansing force.

In ‘Pti’okmon”, the fourth line (possibly made up of futurizm, svarit’, svarivat’, and svaia) may be construed as a self-referential statement concerning Gnedov’s method of constructing the word-lines of Nebokopy:

футуршонсовайвено.

In addition, the Cubofuturist principle of inversion can be seen to be at work. The defiant stance in the last two lines of ‘Azbuka vstupaيششيم’ implies that the
Futurists’ ‘nonsense’ is better than the ‘cleverness’ of the traditional approach to meaning:

Насчитають дураками
амыдурякимлучшевымых

The defence of Futurism is combined with deliberately offensive attacks on the reader’s sensibilities and representatives of aesthetic schools deemed to be passé. The title word of the first poem, ‘Pti’okmon”, may well be more than just the sum of the potential constituents (ptitsa, oko, okno, etc.; an allusion to the expression ptich’e moloko172). According to Sigei, such interpretations hide the actual essence of Gnedov’s neologism, a vulgar expression of astonishment:

То есть “птиюкомоь” - это восклицание (в произношении «птёкмань», что очень близко к «ё ко ло манэ», удивленному возгласу типа «вот её твою матери»)173.

Furthermore, the third line—“ui”mano”—Sigei considers to be “from an area of abusive expressions that are today unknown to ninety nine of every hundred Russians; in some places, there exists the parallel ‘khuinane”174. At the same time, “ui”mano” might be held to contain the rather different association of calmness (uimat’ or uniat’)175. The first and last lines of the poem seem to allude to another slang word, molokosos, meaning an inexperienced youth or ‘suckler’176. In the following line in ‘Pervovelikodrama’, the mention of defiling and backsides sitting too long is probably a scathing reference to the theatre:

Furthermore, the epatazki is even more explicit in the last two lines, where the famous theatre director Stanislavskii, a representative of the Naturalist school, is defamed:

---

172 The saying tol’ko ptich’ego moloka net is a colloquial way of expressing the abundance of or complete satisfaction with something.
173 Letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97. Sigei continues, “had Gnedov not wanted an astonished cry, he would have written: ptitsa oko okno...”.
174 Letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97.
175 The line might also contain uima.
176 The references to milk and sweetness in the first line are repeated in the last two lines and create a circular structure. Milk and sweetness also bring to mind the poem ‘Kozii slashch’. 
‘Khitraia Moral’, on the other hand, has no reference to Futurism and no 
epatazh At its heart seems to be Krylov’s poem ‘Vorona i lisitsa’, based on the well-
known fable of Aesop. The first two-thirds of the poem describe a natural scene, 
where overcast weather turns into a stormy night. The allusion to the fable only 
becomes apparent with the appearance of crows and vixens in the lines:

иВороньеперекаркаетГромъЗавтра...
ПриобгнутъЛисицы—умилюсь—поклоны

Perhaps the next words “khlopni po lysine” refer to an object (the cheese) falling on 
the vixens’ heads. The ‘cunning moral’ of the title is that one’s conscience can be 
stretched without it breaking:

[...] совбстне
рвется—можетесьудобоюрастигивать

The words “zakuska priiataia” refer to the moral and possibly also to the cheese that 
has been won from the use (abuse) of conscience; “mediakopozolotyi”, a copper coin 
that has been gilded, describes the benefit derived from using the moral. The last line 
describes the foxes once again on the trail, the implication being that they are looking 
for someone new to cheat:

Утрадайлышаютобытъzasлаять

Janecek notes that, at 36 letters long, this is the longest uninterrupted verse line in the 
collection177.

The other word-line poems are less clear, and at this stage their interpretations 
are entirely dependent on the title. For example, the title of Gnedov’s second poem in 
the collection, ‘Zubatyi’volk’ (i.e. zubastyi volk), indicates that the poem concerns a

177 Janecek, Zaum, p. 104.
sharp-toothed wolf. However, it is not clear what the wolf indicated by the title does in the poem; the complexities of the word-lines often make a poem intractable, and a vague narrative can be perceived but no more. Similarly, ‘Azbuka vstupaishchim’ leads one to expect some kind of instruction or lesson178 for the ‘initiates’, but, barring the last two lines, the poem appears to depict nature (i.e. the allusions to the sun, an alder tree (“-olesh-”), a quail (“perepel-”), and a toad (“-zhaba”)).

The form of the word-lines in *Nebokopy* is not entirely new, it seems to be based on medieval Slavic texts. This is not a chance resemblance, although the exploitation of ancient or traditional Russian literary forms is more associated with members of the Cubofuturist group (for instance, *Igra v adu* (1912), a hand-written manuscript book by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov with *lubok*-style illustrations by Goncharova). Genrikh Tasteven described Gnedov’s word-lines as “rhythmic complexes”, considering the precedent for them to be Mallarmé: “in ‘Divagations’, Mallarmé calls the verse-line the ideal mystical word, which smelts individual words, turns them into a new, completely collective word not existing in the language”179. The word-lines might be held to produce a new approach to reading poetry: the implication of compressing the component words of the line into a single unit is that the word-line is to be comprehended as a whole in itself rather than the sum of its parts. Sigei relates the word-lines to concepts of “continual experience (*nepberyvnoe perezhivanie*)” expressed by V. Nalimov’s *Dialektika neperyrynosti i diskretnosti v myshlenii i iazyke*180.

There is a number of other Futurist experiments similar to Gnedov’s word-lines. David Burliuk’s “kompaktslova” consisted of words run together (e.g. “Utonchenapetitalant”, “Korsetebutshampanoskripki”181), and two poems by Vasilii Kamenskii each consisted of a single word-line with elided constituents (“Zolotorossyp’ iuvimoch’”, “Rekachkachaika”182); the cited examples are more or less equivalent to word-line types 1 (Burliuk) and 4 (Kamenskii) seen above. Gnedov’s poetry would later be read at evenings of the Tiflis Futurist group in 1918, and traces

178 The idea of a lesson would also also fit with the ‘Khitraia Moral’.
179 *Tasteven, Futurizm*, p. 23.
181 *Quoted from Sobr. stikh.*, p. 159.
182 *Quoted from V. Markov, O svobode v poezii*, p. 356. Aleksei Kruchenykh’s single-line poem, “beliamatokiia” (A. Kruchenykh, *Vzorval*, Moscow, 1913, unnumbered page), is also similar.
of the *Nebokopy* poems can be found in the works of two of its members. Igor’ Terent’ev’s ‘Beskonechnyi tost v chest’ Sofii Georgievny’ involves a complex fusion of component words which border on the unrecognisable, and, according to Sigei, the “two-storey line (dvukhetazhnaia stroka)” developed by Il’ia Zdanevich has its roots in Gnedov’s earlier experiments.

The two remaining works in *Nebokopy* do not feature word-lines. In the first, ‘Kolovorot’, Gnedov attempts to break new ground in experimental prose. It is the last and most neologistic of four thematically connected longer works (the other three being ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’, ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi’, and ‘Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne’): the allusions to ‘toska’ and ‘schast’e’/’gore’ are common to ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’; the second person singular form of address and the development of the “sred’mir’” recall ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi’; references to hearts and souls, daggers, cliffs, graves and coffins are also found in ‘Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne’. However, the style in which ‘Kolovorot’ is written makes it extremely difficult to work out what is happening.

Neologisms and experiments with orthography and punctuation aside, Gnedov employs a number of verbal devices to defamiliarise the work. The juxtaposition of nouns at the start of the first sentence is similar in style to Marinetti’s ‘parole in libertà’:

Благодаря среднеме среднемо сердце мира ягода душечки

The concept of the ‘whirlpool’ (‘Kolovorot’) is suggestive. The almost exact repetition of the first two words of the first sentence at the start of the last sentence (“Blagodar’i sred’mir’e”) forms a circle of sorts. Certain verbal devices in the text may well be an attempt to represent a whirlpool’s turbulent, spinning movement. In this respect, the

185 The removal of soft signs from the end of the second person singular indicative verbs (e.g. “napoish”, “razgonish”, “rasplalesh”, etc.) is in imitation of Ukrainian or colloquial spelling. Furthermore, according to Sigei, the technique of placing soft signs in the middle of words (e.g. “flT O bita”) is derived from old, dialect tales in which spellings such as “dots’ka” and “ot’tsa” could be found; *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 158. Note also the curious backwards apostrophe that replaces the hard sign in the word “kriuchek”.
186 Taking into account the misplaced soft sign, “blagoda’r” might be a noun along the lines of gosudar’ or an imperative of the verb blagodarit’.
gradual mutation of the word “sred'mir'e” throughout the text (“средмір'є средмір'є”, “средмір'є”, “Средмір'є”, “средмір'є”, “средм'ир'є”, and “средм'ир'’е”187), the repetition and echoing of certain words or phrases (“сердтся міра […] сердсє міра”, “сквози […] засквозди”, “сброс' [...] vyброс’”, “десятька [...] десятка”, “Ширина не шири”, “успешка [...] usmeshka”, “счасть'ei [...] schast'oe’”, “кинжал [...] kinzhalo”), and the puns and sound-play are interesting, e.g.:

засквозди срэдм'ир'є подкучуь кукуле бога разорви Голубь крыле в'ежо глуб

and:

тоску скуешь Вы тоску не куйте кайте

Such passages, which resemble the Surrealist practice of ‘automatic writing’, are occasionally interrupted by a relatively coherent section of text. The passage starting “елек плеkatka serdtse”188, for example, seems to describe bats attacking and sucking blood from the heart of the poem’s protagonist; a bat flaps around but the lyric subject cannot get rid of it, starts to choke and call out (“не b'et szadi ezheli udarnit skalo zadokhneshsia zazvenish”). But overall, the experimental prose technique and obscure imagery break down any semblance of a narrative. A comparable piece of Egofuturist prose is Ivan Ignat'ev’s ‘Assiod’189, and similarly “jerky (otryvistyi) syntax”190 can be found in poems by the Futurist Fedor Platov191.

‘Ognianna svita’, the last of Gnedov’s contributions to Nebokopy, is accompanied by an oval-shaped photograph of a bare-chested Gnedov, apparently modelled on similar portrait of Rimbaud192. The poem is unusual in that the first two stanzas are written in imitation-Ukrainian. As stated in the first line of the second

187 Note the differentiation between мір’ (world) and мирь (peace).
188 Elek is a word from the Vologda region meaning “bat” or “nightjar”; SRNG, 8, p. 339. The verb плеkат’ means “to breastfeed”; Dal’, III, p. 310.
190 Sobr. stikh., p. 157.
192 Sobr. stikh., p. 192.
stanza, the poem was indeed the first Futurist ‘song’ in the Ukrainian language, predating the appearance of Ukrainian Futurism by a year\textsuperscript{193}:

Перша це—футурия пісня
на українській мові.
Усім набридли Тарас Шевченко.
Та гопашник Кропивницький.

Here both the national poet of Ukraine and a leading actor and theatre director are defamed\textsuperscript{194}. The negative tone of the poem is typical. In the second two stanzas, the language switches to standard Russian. The poem’s protagonist and author are identified as one (“Sizotelyi voevoda Vasilisk”), and he writes his name in lightning across the sky. Gnedov ends ‘Ognianna svita’ with a typical over-the-top flourish of self-affirmation:

Шекспир і Байрон владдли совместно
80 тысячами словь—
Геніальніший Поэт Будущаго
Василиск Гнєдов ежеминутно
владдєтъ 80000000001 квадратныхъ словь.

For Chukovskii, the poem was an “attempt […] to convey by transrational language the melody of Ukrainian speech”\textsuperscript{195}. As such, it can be seen in the context of a number of similar such experiments in mimetic zaum’ by Russian Futurists: for example, Kruchenykh’s xenoglossic experiments in Spanish, Japanese, and Hebrew in \textit{Porosiata} (1913); Kamenskii’s poem ‘Persidskaia’ (1916), as well as poems imitating Arabic (1919-1921) by Iurii Marr\textsuperscript{196}. However, unlike these examples, Gnedov actually knew Ukrainian and his use of the language in ‘Ognianna svita’ is characterised by a similar usage of dialect words, spelling alterations, and neologisms that are part of his

\textsuperscript{194} See Sobr. stikh., p. 158. “Nabridli” probably derives from \textit{nabridlii} (“who […] causes boredom”, \textit{UED}, p. 522); and “gopashnik” presumably means one who dances a gopak (hopak, a kind of dance).
\textsuperscript{195} Chukovskii, ‘Образцы’, p. 142. This article quotes two sections of ‘Ognianna svita’ on p. 142 and quotes Poems 6, 7, and 8 from \textit{Smert’ iskusstvu} on p. 141.
\textsuperscript{196} Iurii Marr (1893-1935), son of the linguist Nikolai Marr, wrote zaum’ poems and was involved with the 41° group in Tiflis. See Iu. Marr, \textit{Izbrannoe. Kniga 1. Proza, stikhi, dramaturgia}, text prep., comp., foreword, and notes by T. Nikol’skaya, Moscow, 1995, pp. 31, 32, 34.
language experiments in Russian. Markov’s comment that Gnedov was imitating Ukrainian “without much consistency or knowledge”\textsuperscript{197} is not justified.

After \textit{Smert' iskusstvu}, Gnedov had clearly decided that his Futurist experiments were far from over; having proclaimed the end of poetry and the death of art, he was perhaps forced to attempt something new. Each of Gnedov’s contributions is innovative. As well as writing in a ‘new form’ (the word-lines), Gnedov also borrows from an existing language, Ukrainian, to provide a Slavic source for renovating Russian literary language. At the same time, Gnedov’s word-lines and other works in \textit{Nebokopy} make use of the themes (Futurism, \textit{epatazh}, nature), vocabulary, and types of neologisms Gnedov has been using hitherto. The works are often extremely difficult or even at times intractable and this analysis has only outlined certain central features; as Zakrzhevskii noted: “perhaps all their charm is in the fact that no Vengerov will ever be able to decipher them”\textsuperscript{198}. The same critic related Gnedov’s experiments to the language of “primitive peoples and madmen”, a language that cannot be understood rationally but that can be best appreciated if sung:

\begin{quote}
точка получается впечатление, будто нет ни двух лет культуры, ни человеческих понятий и тяжелой логичности, с ними связанной, будто мы вернулись снова к темному звериному раз, и язык наш зверинный, и еще царит в славном
сознании бредовое очарование хаоса...\textsuperscript{199}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Razvorochenye cherepa}

Gnedov did not develop his word-lines further. In ‘Slezhit riabidii trun’ga sno—’, his single contribution to the last Egofuturist miscellany \textit{Razvorochenye cherepa} (published late September 1913)\textsuperscript{200}, the poet returned to standard poetic lines. The poem is dedicated “to those who are deaf and blind”; as in ‘Na vozle bal’, Gnedov seems to taunt or chide the reader for being unable to understand his poetry. Nevertheless, there is considerable difficulty in the coinages and disrupted syntax:

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{RF}, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{198} Zakrzhevskii, \textit{Rytsari bezumiia}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{199} Zakrzhevskii, \textit{Rytsari bezumiia}, p. 99. The idea of singing the poems may have derived from another Egofuturist, Severianin, who apparently sang his poetry during recitals.
It appears as if Gnedov is considerably varying themes within the stanza. To some extent, this stanza is about the self-affirmation, the poet, and Futurism. Line 3, for example, might be addressed to an audience unsympathetic to a Futurist performance; by contrast, in line 4, the poet has ‘decorated the edge of his brain with eyes’, i.e. is able to comprehend more than such an audience. In line 6, the poet asserts his authority in a similar way to the lines “Raspisalsia molniei po nebe/ Sizotelyi voevoda Vasilisk” in ‘Ognianna svita’. On the other hand, lines 1, 2, and 5 are not obviously self-referential; whilst the neologism “iastreblo” (a combination iastreb and istrebit’) seems appropriate for a bird of prey, the motivation for the sudden change of focus is unclear.

In the second and third stanzas, the poem picks up on the allusion to horses (“Konevama”) in stanza 1. For example, in stanza 2:

Кобыляя просьба стучит виски

The final line of stanza 3 shows that the horse-ride is in a mountainous place:

Вду на черствых буграх.

Furthermore, in the last line of stanza 2, the mountains appear as if hands are lifting them up (“gory ruki podniali prodn”). In first two lines of stanza 2, the vocabulary of cliffs, leaps, and whirlwinds in connection with horses recalls ‘Skachev Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’:

Съезжает съ кручи костей средины
Нечаях желтый скачков вихры

---

201 It might be noted that, in this poem, Gnedov deviates from pre-1917 orthographical rules in that he does not place hard signs after final consonants.
Hence, in ‘Slezzhit riabidii trun'ga sno—’, the poet may again be depicted on top of a flying horse (as in ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’), especially if the poet’s leg is capable of splashing through the sun. There are further references to wings and the sky in the first lines of stanza 3:

Крыльышко батюшка камешек горя—
Ябеда радугу глаза,
Вынырник пальца стального
По морю всходит в рукавь

The description of sky in terms of a liquid (seen in the line “Skvoz' solntse pleshchetsia moia noga”) may also be present in lines 3 and 4: the ‘steel finger’ jumping through the ‘sea’ could refer to a shaft of sunlight. Clearly, this interpretation is tentative, and further analysis is hindered by the application of the Futurist tenet of the destruction of standard syntax. The effect of the juxtaposition of nine nouns in the first three lines of stanza 3 above is similar to that at the start of ‘Kolovorot’; and in lines such as “Zveriami iastreblo p'iany gaga”, “Nechaiat zheltyi skachkov vikhry”, and “Iagoda strazhi ne bol'no”, the indicators of number, gender, and case appear to function in a contradictory fashion.

**Other Poems of 1913**

Although Gnedov had experimented with almost every aspect of poetic convention, he had not touched upon the way in which the words are distributed on the page. ‘a La tyr”, published first in 1991 but written in 1913, was one of three poems (along with Ivan Ignat'ev’s ‘Y/ Kh/ ' chen, Kru’ and ‘Tseluiu tseluiavno’ by Pavel Shirokov) that were experimental in this respect. Originally sent by Ignat'ev to Kruchenykh, they survive copied out in a letter from Kruchenykh to A.G. Ostrovskii.

---


203 PO GPB, fond 552, ed. khr. 90. For republication of all three and notes, see *Sobr. stikh.*, pp. 152-54.
The *alatyr* is a magical stone of Russian folklore and legend held to have "sacral and healing properties," it is also known as the "bel-goriuch kamen" so the blank, white space in the middle of the poem could well be a representation of the stone. The displacement of the words and word-segments on the page has the effect of bringing out new aspects of the words:

```
а Ла тырь
Вели Миро мБ
Мир о м
```

The segment "tyr'", which is repeated later in the poem, seems to be either a second person singular imperative or a noun from the verb *tyrif* ("to steal"). The second line features an allusion to Velimir Khlebnikov, and the name is echoed in the third: the splitting-up of the pseudonym Velimir foregrounds its derivation (*velit' mir*). The effect of the divisions "Miro me" and "Mir o m" are unclear, but the alliteration of 'm' is perhaps a way of merging Velimir with "Moiu" in line 4. The word "Piatu" (in agreement with "Moiu") is written diagonally and upside down, almost resembling an actual heel-print on the page. Lines 5-8 are written as follows:

```
кк       упы
не
тырь
```

Together with line 4, they produce a brief phrase reading "moiu piatu kak upyr' ne tyr'", apparently a warning issued to Khlebnikov. In the final three lines, there is a switch of focus towards the lyric subject:

---

205 A later example of a poem where individual words have been broken down into word-segments can be found in *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 84.
206 *SSRLLa*, 15, p. 1198. Might the first two parts "a La" may be regarded as the French à la (like), to produce a secondary meaning 'like a thief'?
207 There has been an earlier reference to a heel (belonging to the Titan) in 'Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi'.
208 Sigov (Sigei), 'Ego-futurnaliia Vasiliska Gnedova', p. 121.
“V glazu polzu” might be understood as Gnedov becoming an irritant in someone else’s (Khlebnikov’s?) eye, or in other words making himself noticeable. In the final two lines, the space between ‘u’ and ‘du’ repeats the technique of Poems 11 and 14 of Smert’ iskusstvu (‘U—’ and ‘Iu’), although here the number of potential verbs is more restricted (e.g. udu, uedu, ukradu, upadu). The capitalisation of the letter ‘u’ (which picks up on “moiu piatu” and “upyr”) emphasises its importance in this poem, as in Smert’ isskustvu. The poem appears to be a double-edged homage to Khlebnikov, who is on the one hand associated with the magical stone and on other called a thief and a vampire.

‘a La tyr” is significant as it represents one of only a few typographical experiments in poetry carried out by the Egofuturists. In contrast, the Cubofuturists were active in this regard. For example, Kruchenykh’s booklet Vzorval’ (1913) contained handwritten poems written diagonally and with various illustrations/graphic marks, and in 1914 Kamenskii deconstructed the idea of verses and stanzas with the scattered segments of his zhelezobetonnaia poema. As Sigei has noted, Gnedov’s poem to some extent predates concepts present in ‘concrete poetry’ and suggests analogies in the work of the poets Mon and Gomringer. In a concrete poem, its

209 Ignat’ev’s poem about Kruchenykh, ‘Y/ Kh/ ’ chen, Kru’ (Sobr. stikh., pp. 153), is similarly double-edged: in it, Kruchenykh is associated with “onan”, “nana”, and “kobel”.

210 Only Ignat’ev innovated in this regard. The prose piece ‘Sledom za...’ (dated 1911) uses Old Russian, Latin, and Gothic German-style lettering. In ‘Opus–45’, words are written to the right and left of a central column-word; underneath, the reader learns that “due to technical impotence, I.V. Ignat’ev’s opus ‘Lazorevyi Logaritm’ cannot be performed by typo-lithographical means” (Razvorochenye cherepa, p. 12). Finally, there is the poem ‘Y/ Kh/ ’ chen, Kru’.


212 Sobr. stikh., p. 152. For example, a poem from 1960 by Gomringer displays a more structured verbal bordering of a space:

silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
“visual element [...] tended to be structural, a consequence of the poem, a ‘picture’ of the lines of force of the work itself, and not merely textural.” However, if the shape of the poem on the page has a representational purpose (the blank space denoting the alatyr’), ‘a La tyr’ is as much a pattern poem as a concrete poem.

**ii) WORKS OF 1914**

*Kniga velikikh*

The year 1914 marked a major change in Gnedov’s poetics, characterised by a reduction of the extreme Avant-Gardism of 1913. Gnedov’s single contribution to the booklet *Kniga velikikh*, ‘Poema nachala’ would have come as a shock to those anticipating further experimental poetry. However, like ‘Pechal’naia skazka’, the poem may be regarded as a folktale, as Polozov suggests in his afterword. In addition to a number of references to *skazki*, this impression is reinforced by moon references (mesiats rather than luna), the personification of plants and mountains, and the floating or flying lovers in the poem’s third stanza. In the repetitions (like that in the first three lines of stanza 2), there are stylistic similarities to folktales, and the two questions and the repetitive four lines of answers resemble a passage in the folk-poem ‘Golubinaia kniga’. Gnedov once again seems to draw on traditional sources, but ‘Poema nachala’ is very much more symbolic than ‘Pechal’naia skazka’.

The title can be translated as ‘Poem of the Beginning’, or perhaps ‘Poem of the Origin’; the poem both seems to herald a new beginning and concerns origins. The

---


213 Anthology of Concrete Poetry, p. vi.

214 V. Gnedov, ‘Poema nachala’, in V. Gnedov and P. Shirokov, *Kniga velikikh*, pp. 7-8. Also, see *Sobr. stikh.*, pp. 60-61. Note that the version of ‘Poema nachala’ in *Sobranie stikhov* has been modified in accordance with corrections Gnedov later made on a copy of the poem held in the Maiakovskii Museum. This analysis uses the 1914 version, because it was the version to be received by the critics and public. Where appropriate, the later variations will be noted. There is some dispute as to when *Kniga velikikh* was published. Sigei indicates 1913 (*Sobr. stikh.*, p. 160); Markov (*RF*, p. 432) and Tarasenkov (*Russkie pisateli XX veka. 1900-1955*, Moscow, 1966, p. 102) specify 1914. The date of one review of the booklet suggests that it was published in February 1914 (S. Krechetov, ‘Sredi knig’, *Utro Rossi*, 22 February 1914, p. 2).

215 For Markov, this “technically most traditional [poem is] perhaps his best one”; *RF*, p. 81.

216 *Kniga velikikh*, p. 9.

poem functions on various shifting planes—the philosophical (the origins of and relations between things), the natural (the description of nature, its relation to whiteness and love), the artistic (the creation of a skazka), and the emotional (the love poem). As indicated by the poem's subtitle "(Beloe)", whiteness is the universal that connects the various associations.

Темнота родит звёзды,  
Звёзды родит тишину.  
Месяц рождается в сказках,  
Сказки—тому любви.

Darkness precedes light (as in Genesis), and the repeated allusions to birth underscore the idea of origins. In the second couplet of stanza 1, the moon (another white light in a black sky) is viewed as a part of a folktale: the cosmic is equated with the literary. In turn, folktales are "tomi liubvi"218, equating the artistic/mythic aspect of 'Poema nachala' to the internal emotions (of the poem's protagonist). The increase and reduction in the focus is typical of the whole piece. Clearly, on a symbolic level whiteness has general associations of purity, life, peace, and so on. In stanzas 2-4 of the poem, whiteness is evoked through concrete images: snow, skin, silver birches (belaia berezka), and the polar bear (belyi medved'). But 'Poema nachala' is also a poem of love, expressed through various representations of whiteness:

Твое белое тело, а я— покрывало;  
Приникнем, и бёлое будет для нас покрывало—  
Не саньтъ, а бёлый покровъ...

Here, whiteness is connected with a woman's body, the lovers' embrace, and a covering to keep them warm rather than one associated with death.

In its title, 'Poema nachala' is clearly linked to 'Poema Kontsa'. Both have been termed poemy rather than stikhovorenia; although longer, 'Poema nachala' is nevertheless far from the length of a standard poem. 'Poema Kontsa' was a belaia stranitsa, and, as we have seen, the symbolism of its whiteness/blankness is

218 The word "tomi" is curious. The second person singular imperative of tomit' would not seem appropriate, so this might be a misspelling of tomy (tomes); however, Sigei treats it as the neologism "tomin" (presumably meaning 'langour'), Sobr. stikh., p. 161.
interpretatable in a variety of ways; ‘Poema nachala’ details certain aspects of that theme. In his commentary on page 9, Ivan Polozov writes that “Gnedov has made the journey from ‘beginning’ to ‘end’”\(^{219}\). Of course, the situation is the exact opposite, and the inversion of the expected order is very much a Futurist technique. If the point of *Smert* 'iskusstvu* was that there had to be an end for there to be a new beginning to art, Gnedov’s reaction was again to resort to something traditional rather than innovative and to write a poem that is perhaps closer to Symbolism than Futurism.

**Rukonog**

Three poems by Gnedov (‘Eroshino’, ‘Sumerki na Donu’, and ‘Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot’ i vshei uviadan’e’) were published in *Rukonog*\(^{220}\) in April 1914. The collection was extremely significant, marking one of the more successful gatherings of Futurists in opposition to those associated with the Moscow Cubofuturist group. The group of Bobrov, Aseev, and Pasternak formed the core of Tsentrifuga; and they were joined by the remnants of the Assotsiatsiia Ego-Futuristov, which had disbanded following Ivan Ignat’ev’s suicide on 20 January 1914. Thus the poems in *Rukonog* range a great deal in style, with Gnedov representing the more radical edge. Nevertheless, his contributions are experimental in a rather different way from his previous works.

As in ‘Poema nachala’, Gnedov to some extent draws upon traditional forms of literature in the style of narration. The tautology of the line “V lokhmotakh loskutakh” in ‘Sumerki na Donu’ is a feature common to folk-songs or folk-poetry. There is further evidence of this in ‘Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot’ i vshei uviadan’e’, where inanimate objects or abstract concepts are capable of movement (“v gorst’ pribegaiut umory”, “Karacheno osoni skachut”); the unclear seventh stanza of the same poem is

\(^{219}\) *Kniga velikikh*, p. 9.

\(^{220}\) V. Gnedov, ‘Eroshino’ (p. 7), ‘Sumerki na Donu’ (p. 8), ‘Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot’ i vshei uviadan'e’ (p. 9), in *Rukonog*. The poems are reprinted in *Sobr. stikh.*, pp. 62-64. The orthography employed in Gnedov’s poems in *Rukonog* (and only in Gnedov’s poems) is the same as in ‘Slezzhit riabidii trun’ga sno—’: i.e. it conforms to pre-1917 norms, except that the hard signs are omitted from words ending in consonants. There are two exceptions in ‘Eroshino’: въ и черезъ. Archive correspondence between Gnedov and Bobrov from March 1914 indicate that the poems were written at the same time as ‘Poema nachala’: “[…] независимо от характера издания моих произведений останутся какими были […]. разве могу дать что-либо из очень ранних произ. (кк. в «Книге Великих»)”; RGALI, fond 2554, Bobrov, op. 1, ed. khr. 27. Correspondence between Gnedov and Bobrov highlights the existence of a poem called ‘Kazn’ that Gnedov sent for inclusion in *Rukonog* but had asked subsequently for it not be printed. Unfortunately, this poem has not not been found.
resolved with the phrase “Iz belago siniago moria”, a manipulation of the formulae iz belogo belogo moria or iz sinego sinego moria.

In general, the emphasis of Gnedov's 'new' poetry was away from morphological, syntactic, and lexical complications. It is noticeable that in his Rukonog poems the use of non-standard language is relatively restricted in comparison to earlier works. In 'Eroshino', for example, there are two colloquialisms: “ptakha”, which is just a colloquial form of ptitsa (ptashka), and the exclamation “Shvakh!” means ‘bad’, ‘weak’, or ‘poor’. In 'Sumerki na Donu', there are two rare words, pecheritsa (mushroom)\(^{221}\) and skuda (an alternate form of skudost'), a Ukrainian word abo ('as', 'for'), and the neologism “surepa”, a syncope of surepitsa (rape seed). Finally, 'Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot' i vshei uviadan'e’ contains dialect words (“umory”, “Dy”) and spelling alterations (“Drekolom”, “pastvo”). However, although the language may be clearer, other difficulties in Gnedov’s poetry are highlighted.

The technique of juxtaposing lines containing obscure and apparently unrelated images was apparent in ‘Slezzhit riabidi trun'ga sno—', and it occurs once again in ‘Eroshino’ and ‘Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot' i vshei uviadan'e’. In terms of the former, Sigei has referred to the “semantic isolation (smyslovaia obosoblennost') of the lines” as being related to later works by the Oberiuty\(^{222}\). As shall be seen, the technique is also a feature of Gnedov’s poems of 1918. Finally, the extremely minimal punctuation of the Rukonog poems became a characteristic of Gnedov’s Futurist works from 1914 on.

The title-word of the first poem, ‘Eroshino’, is a neologism which can be interpreted as meaning a ‘tangled place’\(^{223}\). This is perhaps an accurate description of the poem, where lines 5-11 of the first stanza seem to have been haphazardly placed and function almost independently of each other:

---

\(^{221}\) Pecheritsa means the “edible mushroom Agraricus campestris” (Dal', III, p. 270).

\(^{222}\) Sobr. stikh., p. 162.

\(^{223}\) Eroshit' (“to beat, shake up [...] tangle, dishevel”; Dal', II, p. 1300). The ending ‘-ino’ is common in place names (Mitino, Strogino, Liublino, etc).
A natural backdrop of hills, a copse, and a field can be made out; the allusion to a dinghy may suggest a body of water. However, the possible allusion to a hunting scene (the bear-spear, a falling bird, shot; the tasting of death and a heart in line 13) is undermined by obscure references to mushrooms, decks, cats, a drachma (or dram), and so on. In stanza 3, attention is directed towards the hills, but this is interrupted by an unpleasant image:

Perhaps the shoe (oporok) can be understood as a cloud moving over a snow-topped peak. The final line, where clouds are pictured hitting themselves or the sky, may continue a possible general theme of the violence of nature:

'Sumerki na Donu' is another nature poem, about Gnedov's native Don region. As in previous nature poems like 'Kuk', Gnedov alludes to the little bustard (strepet), as well as evoking geographical features, flora and fauna directly: valleys, fields, spurge, rape seed. The first stanza sets the scene:
The tone of the description is negative ("skuda"). Stanza 2 describes an unspecified but ragged and fat character who rides on top of a bitch ("na suke pod"ekhal") as if this person were a demon or devil of some sort. The poem becomes increasingly aggressive in tone: this unspecified third person character is threatened with poisoning in stanza 3 ("Vyzhmu spelyi molochai") and with a beating in stanza 4:

Приготовлю же завтра полно
Пусть садится тогда на колны.

The poem seems to be a description of some kind of agricultural dispute; an unusual aspect of the poem, however, is the reference to camels ("Verbliuzh'i komy sobiraet") which seems out of place in southern Russia224.

'Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot' i vshei uviadan'e' is the last and longest of Gnedov's three poems in Rukonog. The metre is a regular dactylic trimeter, though it is not fully maintained (at the end of stanza 4, and the first two lines of stanza 5)225. The layout appears to highlight a dialogue concerning fortune-telling (gadan'e) between the two protagonists, one of whom occupies the left-aligned stanzas and the other the centre-aligned stanzas:

Бросите мне лапу скорее коготь ишей увиданье
Ткнусь как на поле
Воздв на посух долины

Кромы не выжевать сказок
Ты покровитель подвязок
Сломишь бедро поцелуем
Брови подгладишь и всуе

224 Gnedov also referred to camels in 'Svirel'ga' (Zasakhare kry) and 'Vchera'.
225 Although the stanzas vary in length from one to four lines long, stanzas 1 and 3 could be written as four-line stanzas.
By stanza 6, however, it is not clear that the dialogue of the first five stanzas is continuing. The poem is full of unclear imagery: the hanging of felt on someone’s neck (stanza 3), and of *lapti* (bast shoes) on eyelids (stanza 4), and the anointing of the skull with chalk (stanza 5). The two-line stanza 6 creates a paradoxical situation whereby the external world is grafted onto a person’s physical internal experiences:

Вывужал дlös из затылка
Дрежолом махал и горбился

This “motif […] of the world appearing out of the person and in the person” is characteristic of the early Russian Avant-Garde. Overall, the poem may amount to the description of various ritualistic acts connected with fortune-telling, but it is difficult to determine any more than that.

*Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov*

In general, rhyme has not been a prominent or consistent feature of Gnedov’s poetry. For example, as in earlier poems, the rhyme in ‘Eroshino’ and ‘Sumerki na Donu’ is sporadic and irregular. The inexact rhymes Gnedov employs in ‘Bros’te mne lapu skoree kogot’ i vshe uviadan’e’ (“potseluem” - “vsue”, “vyshe Noia” - “vyshinoiu”, “umory” - “moria”), for example, are non-traditional but are typical for the Futurists.

‘Glas o soglase o zloglase’, which was published together with articles by other Futurists in the form of a scroll entitled *Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov*, was Gnedov’s one explicit venture into theoretical writing and suggested a new approach to rhyme. Instead of a repetition of similar sounds, Gnedov posits the idea of rhyme as a repetition of similar (or conflicting) ideas, a kind of semantic association termed the “rhyme of concepts” (*rifma poniatii*). The poet illustrates this with an example not from any of Gnedov’s published writing:


227 V. Gnedov, ‘Glas o soglase o zloglase’, in *Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov*. The use of Gnedov’s neologism ‘Svirel’ga’ suggests the poet was involved in this publishing venture. The piece has been republished three times: *Manifesty i programmy*, pp. 137-38; *Zabytyi avangard 1*, p. 63; *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 129.

228 However, Sigei believes that the provisions of ‘Gramata intuitivnoi assotsiatsii’ were mostly written by Gnedov; Sigov (Sigei), ‘Ego-futurnaliia Vasiliska Gnedova’, p. 118.
The article continues by outlining further subdivisions: rhymes of taste (horseradish—mustard: "bitter rhymes"), smell (arsenic—garlic), touch (steel—glass), sight (water—mirror—pearl), and colour (the sibilants ‘s’ and ‘z’ are held to have yellow coloration). The poet prefaces his invention in typical Futurist fashion, saying that it provides material for the next thousand years. Whilst Ignat'ev had suggested a new system whereby all vowels and similar consonants (gutturals, labials, dentals) were considered rhyming, Gnedov’s approach is far more radical and he characteristically seeks to push definitions to their limit. The article trumpets the destruction of traditional “musical” rhyme, which is deemed to be worn out, and its replacement by a kind of conceptual associative play. Far from renouncing radical innovation, the poet can be seen to be continuing to implement the destructive tenets of Futurism. At the same time, the implication of ‘Glas o soglase o zoglase’ was that Gnedov was now more focused on semantic rather than verbal experimentation.

iii) POEMS OF 1917-1919

Previously unpublished poems

There is a gap of three years in which Gnedov published nothing and is not known to have written anything. In August 1914, Gnedov was drafted and spent two years on the Austrian Front. In 1916, he was posted to Moscow and there became involved with revolutionary politics, participating in both the February and October Revolutions of the following year. The next three poems under consideration (‘Khromonogo pustynia po glazu’, ‘Natal’ia Goncharova’, ‘V boku klok sena’) have not been published before; the original manuscripts are located in the Maiakovskii Museum. Gnedov had sent the poems to Bobrov’s publishing venture to be printed in a planned third collection of the Tsentrifuga group, which never materialised. A

230 Maiakovskii Museum, archive of S. Bobrov, items 29963, 29964, and 29965. Sergei Bobrov (1899-1971) was a poet, critic, and head of the Tsentrifuga publishing enterprise.
cover sheet that must originally have accompanied the poems is held in RGALI: together with Gnedov’s signature in the centre of the sheet is the stamp of “I-vo Tsentrifuga” and the date “27.11.[1]917”

The poems adhere to the new orthography promulgated in February 1917, except for the retention of the letter ‘i’. In other respects, the language of the poems is a continuation of that seen in the Rukonog poems, in that verbal experimentation plays a less significant role than before, but on the whole the three poems are much more comprehensible than their predecessors.

Gnedov’s experiences of war and revolution were clearly the inspiration for the first of the three poems, ‘Khromonogo pustynia po glazu’:

Хромоного пустыня по глазу
козырь бы серыми ногами
в голове повыдольблены пазы
пригоревший язык с крюка
пазушка пазушка
смеляя зевунья
Радугой ряда корми.

The poem seems to concern a wounded or mutilated body of an unidentified person or animal, described with hitherto uncharacteristic directness. A glazed expression covers an eye; gouged out of the head are “pazy” (grooves), a technical term implying the inanimacy of the body, and they may represent bullet-holes; a burnt tongue lolls out of the head in the shape of a hook.

There is a change of tone in the second stanza. The narrative shifts from third person description to a second person singular imperative; this is accompanied by a change in the rhythmic patterning of the poem—from the third syllable stress in lines 1-4 to first syllable stress in lines 5-7. In addition, the language moves from direct description to a less clear, metaphorical style. The references to holes or spaces in lines 3 and 4 are picked up in the second stanza. The word “pazushka”, a dialect variant of pazukha (referring to the space between the clothing and one’s chest), links to

---

231 RGALI, fond 2554, Bobrov, op. 1, ed. khr. 27.
232 Dal’ lists pazushka only in the phrase: “ne to denezhki, chto u diadiushki, a to denezhki, chto za pazushkoi (v zapazushke)”, Dal’, III, p. 12.
“pazy” in line 3. The reference to yawning and feeding in lines 6 and 7 connects with the allusion to a mouth in line 4. Finally, the unpleasant image of the final line, an order to feed with a “rainbow of cancer”, incorporates a typically Futurist opposition of light/life and illness/death.

The second poem is ‘Natal’ia Goncharova’:

Natal’ia Goncharova

перекръсък нъжаластра росио
я ти дам печеншицы
красной
метлишней сухаревой башни
вышмогни белыми
желтый
пахнет корицей
корица плакала kitaem

The poem contains certain lexical peculiarities. In line 2, “pozhalusta” is a colloquial misspelling; “rosiu” is the Ukrainian word for Russia, or it could be treated as a misspelling. The dialectism pecheritsa in line 3 has been used before in ‘Sumerki na Donu’. In line 5, “metlishchei” is the instrumental singular of a feminine noun metlishcha, rather than the standard metlishche (broomstick). Finally, the neologism “vyshmorgni” in line 6 combines morgnut’ and vyshmargivat’ (to beat out).

The poem is the only example in Gnedov’s Futurist work of the poet addressing a specific person. The reference to Goncharova is extremely interesting: whilst the Moscow-based Cubofuturist group had close ties with leading Avant-Garde painters (including Goncharova), the Egofuturists had been much more conservative in this regard. Hence, Gnedov’s address to a Cubofuturist associate is indicative of Gnedov’s movement towards his former rivals after the dissolution of the Egofuturist group.

233 Or perhaps as a conflation of Rossiia and rosa.

234 Goncharova illustrated the following Cubofuturists books: Igra v adu (1912) and Mirskontsa (1912-13), both coauthored by Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh, as well as Kruchenykh’s booklets Vzorvat’ (1913) and Pustynniki (1913).

235 Il’ia Repin illustrated the cover of Razvorochenye chepere, the ninth Egofuturist collection; the cover of the fifth collection Zasakhare kry and the Peterburgskii glashatai publishing house logo were drawn by Lev Zak.
In the poem, Goncharova is requested to repaint Russia, which can be understood both as reflection of the changing political and artistic climate in the country in 1917; alternatively, "perekras'" might be a call for the artist to return from abroad\textsuperscript{236}. In lines 3-6, the poet offers her the accoutrements for the painting—in this case, peculiarly, mushrooms. It is not clear why they would be of any help; perhaps the mushroom might provide dye to paint with\textsuperscript{237}.

The layout of the poem is arranged to highlight two colours, red and yellow, both of which suggest Goncharova's brash use of colour in her Neoprimitivist painting\textsuperscript{238}. The colour red is necessarily associated with Russian revolutionary politics, with which Gnedov was linked; furthermore, while fighting for the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution, the poet stayed near the Sukharev Tower\textsuperscript{239}. The exact nature of the cataract is not clear. The "bel-'" in "bel'mo" might carry a reference to the Whites, or perhaps it connects with the colour yellow in line 7 in that a cataract can give the eye a yellowish appearance. At the same time, the adjective "zheltyi" cannot be said to modify any of the nouns in the poem. The colour yellow sparks off a chain of associations, connecting visual sensation, smell (cinnamon, which is also a yellowish-brown colour), and China (a source of spices); in the last line, cinnamon "cries" China, i.e. it shows its provenance\textsuperscript{240}. The East was a source of artistic inspiration for Goncharova; in theoretical articles from 1914 she declared "my path is toward the source of all arts, the East"\textsuperscript{241}. Finally, of course, the connection can also be made between the colour yellow, the East, and the identification of the Asiatic with the Revolution (symbolised by red in the poem). The poem seems to call upon Goncharova to paint a symbolic expression of the Revolution as the union of Russia and the East\textsuperscript{242}.

\textsuperscript{236} Goncharova had left Russia in 1914 to join Diaghilev's ballet in the West; by 1917 she was permanently established as an artist in Paris.

\textsuperscript{237} There is such a thing as a krasiaschchii grib (Echinodontium; literally a 'dyeing mushroom'); P. Macura, *Russian-English Botanical Dictionary*, Reno, 1982, p. 128.

\textsuperscript{238} Note Gnedov's later poem: "zheltyi/ krasnyi/ sinii/ goluboi/ krasnykh/ dva zelenykh/ piat'/ desiat'/ zheltyi/ tochka/ sinikh sto po sto", *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 83.

\textsuperscript{239} See *Sobr. stikh.*, pp. 24-25, which is based on a letter (dated 5.8.77) from Gnedov to Sigei. The poet had also been stationed at the Spasskii barracks in the Tower in February 1917.

\textsuperscript{240} The lower case of "kitaem" balances that of "rosiiu".

\textsuperscript{241} N. Goncharova, 'Preface to Catalogue of One-Man Exhibition, 1913', in *Russian Art of the Avant Garde*, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{242} The shape of the poem may be of some consequence. "Natal'ia Goncharova" occupies the first line, but, if treated as the title separate from the other lines, the poem forms a near-symmetrical 'E' shape. Lines 5 and 6, which carry the metaphor involving the Sukharev Tower, protrude in the shape of a
‘Natal’ia Goncharova’ betrays some indebtedness to Maiakovskii. The layout of ‘Natal’ia Goncharova’ resembles and may have been influenced by the column form Maiakovskii was employing 1916-22. Gnedov’s poem may well carry direct textual references to Maiakovskii, for example, in the similarity of the line “Vykolot’ bel’ma pustyn” of Maikovskii’s poem ‘My’ (1913) and Gnedov’s “vyshmorgni bel’mo” (note also “pustynia po glazu” in ‘Khromonogo pustynia po glazu’). Another Maiakovskii poem that is similar in content to ‘Natal’ia Goncharova’ is ‘A Vy mogli by’ (1913): both poems are concerned with the symbiotic relationship between poet and painter and apparently propose that the world be painted in a new way. In ‘A Vy mogli by’ Maiakovskii assumes both roles (he was trained and active as a painter), whereas in ‘Natal’ia Goncharova’ Gnedov has the idea and the accoutrements but calls upon a recognised painter to perform the task. Another telling contrast is that, while both poets propose the use of unusual but everyday items for poetic creation, Maiakovskii will employ a feature of the city (drainpipes - “A vy/ noktiurn sygrat’/ mogli by/ na fleite vodostochnykh trub?”), whereas Gnedov offers Goncharova mushrooms, a feature of the country. Gnedov remained a nature poet; urban themes are almost non-existent in his work.

The third poem is ‘V boku klok sena’:

В боку клок сена
выпори
метель салахы на гайтане
прочим существам
по заднему месту
Почтение

tower between the single-word lines 4 and 7. The associations of Russia–red and yellow–China are underscored by the fact lines 2-4 and 7-9 form two triangles.

243 Gnedov first met Maiakovskii at Nikolai Burluk’s flat in St Petersburg in 1913 (see RGALI, fond 1334, Kruchenykh, op. 1, ed. khr. 288, 1. 51). According to Piast, Gnedov had once said of Maiakovskii’s poetry “I don’t like Benedictines (benediktinov)”; Piast, Vstrechi, p. 263. Khardzhiev later explained that this was “a normal piece of épatage”-, Sobr. stikh., p. 22). In an article from 1981, Khardzhiev noted that “Maiakovskii’s verse system influenced Gnedov’s later poems”; Khardzhiev, ‘Iz materialov o Maiakovskom’, p. 276.

244 Janecek, Look of Russian Literature, p. 219.


246 Maiakovskii, ‘A Vy mogli by’, in his Sobranie sochinenii, 1, p. 75.
As in ‘Natal’ia Goncharova’ and the second stanza of ‘Khromonogo pustynia poglazu’, this poem is structured around a second person singular imperative. There are two non-standard words in line 3: the neologism “salazy”, derived from salazit’ (to slide) or an abbreviation of salazki (sledge), and the dialect word gaitan (string). In addition, there are two slightly odd syntactic features: it is curious that the command is to whip the wisp of hay in the side, and in line 3 it is not clear how one should understand ‘on string’. Nevertheless, ‘V boku klok sena’ appears to be a depiction of a horse-drawn sledge being driven through a snowstorm. Although laid out as a six-line poem, it can be divided into three parts (lines 1 and 2, line 3, and lines 4-6) to highlight three separate impressions. The shift of focus in each part and the way in which the attitude of the person whipping is revealed only in the last line is reminiscent of the form of haiku.

**Vremennik 4-yi**

There are three more poems dating from the end of Gnedov’s Futurist period. The first, ‘Roiut vam mogilu bogi’, published in 1918, was actually written in 1917 amidst the October Revolution (probably at around the same time as the last three poems). Gnedov recalled how with one finger he managed to type out “a poem influenced by the events” during a brief lull in the fighting. The poem does not display revolutionary fervour; Sigei treats its absurdity as “directly proportional to the actual events”. Rather than leading on one to the next, the opening four lines seem to function in parallel, in a similar way to sections of ‘Eroshino’, ‘Bros’te mne lapu skoree kogot’ i vshei uviadan’e’, and other earlier poems.

Роют вам могилу боги
Половали волку ноги
Хвост повесили в углу
Потерял портной иглу

---

247 V. Gnedov, ‘Roiut vam mogilu bogi’, in Vremennik 4-yi. The poem is republished in Sobr. stikh., p. 65. A reproduction of Vremennik 4-yi can be found in Khlebnikov, Tvorenita, p. 111.


249 Sobr. stikh., p. 163.
Lines 1 and 2 carry images of death and breakage, and line 3 of hunting. The agents of destruction are a third person plural 'they', the gods. In line 4, the reference to a tailor losing his needle is somewhat obscure but may be understood as a metaphor that describes the breakdown of normal events. The line apparently confused other members of Gnedov's revolutionary committee:

Встречая меня, портные Монахов, Мороев, Матюшин и другие, добродушно посмеиваясь, задавали вопрос: «Так как же, товариш Гнедов, выходит, «потеряли мы иглу» в связи с событиями?»

In lines 5 and 6, the sudden shift to an elephant and its trunk is unexpected, motivated by the sound-play saza-s(k)azhe-sazhe:

Сажа скажет нос саженный
Верно счастье ли слону
В луже свиной
Поклоняемся вину

The worshipping of wine (line 8) may be a reflection of the intoxication of the events or an explanation of what is happening as being guided by a ‘drunken’ logic; furthermore, during the Revolution, wine-cellars were looted. In contrast to the difficult content, the poem's metre is a regular trochaic tetrameter (but note line 7: "v lúzhe svinói"), like the earlier 'Letana', and there may be an echo of the chastushka, which are often trochaic and were widespread at this time.

Gazeta futuristov

Published in Gazeta futuristov, a poster that was pasted on walls all over Moscow in 1918, 'Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno' is another poem that is characterised by obscure imagery, drastic shifts of focus, and trochaic metre (although it is not maintained throughout); Sigei has described it as an "absurdist poem":

250 Tovarishch Ol'ga, pp. 75-76.
251 Sobr. stikh., p. 163.
252 V. Gnedov, 'Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno', in Gazeta futuristov, p. 2. The poem is republished in Sobr. stikh., p. 66.
253 Sobr. stikh., p. 165. Gnedov's poem strongly contrasts with the openly ideological contributions to Gazeta futuristov of Maiakovskii, Kamenskii, and Burliuk.
At first, this appears to be a nature poem, albeit a highly unusual one. Line 1 starts the poem in a straightforward way, depicting singing larks, which are typically associated with the arrival of spring. However, the switch of focus in line 2 towards the birds’ talons (“kogot’ia”) is unexpected, as if trying to portray larks as birds of prey. The tone of the poem continues to change with the series of unclear impressions that follow in lines 3 to 6. The allusion to the sun254 in line 5 presages a shift from natural depiction (larks, horses, etc.) to description of cosmic travel calling in at Uranus. The expansion of the poem’s focus may be an attempt to represent the freedom that the poet is capable of, but then the poem falls away in the last three lines, which seem to be governed by sound-play (the byl of “kobyle” seems to motivate the “Byli”, “bylo”, and “Byli” in lines 9 and 10). As in the preceding poem, Gnedov, in contrast to his earlier practice, uses an almost regular rhyme scheme, here with constant feminine, mainly inexact, rhymes (-adno, -iadno, -ono(v), -oni, -ontse, -rani, -rane).

254 The word “sontse” used by Gnedov is not a misprint but the Ukrainian word for ‘sun’.

swan. A similar association was made in the long poem ‘Svirel'ga’ ("raspoiasany lebed’"), and the bird occurred in Gnedov’s drawings of the 1960s256.

То скачущий лебедь
Не я ли?
Мы с лебедем в поле гуляли
Забыта ли лебедем доля,
Надета ли к клюву уздечку,
Повешен ли верно висящий,
Написана ли белая цаца,
Поют ли всегда молчаю,
Поют и будут петь дети,
А мир перестанет ли петь?
И лебедю сказано петь

Sigei recodes the first three words of line 3 as the *sdvig* "mylebed’"257 to show the connection of poet and swan. Interestingly, the swan is combined with certain attributes of a horse: it is depicted galloping and a bridle has been put in its beak. It is not surprising that Gnedov might associate himself with horses: they were part of his Cossack heritage and encoded in his surname, and a critic had once entitled him “Donskoi Zherebets Vasilisk Gnedov”258. Here, the combination of swan and horse creates the image of a Pegasus, which was the way the poet envisaged himself in ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’. The bridle is symbolic of a constraint placed upon the swan (poet), and this may be an allusion to the fact that, when Gnedov wrote the poem, he was recovering from shellshock sustained in the October Revolution.

Also noticeable is that the poem is primarily made up of rhetorical, existential questions as if brought on by recollections of an idealised past, when the poet was perhaps freer in his expression. The poet worries about being forgotten, constrained, or whether his poetic voice is in fact dying. Line 7 seems to question whether anything has been written at all259. In lines 7 and 8, there may be certain allusions to *Smert’*

---

256 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 165. Sigei notes that the theme of the swan also arises in Petrovskii’s poems dedicated to Gnedov.
257 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 165.
258 *Sobr. stikh.*, pp. 188-89. A poetic model for the positive association of poet with horse may have been in Maiakovskii’s ‘Khoroshee otnoshenie k los’ K-adiam’ (1918).
259 *Tsatsa* is a childish or colloquial word with a variety of meanings (“child’s toy, plaything; good child; big head” (*Els.*, 4, p. 3052)), but here, in the context of “Napisana l”, it might well be
iskusstvu. The “belaia tsatsa” recalls the theme of whiteness in Gnedov’s writing in general (‘Poema Kontsa’ and ‘Poema nachala’, in particular), singing in silence may suggest both ‘Poiui’ and the silent recital of ‘Poema Kontsa’. The final line provides a defiant answer to the questions in the first stanza: come what may, the swan is told, or is fated, to sing. Of course, there is an irony here, given that this was Gnedov’s last published poem. Nevertheless, ‘To skachushchii lebed’ was not quite the poet’s ‘swan song’: he continued to write, if not to publish.

iv) LATER POETRY

Little is known about Gnedov’s writing in the years immediately after 1919. According to Petrovskii, Gnedov burned a book of poetry he had been working on at around the time of ‘To skachushchii lebed’. The next known poem comes from 1938:

Все что видим только сон
Что случилось с нами!
Я Великий Эдисон
Со своими самими

Given that the poem was written in the Lukianovskaiia prison in Kiev, its whimsical humour seems rather pointed.

After his release from labour camp, Gnedov devoted his remaining years to poetry. He wrote on a daily basis and a considerable volume of poetry written 1958-78 remains unpublished. Sigei explains that its stylistic variety (and varying quality) was because “the process of creation attracted the poet far more than the finality of the result”\(^{261}\). Later works expressed the poet’s enjoyment and sense of wonder at the world (e.g. ‘Kakoi schastlivyi den' segodnia”\(^{262}\)), his sense of time and its passage\(^{263}\), as well as recollections of his imprisonment\(^{264}\). It should be noted that the great majority

---

\(^{260}\) Sobr. stikh., p. 87.
\(^{262}\) Sobr. stikh., p. 74.
\(^{263}\) For example, see the poems numbered 82, 83, 88, and 123 in Sobr. stikh., pp. 88, 89, 91, 110.
\(^{264}\) See poems 65, 66, 67; Sobr. stikh., pp. 79-79.
of these works had little or nothing in common with his Futurist origins. However, some connections can be discerned. Gnedov was proud of his achievements as a Futurist and often incorporated reminiscences of early contemporaries, as the following previously unpublished poem called ‘Ekspromt’ shows:

Юбилейный Ваш бальзам
Мне открыл стихов Сезам
Янтарем зацвёл Сезан
И любым и не сказа́н!

Я ещё пройдусь по солнцу,
Полетаю над луной и
Любому чудотворцу
Млечной стану пеленой!

Там где Игорь не скитался
Не был даже Велимир,
Я хожу, смотрю сквозь пальцы
струн, звенивших с детства дни

Gnedov signed the poem “Generalissimus russkogo futurizma”, a title also used by David Burliuk. In the final four lines of another poem, the poet recalled ‘Poema Kontsa’:

Сильнее огня и слова только молчание
Превращение мною в Поэму Контса
Склониться перед ним Коровое молчанье
И заиграет солнце новорожденного птенца

According to Sigei, this poem was a late response to Maiakovsky’s *Prostoe kak mychanie* (1916), whose title apparently referred to Gnedov. In addition to direct references, Gnedov employed certain general themes in his later poetry that were shared with earlier works. The first line of a poem from 1974, for example, echoes the third line of ‘To skachushchii lebed’:

---

265 RGALI, fond 2823 Smirenkii, op. 1, ed. khr. 88, p. 89.
266 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 185.
Furthermore, there are a number of later poems in which the poet compares himself with animals, particularly birds (as in ‘To skachushchii lebed’, ‘Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno’, and others). Many more concern nature in some form, in one case the transformation of the poet into other natural states:

Я превращаюсь в растение
Могу лишь лучи поглощать
Ветрам давать свирепства
И поэзийному пишать

Traces of the self-aggrandisement evident in Egofuturist works like ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’ can be found, among others, in the 1974 poem ‘Mne budut pokloniat'sia’:

Великий я великий
Величиям кошмарным
Неизмерим я лыком
И пением комарным

Here, however, the arrogance is tempered by irony.

As can be seen from the cited examples, Gnedov’s use of rhyme, metre, and in particular language, is very much more standard than in his earlier works. Nevertheless, neologisms do occur rarely, in this instance combined with a certain absurdity:

Нет ничего зеленее солнца
Нет ничего голубее луны
Скажите какого цвета спросонца
И какого цвета у швецара галуны

---

267 Sobr. stikh., p. 119.
268 The analogy is drawn between poet and dog (81), cat (83), bear (120), sparrow (55, 57), “immature nestling” (84), and falcon (91); Sobr. stikh., pp. 88, 89, 108, 74, 75, 79, 93.
269 Sobr. stikh., p. 82.
270 Sobr. stikh., p. 113.
271 Sobr. stikh., p. 94.
The coinage “sprosontsa” combines the colloquial adverb *sproson’ia* (being only half awake) and the Ukrainian word *sontse* (sun), which was used in ‘Zhavoronki vystypaiut ladno’. One or two later works involve the kind of intractable content and formal experimentation familiar from his Futurist days. The extensive use of neologisms and lack of punctuation in the extended prose piece ‘Sugubennonauchnovastistaia argumentnost’ svoim ostrim kontsom...’272 recall Egofuturist prose works like ‘Kolovorot’; and in an earlier version of the following poem, Sigei has shown that the third line read “kuka”, and he connects this work with the 1913 poem ‘Kuk’273:

```
в с о
с т
к а
я
не вер о в а я
ж у
и т274
```

Although written for the most part in a more straightforward and traditional style, there are elements in Gnedov’s later works that show his continuing interest in Futurism and that seem to form a “bridge to his *Zasakhare kry* and *Nebokopy*”275.

Throughout Gnedov’s Futurist period, the search for new forms was a constant feature, but equally characteristic is the variety of both his experimental and more traditional pieces. The chronological analysis of the works shows the uneven course of the poet’s development. Gnedov’s first poem, ‘Triolet’, was more Symbolist than Futurist, but his next works in *Gostinets sentimentam*, *Dary Adonisu*, and *Zasakhare kry* displayed the kind of sustained neologistic language that typified his Futurism. *Smert’ iskusstvu* was also innovatory in its language, but was especially significant for the reduction of poetic form to consecutively smaller units. ‘Poema Kontsa’, where

272 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 82.
273 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 175.
274 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 84.
275 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 27.
language was rejected altogether, was a logical consequence of the abbreviation and the tenet of destruction implicit in Futurism; Gnedov’s best known and perhaps best poem makes a striking statement, one which clearly carried a resonance for other Avant-Garde artists later in the same century. The poet continued to innovate, inventing ‘word-lines’ as a new unit in poetry and writing a piece whose layout was similar to those developed by ‘Concrete’ poets some 40 years later. After 1913, however, the poet began to tone down his experimentation and move away from deliberately shocking and offensive statements. The works of 1914-19 tended either towards obscurity and absurdity or, conversely, towards the increasing semantic and linguistic clarity and contemplative character of later works. Overall, there is a sense in which Gnedov’s poetics develops the ‘wrong’ way around, as if, as Sigei hints, according to the principle of inversion proclaimed in the title of the Cubofuturist collection Mirskontsa. Gnedov brought poetry to a symbolic end in Smert’ iskusstvu at the very start of his career, producing ‘Poema Kontsa’ several months before ‘Poema nachala’; and in general, there is a movement from highly complex early experiments to more straightforward later poetry. At the same time, Gnedov’s development also comes full circle; poems such as his first, ‘Triolet’, as well as ‘Pechal’naia skazka’, ‘Poema nachala’, and “To skachushchii lebed” indicate that the poet had from the start been interested in styles of writing that contrasted those of his main Futurist output.

Alongside Gnedov’s apparent eclecticism, certain themes run through the whole of his Futurist period: the concern for the state of poetry, whiteness and silence; the influence of folklore, mythology, and mysticism. Probably the most recognisably Egofuturist feature of the poet’s work was his usage of a strident lyric subject, but other elements include the Nietzschean-inspired prose (‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi’), the several references to whirlwinds, eagles, doves, abysses, the ‘metaphysical’ concern with death, happiness, grief, and melancholy. Above all, Gnedov is a nature poet, and the interaction of poet and nature is central. References to plants and birds abound, and an identification with horses and birds as symbols of freedom can also be felt. As has been seen, Gnedov never renounced his Futurist origins, and his later poems show him to have been committed to his achievements.

---

276 Sobr. stikh., p. 8.
The analysis now proceeds to its final stage, increasing in focus from consideration of Gnedov's works to hone in upon his use of words.
CHAPTER 3. WORDS

i) FEATURES OF GNEDOV’S POETIC LANGUAGE:
DIALECTISMS, NEOLOGISMS, ZAUM'

More than anything else, Russian Futurism was an art of the word, and Futurist poets sought to enrich and revitalise poetic language through linguistic innovation. For the Egofuturists, the use of French and English borrowings (e.g. “Effekten byl vash temnyi tualet”\(^1\), “ogimniv ekstsess v virele!”\(^2\)) to humorous or kitsch effect exploited the snob-value and supposed modernity of West European languages. Neologisms such as desubstantival verbs (“Menia otronit Marsel’eziia”\(^3\); “molebniat”, “zarnichit”\(^4\)), coinages from prepositional phrases (“Ia povseserdno oekranen”\(^5\)), and other ‘speeded-up’ word creations like “ozerzamok”, “zheno-klub”, and “zlatopolden”\(^6\) were considered by Chukovskii to be potential additions to the language and symptomatic of an “Americanisation” of Russian\(^7\). The Cubofuturists employed neologisms to an even greater extent than the Egofuturists. Kruchenykh, Khlebnikov, Maiakovskii, Kamenskii, Guro, and others all made use of neologisms in various ways. They found inspiration in the language of the street and countryside, in bird song, and the outlandish or unusual (to a Russian ear) sounds of foreign languages. Kruchenykh is primarily known for his abstract zaum’nyi iazyk experiments, such as ‘Dyr bul shchyl’ and ‘go osneg kaid’ (1913). While neologisms make up only a small part of Khlebnikov’s total poetics, they were extremely varied in structure and derivation: experiments with morphology (using the root smekh, ‘Zakliatie smekhom’), sound-painting (zvukopis’, ‘Bobeobi pelis' guby’), as well as abstract zaum’ (‘Noch' v Galitsii’, Zangezi)\(^7\). Khlebnikov drew upon many Slavic languages and dialects, and wrote several articles describing his derivational processes and word-formations.

---

\(^1\) I. Severianin, ‘Intima’, in his Sobranie sochinenii, 1, p. 201.
\(^3\) I. Severianin, ‘Samogimn’, Zlatolira (1912), in his Sobranie sochinenii, 1, p. 186.
\(^4\) K. Olimpov, ‘Evan, Evoel!', Zhonglery-nervy, St. Petersburg, 1913, p. 4.
\(^5\) I. Severianin, ‘Epilog’, Ego-futurizm (1912), in his Sobranie sochinenii, 1, p. 179.
\(^6\) Chukovskii, ‘Ego-futuristy i kubofuturisty’, p. 112.
\(^7\) Khlebnikov himself noted up to 53 different neologistic areas; see V. Grigor’ev, Grammatika idiostilia. V. Khlebnikov, Moscow, 1983, pp. 93-94.
Although an Egofuturist, Gnedov was closer to other Cubofuturists in his verbal experimentation and use of language. Unlike Khlebnikov, however, Gnedov left few clues as to his neologistic rationale, making the explanation of his coinages a complex task. This chapter is a first attempt to account for the distinctive features of Gnedov’s experiments in poetic language and to describe their implications.

**Dialectisms and Colloquialisms**

This section is concerned primarily with stylistic registers. For the most part, the words considered do exist, except where neologisms have been closely modelled on such words. The first group below consists of non-standard words or dialectisms that are listed in Dal’’s dictionary or in dialect dictionaries but that nevertheless remain outside the scope of standard Russian. The words are given in the morphological form in which they appear:

- kalenki (2);
- vymnoi, zeli (3); unest' (4); peredumki (5); gagali, plakukha (9); strepetili (10); pravdit', rasposhu, zakoniu, lomchu, polgoria (11); lokal (12); bezvestia (17); vyshlaia (19); razsevi, mokhnatka, eleka, vertliv, poval, viaza, zakostilo (35); pecheritsy, gorlaia (43); umory (44); pazushka (45); pecheritsy (46); gaitane (47); tsatsa (50).

In addition, a number of words can be identified as coming from dialects of Gnedov’s native Don region:

- zelenke (2); peletit (2); vershi (4, 5); veti (5); guk! (10; from gukat'); gi! (12); buba (21); gormai (39; from gorma), dy (44).

Given that the dialects of the Don region contain a great deal of Ukrainian words, it is of little surprise that there appears to be a number of Ukrainianisms in Gnedov’s work (in the case of neologisms, the existing Ukrainian word is put in parentheses):

---

8 However, there will be little additional analysis of Gnedov’s word-lines from Nebokopy. This chapter is to be read in conjunction with the Glossary, from where the numbering of all the words and quotations comes.
As well as these words, the first two stanzas of ‘Ognianna svita’ are written entirely in a kind of imitation Ukrainian. Gnedov used existing diminutives extensively and created neologistic diminutives:

molochki, steblochki, medik (3); dykhankoi, glazkom (4); rzhavlenki-dubtsy, rzhavki (5); proklemushkov, proklemushek, proklenuki, igolochku-slezku, igolochki-slezki (8); strepetki (10); kumirka, krovka (11); sinenki, verbiuuki (12); somka (18); rechki (28); nizanku, viazianki, mogilke, myshatki, polosok (35); podtishok, krylyshko (39); pazushka (45).

In general, diminutives are a feature of colloquial and dialect language as well as of folk-songs and poetry. In addition, Gnedov also made use of colloquialisms (for neologisms, the standard form is in parentheses):

storozhkii (2); zalikhvatkoi [zalikhvatskoi] (5); maternii [maternyi] (8); obglodki (7); eva! (12); batiushka (39); ptakha, shvakh! (42); kovylial (46); kovyliaet [kovyliaetsia] (49).

On occasion, as in ‘Svirel'ga’ (Zasakhare Kry), Gnedov mixes registers:

Эва! Милостивые государи

The address to the reader combines a colloquialism with an extremely formal construction.

The use of dialectisms, diminutives, and colloquialisms fits a pattern of Primitivism that was present in Russian literature from the middle of the first decade of this century (Remizov) and in the work of certain Russian Futurists (Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, Kamenskii). Nilsson has charted the movement of Primitivism in Russian literature from 1906 onwards, defining it as “a search for new aesthetic effects outside
the limits of the established concepts of art, in objects or categories officially considered to be ‘simple’, ‘primitive’, ‘non-art’”. In a lecture entitled ‘Blizhaishaia zadacha russkoi literatury’, which was published in 1909 but delivered first in 1906, Sergei Gorodetskii envisaged the use of archaisms, “folklore traditions and popular language”, and neologisms to renew poetic language. Ironically, in 1913, Gorodetskii gave Gnedov’s experiments in exactly this area a hostile reaction.

The application of dialect forms and colloquialisms can be felt throughout Gnedov’s work, and it is in this area that Gnedov found a great deal of room to experiment, creating a language that Sigei has described as “‘fluidized’ variation of folk speech”. In a recent letter, Sigei writes:

разговорный язык и по сей день творится на ходу: каждый говорящий создаёт новые слова в русе общего... Именно так вёл себя Василий Гнедов в футур-период
(только что оторвавшиеся от других носителей творительного языкового зудежа).  

However, Sigei’s statement that “folk speech knows no laws” is an exaggeration. Dialects of the Don region, for example, are typical of all South Russian dialects and “virtually absent are such features that would represent a transformation of linguistic phenomena known in a slightly different form in other areas”. At the same time, it is possible that some words listed as ‘neologisms’ or ‘word-alterations’ below may in fact be rare, unrecorded, but (once) existing dialect words, as Khlebnikov wrote in 1908, “whoever knows the Russian countryside, knows of words created for an hour and surviving the lifetime of a butterfly”. Furthermore, standard Russian words can have different shades of meaning in their dialect usage; linguistic differences between villages in the Don region two to three kilometres apart can be extremely significant.

11 In a review of Gostinets sentimentam: Gorodetskii, ‘Puchina stikhovaia’, p. 3.
12 Sigov (Sigei), ‘Ego-futurnliia Vasiliska Gnedova’, p. 117 [the translation of the phrase is taken from Janecek, Zaum, p. 102].
13 Letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97.
14 Sigov (Sigei), ‘Ego-futurnliia Vasiliska Gnedova’, p. 117.
15 SRDG, p. VIII.
17 For example, according to SRDG, belka can be “a type of wheat” (I, p. 23), zvuk may mean “hearing” (sluh) (II, p. 27), and risk can mean a “desire” (III, p. 93).
18 SRDG, p. VIII.
Evidently, this introduces a level of relativity into the language: without the relevant specialist dictionary at hand, many of the dialect words Gnedov uses might be perceived as neologisms, and in any case the reader cannot be sure the given dictionary meaning was the one envisaged by the poet. Thus, Gnedov seems to exploit the strangeness of such words from the perspective of standard Russian.

**Neologisms**

The majority of the neologisms occur in works written in 1913 (40 of the 50 poems under study). From 1914 on, neologisms assumed a much less important role. For the purpose of this study, the word ‘neologism’ is to be understood in its broadest possible sense: a new formation, and one not found in any dictionary. Thus it would include both such obvious contrivances as “krylobrat” as well as the minutest variation from the standard spelling of a word, e.g. “zastonila” (rather than zastonal’). Both examples are viewed as deliberate coinages or deviations from standard language. This analysis is an attempt to highlight the main trends in Gnedov’s neologisms, with examples. The following list categorises the neologisms into the relevant parts of speech. As in the previous section, the words are given in the morphological form in which they appear:

**Nouns**

*Letana, Lëto-dom (2); khoziaiam (3); zlatokoniushni, svetiakami (4); rapsoda, dum’, vlastnik, listnik, rzhavlenki-duhtsy, rzhavki (5); eskizev (6); plamen’e (7); sred’mir, samosila (7); gurebka, proklenushkov, proklenushek, proklenukhi (8); slezeteki, neveselei, tekivoi, veseliam, bereziach’iam, okhotei, veseloch’em, krichakov, listiage, tselovami (9); belokol (10); krylobrat, kust’iam, napisei, dolanakh, mechak, krovka, smeiankoi (11); svirel’ga, raskrylenka, bezzadorka, zadorka, krashen’, sinenki, krugopliash, verbliudkoi, stonoem, lebedovik, pezhi (12); stonga, pepel’e (13); svirel’ga, prostorechev’e, zvukopas (15); robkot (18); smol’ga (19); sredmir’e, dushitki, nizanku, viazianki, plekatka, sladoshi, myshatki, (35); riabitii, trun’ga, podtishok, vynyrnik (39); tyr’ (40); eroshino (42).*
Before turning to the types of neologism that Sigei believes typical in Gnedov’s work, we look at a variety of word-formation techniques used by Gnedov that are standard.

**Compounds**

The procedure of combining two words (or roots of words) to create a new formation is known as compounding. The formation of compound neologisms is common in standard language as well as being a technique exploited by poets that is akin to metaphor. For example, Gnedov seems to have condensed the words *ston* and *vodoëm* in the following line:
The associations groan–pain–tears–water unite the two components, or the 'repository of groans' may refer to camels. Other unusual poetic images can be found in the creations “krylobrat” (11) and “zvukopas” (15). The addition of zlato- to other roots is common: Gnedov’s “Zlatokopytko”, “Zlatokoniushni” (4), and “zlatopliashu” (12) can be compared to Severianin’s coinages “zlatolira” and “zlatopolden'” and Khlebnikov’s “zlatovolnach'”. One of Gnedov’s most important concepts was a compound: Sred'mir (7), from which he forms the adjective Sred'mirnyi. As has been seen in the analysis of ‘Kolovorot’, these coinages are developed (e.g. “средмирье средмирье”, “средмйрро”, etc.), where Gnedov plays on the homonyms meaning ‘world’ and ‘peace’, written in pre-1917 orthography миръ and миръ. Similarly, лето-дом (2) involves a pun on летний дом (summer house). Other compounds formed in a less standard way are “slezetek” (9); “marshegrobaia” (11); and “Bubchigi” (14).

Prefixation
A number of words are formed in a standard way by adding prefixes to existing roots in order to create new shades of meaning. The adjectives “neotvetnyi” (8) and “neotsveten” (35) and the verbs “vpolosnuto” (5), “vykloniaiutsia” (11); “perekanchival” (12); “vpolosnulo” (39); “vyzhevat’” (44) all conform to word-formation rules. In terms of the word “vyroslit” (35), the stem ‘rosl’ occurs in the verb взросlet' but in no formations with the prefix в-. A less standard example of prefixation should be noted: the verb “впалachu” (11) is a prefixed verb formed from the root palach (executioner) without the additional derivational suffixes that occur, for example, in palachestvovat'.

Suffixation
Some noun neologisms are formed by adding to the root commonly found endings such as ‘-nik’ (vlastnik, listrik, 5; vynyrnik, 39) and ‘-ak’/‘-iak’ (svetiakami, 4; krichakov, 9; Mechaku, Mechak, 11). Here, the ending indicates that the word signifies an animate or inanimate agent of the action or state designated by the root. When Gnedov employs the unusual dialect or colloquial ending ‘-ga’, as in Svirel’ga (12, 15),
Stonga (13), Smol'ga (19), trun'ga (39), it can be assumed that the neologism functions in the same way or one can try to find analogies (e.g. pustel'ga, shtanga, etc.), making the coinage closer to the ‘portmanteau’ words described below.

Portmanteau words

‘Portmanteau’ words or blends occur when the formation and meaning of two words are combined into one19. This is a productive process giving words such as ‘smog’ (smoke, fog) in English. In a poetic context, as with compound neologisms, this juxtaposition and merging is closely connected with metaphor and pun; they differ from compounds in that the roots of the two components are merged (unlike, for example, “krylobrat”). The process is also paralleled in the word lines of Nebokopy, some of which are extended portmanteau words.

In the following line, the verbal coinage involves both kissing (tselovat') and hunting or ensnaring (lovchii):

Стоюемо тебя целоваться... (12)

Some portmanteau words are achieved through only very slight alterations to the formation of the original word. The coinage “raztsvetenaia” (12), a form of raznotsvetnyi or from raztsven'et'e, subtly incorporates both colour (tsvet) with shade (ten'); the middle ‘i’ in “materinyia” (8) may create an oxymoronic fusion of both motherliness (materinskii) and abusiveness (maternii). Alternatively, the word “zaplakuchilis'” (9) is made up of two components that are derived from the same root, zaplakat' (to start crying) and plakuchii (weeping); similarly, “Razlomcheno” [razlomat', dial. lomtit'] (15). Sometimes, more than two words can be involved in the composition of a portmanteau word, for example:

Мечаеть Мечакъ (11)

---

19 In *Through the Looking Glass*, Humpty Dumpty explains to Alice that the word “slithy” (from the poem ‘Jabberwocky’) is a mixture of ‘lithe’ and ‘slimy’: “You see it is like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word”; L. Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, London, 1873, pp. 126-27.
The verbal coinage “mechaet” resembles the verbs *mechtat’* (to dream; *mechtaiu*, *mechtaesh’*) and *metat’* (to throw; *mechu*, *mechesh’*) but may also be derived from *mech* (sword). Similarly, the neologism “robkot” is composed of *robkost’*, *kot*, and *rokot*. Further examples of portmanteau words are: “snoi” [*son*, *snits’ia*, *snovat’*] (2); “razrydavliu” [(raz-) *rydat’, davit’*], “osklepliaiu” [*sklepat’, oslepliat’*], “rydachit” [*rydat’, rybachit’*], “stoloknilos” [*stoloch’, stol’knut’sia*] (11); “sladoshi” [*sladkii, sladit’, ladosh’*] (35); “vyshmorgni” [*vyshmygnut’, morgnut’, vyshmargivat’*, Ukr. *vyshmorgnuti*] (46). Less clear examples are “pevshno” [*pet’, pevuchii, pyshnyi, psheno?*] (35) and “pukhriadiadna” [*pukh, riadno?*] (49).

Non-standard derivational procedures

Unlike Khlebnikov, Gnedov’s approach to making new words did not usually conform to standard methods of word-formation, however. A variety of procedures is listed in this section. Gnedov once explained to Nikolai Khardzhiev how the first two lines of ‘Letana’ (“Uverkhaiu lëto na muravoi”) were formed:


This device is a kind of transposition of word sections, but there appears to be no other examples of it in Gnedov’s work.

Some verbal neologisms seem to have been formed by a highly irregular process of ‘internal derivation’. The word *liublial* (12) can be seen to be a past tense of a verb created from the first person singular present tense *liubliu*. For the verb coinage *nazovlial* (12), the stem *nazov-* from the first person future tense of *nazvat’* appears to have been used to make the new verb “nazovit’”, which might have the imperfective pair “nazovliat’”.

In ‘Na vozle bal’, certain of Gnedov’s neologisms seem to be created by ‘false’ analogies. For example, the following line contains three neologisms:

Обхватена цвёлами бытая ненасыта (9)

---

20 Quoted in Sigov (Sigei), ‘Ego-futurnaliia Vasiliska Gnedova’, p. 117; the same quote appears in *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 140.
The word “b'etaia”, from *bit’*, seems to combine the past passive participle (*bityi*) and the third person singular present tense (*b’et*), “nenasyta” is a noun created from *nenasytnyi* and by a possible analogy with the adverb *dosiya*. On the other hand, to form the noun neologism “tselovami” (9), Gnedov uses the productive stem *tselov-* (*tselovat’, tselovanie*) to create a noun “tselova”, which may be modelled on *osnova*.

This ‘incorrect’ method of making new words was also used by Kruchenykh: his neologism “vzorval’” is derived from the past tense of the verb *vzorvat’* and by analogy with the noun *pechal’,* with which the coinage rhymes in the poem.

‘Word alterations’
Sigei uses the term *slovoizmenenie*\(^\text{21}\) to characterise Gnedov’s coinages. In strict linguistic terms, the word means ‘inflection’ but in this context might be better understood in the literal sense of ‘word-alteration’; Sigei contrasts this with the word *slovoobrazovanie* (word-formation), which would be more aptly used to describe Khlebnikov’s neologisms. Here, ‘word-alteration’ will be used to refer to a variety of neologisms that can be seen to result from small modifications in the formation of existing words. As seen in the first section of this chapter, such neologisms may be close to or modelled on dialect words.

One aspect of word-alteration is incorrectly spelled words. It is here that the boundaries between existing word and neologism become very difficult to distinguish. It might well be felt that these words are immediately recognisable as standard words, and the ‘mistake’ may not be discerned. Nevertheless, there is a number of words that have been tampered with to produce a calculated effect. According to Sigei, a phrase like “Begun begit” (4) (rather than *bezhit* or *begaet*) “would have pained the ear of Khlebnikov, who always checked his neologisms by the ‘laws of the Russian language’”\(^\text{22}\). The deliberately sloppy spelling employed by Gnedov is an attempt to imitate colloquial forms, e.g.

Звонь залихваткой пляши (5)

---
\(^{21}\) Sigov (Sigei), ‘Ego-futurnliaia’, p. 117.
\(^{22}\) Sigov (Sigei), ‘Ego-futurnliaia’, p. 117.
and, in a later poem,

Ната́лья Гончарова
перекра́съ пожалу́ста росю́ (48).

In both cases the intended effect is a small disruption to the norms of literary language but not to the word's basic meaning. Other examples are: "darovili" [darovali], "kozyi" [kozii] (3); "begit" [begaet, bezhit], "zabavo" [zabava] (4); "maternyi" [maternyi] (8); "strepetili" [strepetali] (10); "stoloku" [stolka] (11); "pereezzhil" [perezhhal], "sinenki" [sinen'ki(i)], "podzhalal" [podzhalil], "krugopliash" [krugoplias], "razvintiali" [razvintili], "zastonila" [zastonala] (12); "kozlevaia" [kozlovaia] (14); "povesiai" [povesi] (35); "vzrostali" [vzrastit23] (42); "lokhmotakh" [lokhmot'iahk] (43); "drekolom" [drekol'em], "Dol'sh" [dol'she] (44)24.

The changing of the final letter of certain nouns results in a change in gender: zabava and pastva become the neuter nouns zabavo (4) and pastvo (44); metlishche (an augmentative of metla) is given in the feminine instrumental singular form metlishchei (46). Here, the result is a disruption, but one that does not blur the word's meaning. Other alterations to the formation of words, however, do create some semantic confusion. The verb "rasprostit'" (15) is simply the reflexive verb rasprostit'sia with the reflexive ending removed, apparently making it a transitive verb. At the same time, the boundary between the incorrect spelling of a word and other categories of neologism is very fine. For example, the word "zverianyia", a misspelling of zverinyi, might have been formed by analogy with an adjective such as dereviannyi.

Three words that Gnedov uses to denote his poems are interesting 'word-alterations'. The first, "poeza" (the subtitle of 'Gurebka proklenushkov'), was the word that all Egofuturists used for their poems and derives from Severianin and seems to be a mixture of poeziia and poema, or based on the French poésie. Unlike the other Egofuturists, however, Gnedov avoided using French or English words to form neologisms in his poetry, so his use of this word is very untypical. It is interesting that

23 Dal' (I, p. 490) lists vzrast', vozrast', vzrost', vzrosti, and vzrost' but not "vzrostat'".
24 Amongst other Futurists, Kruchenkhy noted that slips in orthography could unintentionally create new shades of meaning that might be more poetically appropriate. In the line "Khvoi shuiat, shuiat" from Elena Guro's poem 'Finliandiia', Kruchenkhy and Khlebnikov viewed the verb to be quite justified in that form: "imenno shuiat! listvennye derev'ia shumiat, a khvoinye shuiat"; A. Kruchenkhy and V. Khlebnikov, 'Slovo kak takovoe', Manifesty i programmy, p. 54.
on the two other occasions when Gnedov does use foreign borrowings, he tampers with the endings: “rapsoda” (the subtitle of ‘Pridorogaia dum’) and “eskizev” (the subtitle of ‘Muravaia’), rather than rapsodiia and eskiz.

In his work in Gostinets sentimentam, Dary Adonisu, and Zasakhare Kry, Gnedov employs a kind of truncated, reconstituted neologism. Some examples consist of a root and ending without a derivational suffix (formant) and an ending: “chasyi” [chasovoi] (2); “zakhvato”, “sladyi” [sladkii] (3); “dum’” [duma], “gigantyi” [gigantnyi] (5); “tsepo”, “pado” (7); “marshegrobaia”, “groboe” [grobovoi] (11); “belosnegii” [belosnezhnyi], “Pezhi” [pezhina] (12). The process of simplification also has the effect of ‘laying bare’ the root of each word. The word “pridorogaia”, which has been slightly abbreviated from pridorozhnaia, foregrounds both the root doroga and a ‘new’ element, dorogaia. Similar in intention are “Kruzho” [kruzhno] (3) and “belosnezhii” [belosnezhnyi] (12), where the dropping of the formant ‘n’ suggests that the formation of both might be borrowed from another model, e.g. vrag–vrazhii. Other simplified coinages have been recombined with a formant: the adjectives “Krapkiia”, “Dubkiia” (5), “vetkiia” (8), and “iadko” (35) can be compared to the existing kraplenyi, dubovyi, vetochnyi, and iadovityi; and the noun “khoziaiam” (2) to khoziaevam.

Abbreviation

The technique of abbreviation is extremely significant and can be felt at various levels of Gnedov’s work. Many of the incorrect spellings and word-alterations given above show a degree of abbreviation in comparison with standard pre-existing words. Of course, in a wider sense, the creation of neologisms often involves abbreviation, the combination of two or more concepts into a smaller number of words (e.g. ‘portmanteau’ words). For example, the following phrase encapsulates a number of ideas in just two words:

Затумло-Снірђельжитъ (16).
Although "-tum-" in "zatumlo" is not even a morpheme (but is probably a shortened form of *tuman*), a rough translation might be 'he/she/it will play the pan pipes/be a *Svirel’ga* in a starting-to-cloud-over way'.

One means Gnedov uses to abbreviate words is close to acronym. In the following line, the word "prodn" is in context clearly nothing to do with *prodan*:

И горы руки подняли продн (39)

Sigei suggests that the line is about "mountains which look as if hands have lifted them from the depths (gor[y], *kotorye slovno by podniali ruki so dna*), thus, the word is formed from the most significant letters selected from the line (*gory ruki podniali*)^25^.

The concept of abbreviation also seems to be at work at the level of the poetic line. The following lines from 'Kuk' are a reduced or syncopated variant of *kukovala kukushka kuku*:

Кукала кука:
Кук!   (10)

Gnedov develops the concept of abbreviation in the second line of his poem 'Letana':

Крыло утвержаю по зеленъ (2)

Here, as already noted, he intended "Krylo", a standard neuter noun in the nominative case, to function as the adverb *krylato*^26^. Such an 'unnatural' syncope indicates Gnedov's intent to compress larger forms into smaller, in this case playing on the idea that the ending '-o' could be adverbial as well as substantival. The process of abbreviation through elision can be seen as early as January 1913, from a journalist's description of a recited version of the above line:

Так, вместо «поднимаюсь вверх на крыльях», он пишет: «Крыловерхаяся»^27^.

---

^25^ Letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97.
^26^ *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 140.
This elision of words, which is present in other coinages like “nechait” (12) and “ubezkraiu” (22), is the blueprint for another kind of compressed neologism. In March 1913, Gnedov declared “we are striving towards economising speech. With a single word, we want to express a whole phrase!”28; his contributions to Nebokopy, published in late August of that year, involved the fusion of words into a single word-line. Some consist merely of an entirely normal phrase run together:

Такихусловиянысﻹابеж (30).

The compression also results in a fluidity in the boundaries between the original word components, e.g.

бабушканкуликазелен (32)

where babushka, kulik (sandpiper; stint), and “zelen” (zelen', zelenyi) seem to be the primary components, but the middle could consist of ushka, kak, akuli, kulikat' (dial. to be lonely and depressed), ulika, and lik. An even more complex fusion can again be seen in the following line:

лениграцицеленискоромысл (30)

Janecek identifies an unclear mixture of lech', gaga, gagara, grach, chicherone, chicher, zelenykh, and koromyslo29. Such a process, where different words can be produced by focusing on different areas of the line, has something in common with Kruchenykh’s concept of sdvig30. Furthermore, the word-lines in Nebokopy, which are neologisms in themselves, are in turn composed of the same kinds of neologisms and irregularities seen above: abbreviated word-alterations (“mokhaia-”, “zelkii-”, “negodyi-”, “-priiataia” 34), incorrect spellings (“zubatyi”, “rostet-” 30; “uletilo-”, 37), dialectisms (“-begliaki-”, 34), and so on.

28 Den', 24 March 1913; quoted from Sobr. stikh., p. 198.
29 Janecek, Zaum, p. 104.
Finally, abbreviation operates as a principle at the level of the poem, and this is particularly evident in *Smert' iskusstvu*. According to Sigei, a favourite technique of Gnedov is the “collapse of ‘massive’ form”: hence, he views ‘Kozlo’ as a synecdoche of ‘Kozii slashch’ and ‘Svirel'ga’ as a compressed version of its longer namesake in *Zasakhare kry*. The process culminates in the reduction of poetic form to one-line, one-word, and one-letter poems; finally, with ‘Poema Kontsa’, the poem as such no longer existed.

The Russian Futurists sought to increase their capacity to express by accelerating the process of linguistic change and by compressing information into smaller units. The Russians shared the concern with speeded-up communication with the Italian Futurists, but the application produced rather different results. Gnedov consistently implemented a variety of techniques to abbreviate language: at the level of the word (neologism), the line of verse, and the poem itself. Abbreviation is central to his original use of language, and, in this respect, he went further than any other Russian Futurist.

**Ambiguity**

One aspect of the difficulty of assigning a primary meaning to many of Gnedov’s words is to open up the notion of ambiguity. Ambiguity is present in the arbitrariness and mutability of dialectisms and colloquial words; it is inherent in neologisms, especially portmanteau words; in the uncertainties that can be caused by slight changes to the formation of words (‘word-alterations’); and where abbreviated words appear to be packed with multiple meanings.

As we have seen above, a small alteration can effect a word’s meaning. For example, “gor’” (16) is in context a combination of the genitive plurals of *gora* and *gore*; in ‘Kolovorot’, the placement of the soft sign in the first word “blagoda’r?” helps render the word’s function (second person singular imperative? noun?) unclear. In the words “neiarocha”, “Sinevoche” (12), and “Konevama” (39), the roots of the words are clear but their grammatical function is not. There is a number of words (especially in ‘Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne’ and ‘Kolovorot’) ending in ‘-o’ that might be

---

31 *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 146.
32 See, for example, Lawton, ‘Russian and Italian Futurist Manifestos’, pp. 405-20.
neuter nouns, adverbs, or even short form neuter adjectives. The grammatical function of single neologisms cannot always be resolved, e.g.:

Закон на Скалой полосато Мехо: "Не ходите къ Мечу" (11),

where "Mecho" is perhaps an adverb, but it is not entirely clear how "polosato Mecho" can be understood. On other occasions, there may be more than one possible function for a word with an ‘-o’ ending:

Сонячко Сердце на гроб (11).

The neologism "soniachko" (close to the Ukrainian word soniachnii) may be either an adverb or an adjective modifying "serdtse". Other examples of this are "kozlo" (14); "vorenko", "pezho", "umilo", "gado", "gryzliako", "pevshno", "obertko", "kinzhalo", "molno", "upado" (35); and "sno" (39). A similar blurring of grammatical function can also be seen in certain nouns that are adjectival or that the ending is instrumental where the prepositional is expected ("na muravoi", 2; "na Skaloi", 11). The following lines from 'Letana' show a combination of ambiguous formations:

Пелених пеленко газой,
Цьгой соной Летка насъ... (2)

"Gazoi", "Tsvetoi", "sonoi" resemble both the kind of truncated adjectives seen above as well feminine nouns in the instrumental singular case; and "pelenko" may function as an adverb rather than a noun whose gender has been changed to neuter. Although the word letka or lëtka does already exist with various meanings33, in this context it might be felt to derive from letat34, leto, or even Leta (Lethe). Gnedov seems to enjoy such ambiguities. In 'Kozii slashch', the word “medik” must be taken as a diminutive of mëd, the usual diminutive of which is medok, rather than a reference to a medik. In the title 'Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy', “skachek” is probably an alternate spelling

33 Letka means "a shelf in front of an entrance to a beehive" (SRDG, 2, p. 113), or "spring wheat and rye" (SRNG, 17, p. 17). Lëtka is a dialect word meaning an "entrance (in beehive)" or "buckshot"; Els., 1, p. 467.
34 As noted in SRNG, 17, p. 17.
of skachok rather than the genitive plural of skachka. In a final example, the complex multiple meanings of the neologisms impede the syntax:

Слезжит рябидий трндыа сно (39)

The verb “slezzhit” may be a combination of slezt', s'ezzhat', and sleza, “riabidii” is presumably a noun in the genitive singular (or nominative/accusative plural) that may derive from riabina (rowan tree), riaboи, and/or riab'; similarly, the noun “trun'ga” has a number of possible sources of meaning (see the Glossary); finally, it is not at all clear what part of speech “sno”, presumably derived from son, might be: a noun by analogy with dno? An adverb? It seems unlikely that a definitive answer could be given to all the questions and contradictions provoked by this line. In his dialectisms, neologisms, and experimental practices, Gnedov makes a virtue of verbal, syntactic, and semantic ambiguity.

Zaum'

As an early Avant-Garde poet who made consistent use of verbal experiments, one might have thought that Gnedov would have considered himself a practitioner of zaum'35. However, Gnedov both rejected the idea and strongly objected to being compared to Kruchenykh in this regard36. Amongst subsequent critics, the matter remains unresolved. While both Khardzhiev and Krusanov have used the word zaumnnyi to describe Gnedov’s verbal experiments37, Aigi believes they are characterised by word-creation (slovotvorchestvo) rather than transrational language38. Central to this is the controversial question of the definition of the term. The original definition of zaumnnyi iazyk derived from Kruchenykh, who used it to describe his abstract verbal experiments written in a ‘free’ language highlighting the “irrational, mystical, and aesthetic aspects”39 of the word. His ‘Dyr bul shchyl’ poem was written

35 Kruchenykh coined the word zaum’ only in 1921; in 1913, he was using the term zaumnnyi iazyk. In this section, however, I will not make the chronological distinction and will refer only to zaum’.
36 Sobr. stikh., p. 191. Gnedov’s claim that “there are no made-up words in Smert’ iskusstvu” (from a letter to Khardzhiev, quoted in Sobr. stikh., p. 20) may well be an attempt to differentiate his work from the zaum’ in works such as Kruchenykh’s Pomada (also 1913).
37 Krusanov, Russkii avangard, p. 104; Khardzhiev, Stati ob avangarde, 1, p. 79.
“in its own language [whose] words have no definite meaning,” an abstract collection of apparently arbitrarily selected sounds:

Дыр был шыл  
ублыщур  
скум  
вы оо бу  
рлъэ

With the possible exception of “a—vi—ka!” and “a—vil’—do!” in Smert’ iskusstvu, there is nothing in Gnedov’s work that resembles Kruchenykh’s experiments.

However, while a definition along the above lines is commonly held, it is far from the only one. A formula Sigei has used is that zaum’ is a product of the combination of “two [...] methods of writing: the phonetic and the allogical”; ‘Dyr bul shchyl’, then, is not zaum’ but a “simple phonetic poem (an abstraction)” In terms of Gnedov’s work, the situation is complicated. For Sigei, individual neologisms cannot be zaum’ on their own, but the “combination of them into a single verse construction may turn out to be zaum’ [if a] logically unknowable new and unexpected meaning” is produced in the poem. However, Sigei does not specify any examples from Gnedov. Mickiewicz has described zaum’ as a polysemantic linguistic phenomenon, one with the potential to “create multilinear tracks of communication”; his definition is in fact a more sophisticated way of expressing Khlebnikov’s assertion of 1921 that zaum’ “is language beyond the bounds of reason.” Mickiewicz concentrated on Khlebnikov’s neologisms in his consideration but entirely ignored Gnedov.

40 A. Kruchenkyh, Pomada, Moscow, 1913 (unmarked page number).
41 A. Kruchenkyh, Pomada, (unmarked page number). The poem is reproduced in Janecek, Zaum, p. 54.
44 Letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97.
45 Mickiewicz, ‘Semantic Functions’, p. 386.
46 V. Khlebnikov, ‘Nasha osnova’, in his Tvorenita, p. 628. Vroon notes, “Khlebnikov is not always consistent in his use of the term [...] Sometimes it refers only to the ‘language of the stars’, but at other times it is used in a more general sense, referring to any form of speech which ‘lies beyond the bounds of reason’”; R. Vroon, Velimir Khlebnikov’s Shorter Poems: a Key to the Coinages, Ann Arbor, 1983, p. 24, n. 42. In the case of “zvezdnyi iazyk”, Khlebnikov provides so many interpretants that it becomes a rational system, quite opposite to what Kruchenkyh had in mind.
Finally, Gerald Janecek, probably the leading expert on the subject, returns to Kruchenykh’s concept of words with “no definite meaning” to provide the most recent formula. He views zaum’ as the state of indeterminacy that the reader experiences from a text that has undergone certain dislocations (sdvigi), be they phonemic, morphological, syntactic, or ‘suprasyntactic’; where definite meaning can be perceived, zaum’ is not present. By this reckoning, the complex interaction of neologism and syntactic experimentation seen in much of Gnedov’s Futurist work is zaum’. Indeed, in the poem ‘Kobel' gor’, Janecek found a complex mixture of ‘morphological zaum’ and ‘syntactic zaum’, and Gnedov is classified as a “competing early zaumnik”.

Clearly, the question as to Gnedov’s involvement with zaum’ will remain open in so far as the definition of zaum’ remains fluid. To some extent, Gnedov’s objection to the term zaum’ is a reflection of his rivalry with Kruchenykh. Whether or not the poet wished to be associated with the phenomenon, he is considered very much part of its birth. In 1914 the theatre director Meierkhol'd referred to Gnedov as the “piter'skii zaumnik”, and the contemporary zaum’ poet Sergei Biriukov places Gnedov alongside Khlebnikov, Guro, Kruchenykh, and Bol'shakov, as one of the pioneers of early zaum’. Such company is appropriate. In terms of his verbal experimentation, Gnedov is very much closer to what would be considered typical of the Cubofuturists rather than the Egofturists. But although the concept of employing colloquial and dialect forms and neologisms built on Slavic roots was not unique to Gnedov, his idiosyncratic combination of them was. Furthermore, there is considerable variety in the poet’s neologistic practice, and he employed both standard and non-standard word-creation techniques. While his ‘word-alterations’ and portmanteau words are notable, it is Gnedov’s application of abbreviation, which is unprecedented among the Russians and very different from that of Marinetti, that makes his language particularly distinctive.

47 As a result Khlebnikov, who provides explanations for his ‘zaum’, is not considered a zaumnik; see Janecek, Zaum, pp. 135-52. Also Janecek, ‘Zaum’ Classification’, pp. 165-86.
48 Janecek, ‘Zaum’ Classification’, p. 49. Recently, Sigei acknowledged the increased scope of transrational language: “a zaum’ poem is one to whose comprehesion logic bears no special relation”. At the same time, he believes that zaum’ may arise over the course of a poem, rather than at the level of individual neologisms; letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97.
49 Janecek, Zaum, p. 97.
50 Quoted from Pamis, Russkie pisateli, 1, p. 589.
51 S. Biriukov, Muza zaumi, Tambov, 1991 (inside front cover).
ii) GLOSSARY

The glossary is an attempt to provide an account of all the neologisms and other non-standard word-usages in the 50 of Gnedov’s Futurist poems. The motivation behind it is to make Gnedov to some extent ‘readable’. In terms of the neologisms, an attempt has been made to cover the probable derivations given the context in which the word appears. The word ‘from’ after the given word indicates a neologism, and its possible constituents are listed in order of probability. The following abbreviations are used: ‘coll.’ - colloquialism; ‘dial.’ - dialectism; ‘pej.’ - pejorative; ‘Ukr.’ - Ukrainian or Ukrainianism.

NIZHEGORODETS

1. Triolet

No neologisms or irregularities.

GOSTINETS SENTIMENTAM

2. Letana

Letana - from letat', lët, letun, letun'ia, the Smolensk region word letan' (the meaning is unclear, but the word is found in the song line: “A da vo gornitsy, vo svetlitsy, Dva golubia na shkafi; oni p'iut i l'iut, Po letani b'iut, V tsymbaly igraiut”, SRNG, 17, p. 15). Lëtnaia (“a bee collecting honey”, SRDG, 2, p. 113). Also, perhaps connected with leto or Leta (the river Lethe). The ending ‘-ana’ is found in women’s first names, e.g. Svetlana, Oksana, etc.


муравой - from muravá (grass, sward). Note the adjectival form and Gnedov’s indicated stress “murávoi”.

сторожную - from storozhit' (to guard); also storazhivat', sterëzhit', Dal', IV, p. 553; from a non-existent verb “storozhevat’” or adjective “storozhii”.

Лётодомь - from lët, dom; letnii dom (summer house).

горавый - from gora, gornyï, gore, gorevoi, goret', garevo (“a wood that has burnt down”, Dal', I, p. 948).

dеро - from derzki, derzost'.

каленки - kalenka (“barren heifer”, Dal', II, p. 189), kalënka (“bathhouse stove”, “kiln constructed in a field for drying pears”, “child’s arrow for a bow; it is wooden, but its tip is tempered by burning”, Dal', II, p. 192), kalit’ (to heat, incandesce, roast), kalenie.

сторожкий - (coll.) watchful.

часый - from chas, chasovoi.

круговить - Ukr. krugovid (“horizon, landscape”, UED, p. 433); krugozor (horizon); krugovoi, vid.

не сноi глазь - unclear. Perhaps from son, snovat’ (to scurry, dash about), and znoi? “Snoi” may be imperative, after ne. Another possibility is that the phrase should read nebesnoi glaz with the ‘-be-’ omitted.

пеленить пеленко - pelenat’ (to swaddle); pelein’, SRDG, II, p. 222. Pelënka (nappy, swaddling cloth).

газой - from gaz, gazovyi.

цшётовой - from tsvet, tsvetnoi.

соной - from son, sonnyi.

Летка - “shelf in front of an entrance to a beehive” (SRDG, 2, p. 113); a Latvian Russian dialect word meaning “spring wheat and rye” (SRNG, 17, p. 17). Lëtka ((dia1.) “entrance (in beehive)”; (dia1.) “buckshot”; Els., 1, p. 467); Ukr. letkii (-ka, -ke; “volatile, evaporative”, UED, p. 453); letat’, lët, leto (diminutives letochka and letechko, SRDG, 2, pp. 114, 116); Leta.

3. Kozii slashch

слащь - from sladkii, comparative slashche; along the lines of ‘Zasakhare kry’ (zasakhareennaia krysa). Also slashcha (“turnip”, Dal’, IV, p. 245).
вымной - from vymia (udder); vymnet', vymnut' ("to be close to giving birth to a calf"), Dal', I, p. 742. The adjective vymnyi is found in vymnaia trava, an unidentified herb, SRNG, 5, p. 312.

молочки - from moloko, molochko.

dаровили - from darovat'.

хозяймь - from khoziain, khoziaika.

зели - zel' ("a young winter crop, in autumn or spring, before ears have formed", Dal', II, p. 1687).

стеблочки - diminutive of stebel' (stem, stalk).

коренили - from koren', koren'tsia (to be rooted in). Korenit' ("destroy, kill"; "to curse, reproach, revile", Dal', II, p. 416).

захвато - from zakhvat.

козый - from kozii (the adjective from koza), but with spelling change 'i' to 'y'.

сладый - from sladkii, sladit'.

мёликъ - more likely to be diminutive of med, although the usual diminutive is medók, than medik.

кружо - from kruzhnyi.

выпнить - from penit' (to froth), plus prefix vy-.

4. Skachek Toski - Pobeda Ogne-Lavy

скакечъ - skachok (jump, leap; "grasshopper" or "dragonfly", Dal', IV, p. 178; "a Cossack who is separated from his parents", SRDG, III, p. 121). "Skachek" could also be the genitive plural of the feminine noun skachka.

выси - vys' is a variant of vysota, Dal', I, p. 770.

Верши - vershi ("on horseback", Dal', I, p. 450), or from vershina. Also in 'Pridorogaia dum'.

Бегунь бегунъ - begun (runner) can also refer to "one of the most evil, perverted concepts of the schismatics [...]: beguny obey no civil order, recognise no authorities; for them the kingdom of the Antichrist has begun; they roam the whole world and must die in oblivion, in a foreign land, and be buried in secret, lest they are recorded in any inventories. For this, they divide into wanderers (stranniki) and almsgivers

*Огнелаво* - from the proper noun “Ogne-lava” in the text.

*Бей бубно* - from bubna, found in the phrase vybit' bubny (to beat), SRDG, I, p. 43; and see SRNG, 3, p. 234.

*Забаво* - from zabava.

*Голубящий, Голубящим* - present active participle of golubit' (to caress, fondle); golub'; goluboi.

*Златокопыток, Златокопытко* - from zlato- and kopyto.

*Унести* - unest' is a variant of unesti, Dal’, IV, p. 1031.

*Забираться в горах-долах* - note the phrase za gorami, za dolami (far and wide).

*Златоконошни* - from zlato- and koniushnia.

*Светляками* - from svet, svetoch ((obs.) torch, lamp; (fig.) light, luminary).

### 5. Pridorogaia dum'

*Придорога* - from pridorozhnyi (road/wayside). The unsoftened ‘g’ serves to highlight the root doroga and perhaps foregrounds dorogoi.

*Думь* - from duma ((folk., poet.) thought, meditation; ‘duma’ (Ukrainian folk ballad)).

*Папироса* - from rapsodiia.


*Гигантый* - from gigant, gigantnyi, gigantskii.

*Верши* - see entry under ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’.

*Передумы* - peredumka, Dal’, III, p. 120; peredumyvat' (to think better of).

*Залихваткой* - from zalikhvatskii ((coll.) devil-may-care, carefree).

*Плящи* - from pliasat’ (to dance), pliaska.

*Листникъ* - from list, listnyi, Dal’, II, p. 658.

*Вполоснуто* - from polosnut' ((coll.) to slash), plus the prefix в-.

*Белякъ* - all the standard definitions are unhelpful in this context: beliak (white hare; shoal of fish; foam of waves); belka.

*Ржавленкилуби* - from rzhavyi; dub; dubets (“the medicinal plant Glucarchira”, SRDG, I, p. 141).
Кранкія - from krap.
Ржавки - from rzhavyi.
Дубкія - from dub.
Ветптушы - vet' is a Don region dialect variant of vetka or vev', SRDG, I, p. 141.
Gudets is someone who plays the gudka ("rebeck", Dal', I, p. 1003); gud.

6. Muravaia

Муравая - see 'Letana' above.
Эскизь - from eskiz.
Травой-отравой - Dal' lists the phrases: "trava travoi" and similarly "travka muravka", Dal', IV, p. 817.
Зелено-муравой - from zelényi; murava.

DARY ADONISU

7. Zigzag priamoi sred'mirnyi: sebe
Средмірная, Средмірь - from sredi; мірь (world). These coinages are developed in 'Kolovorot'.
Издерганы - izdërgat', izdërgan'e, Dal', II, p. 40.
Оглохший - from oglokhnut' (to lose one's hearing, to have bad hearing), Dal', II, p. 1652.
Пламенье - from plamen' (obs.), plamia.
Сіянь - from siiat', siianie.
Змійко - from zmeika, a diminutive of zmeia.
Голубящий - see entry under 'Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy'.
Измечеть - izmetat' ("to throw out", Dal', II, p. 53).
Ціно - from tsep'; the 'о' can be found as a ligature, e.g. tsepochka.
Падай надо - from padat'.
8. Gurebka proklenushkov

Гуребка - apparently, a diminutive of гур'бá (crowd, gang).

прокленушковъ, прокленушекъ, прокленухъ - probably from проклястъ; проклятий. Also, клен (maple tree).

поэза - the typical word used by the Egofuturists to denote a poem. A combination of poemа and пoeziiа, and an imitation of the French ‘poésie’ or English ‘poesy’.

в'яткія - from в'ёлка.

А-'а! А-'а! У-'у-'у!!! - the sound ау is “an exclamation shouted in a wood so as not to lose one another”, Ozhegov, p. 30.

Кал'тнй - from клет', клетка (cage, coop, hutch).

ленухи - colloquial word meaning ‘lazy people’.

Гуа-туа-'а-ой! - note the similarity with the sounds made by dogs in the forest (“Gau, gau! Ga-ga! Ga-ga!”) in the 10th section of Khlebnikov’s ‘Тиран без Te’ (1922).

матерній, матерній - combinations of матерній ((coll.) obscene) and матерinskii (maternal).

неотв'ятнй - from не-, отв'яній.

поразб'яли - from по-, рассєят'.

ZASAKHARE KRY

9. Na vozle bal

слезетки - from слеза, тех', тектучий, сlezотеченіе.

невеселей - from не-, веселыи, vesеle', possibly a noun or comparative adjective.

заплакались - from заплакат', плакучий.

на Тековой - from тёкучий, тёковый, also note тёкавий (“curious”, Dal', IV, p. 739).

боро - борзый ((obs., poet.) swift).

гагали - gagat' is a variant of gagакат’ (“to make a honking sound, like a goose”, Dal', I, p. 831).

веселямъ - from vesелыи, vesеle'.
березичьимь - from berёza. By analogy telenok–teliachii, “bereziach’iam” might be formed from the notional words “berezenok” (‘birch offspring’) – “bereziata” – “bereziachii”.

охотњи - from okhota, okhotnik; perhaps by analogy with the colloquial nouns gramotei (“a literate person”, SSRLIa, 3, p. 363) or bogatei (“a rich person”, SSRLIa, 1, p. 532).

весьюляемь - from vesёlyi, vesel’e. Also vesёlka (a Volga region word for the fish “Clupea caspialichus”, SRNG, 4, p. 180), vesёlochka (a Kazan dialect word meaning “spoon”, SRNG, 4, p. 180).

перебродое - from perебродит’ (to ford (a river); to wander, roam, to have fermented, risen), perеброда (“(dial.) a wandering, nomadic person”), perебродное населеие; and переброды (“hall, corridor”), Dal’, III, p. 84.

Грохло - from grokhmut’; also note ‘Grokhlit’, Poem 8 of Smert’ iskusstvu.

dвоенились - from dvoit’, Ukr. dvoinitsia (“to become doubled, to divide in two”, UED, p. 171).

кричаковъ - from krichat’.

засолнкло - from solntse. The ‘k’ is strange (perhaps ‘-klo’ suggests the root ‘-klon-’, e.g. klonit’sia, nebosklon, etc., although it may be related to ‘ts’ (litso, lik). Alternatively, “zasolnklo” could be misprint of “zasolnilo”.

на развийой листягъ - razvigoi is unclear. Sigei suggests: “listva rezvaia, razdvizhnaia, sheveliashchaisia” (letter dated 5.11.97). Listiagovyi is a variant of listvennyi, SRNG, 17, p. 70.

це́ловами - from potselui, tselovat’.

бытая - from bit’, third person singular present tense b’et, past participle passive bityi. A publishing house venture called B’eta published Gnedov and Shirokov’s Kniga velikikh in 1914.

ненасытна - from nenasytnyi; note the colloquial adverb dosyta.

плакуха - from plakusha (Dal’, III, p. 289), plakat’.

10. Kuk

Кукъ!, Кукала кука:/ Кукъ! - “According to Gnedov, ‘Kuk!’ is the sound of the female cuckoo calling the male, who in the poem answers ‘Ia’”, Sobr. stikh., p. 146.
Kukushka, kük, kukovat’, also kukat’ (“to emit a voice”, Dal’, II, p. 546); Ukr. kukati - kukaïu, kukaesh (“to cuckoo; to complain, whimper”, UED, p. 436). Also, note kuka ((zool.) “water-tiger”) and kukat’ (“to emit a sound (of a water beetle”), SRDG, II, p. 97.

стреметь - little bustard.

перепелъ - from perepel (quail).

желтогоротый - from zheltorotyi (yellow-beaked; (fig.) inexperienced, green).

стреметный - from the rare verb strepetat’ (“to squeal, whistle”, Dal’, IV, p. 579); a diminutive of strepet.

уныло - from unyvat’ (to be depressed, dejected), unyvnyi, unylyi, Dal’, IV, 1033.

желтый - from zheltit’, zheltet’, zheltovat’sia.

бѣлоколь - from belyi, kol.

gалочь - from galka (jackdaw), galochii; galoch’e is a collective noun meaning “jackdaws or carrion crows”, Dal’, I, p. 840.

ставь - from stanovit’, stanovat’ (“to set up an encampment; to make a stop en route”), stanyi (“able to occur”), Dal’, IV, p. 503.

Букъ - beech tree; note also bukat’ (“to emit a sound (of water beetles)”, SRDG, I, p. 46).


11. Marshegrobaia pen’ka moia na mne

маршегробая - from marsh, marshevyi, grob, grobovoi, grobnoi (Dal’, I, p. 979).

пѣнка - “i pesnia i pen’kovaia verevka”, Sobr. stikh., p. 157; pen’ka (hemp).

крылобрать - from krylo and brat.

разгули - from razgul (revelry, debauch; raging), razguliat’.

раскиниваль - from kinzhal (dagger), kinzhal’nyi, raskinut’; zhal’.


блескаю - from blesk, blesnut’; blesknut’; Ukr. bliskati (“to flash; [...] sparkle, twinkle; beam, ray”, UED, p. 35).

столоку - from stoloch’, first person singular stolku.
разрыдавлю - from rydat', davit'.
kумирка - from kumir.
планетко - from planeta.
полосать - polosit' ("to cut into strips", Dal', II, p. 670).
grобое - from grob, grobovoi, grobnoi, Dal', I, p. 979.
крокодилить - from krokodil.
Я и марши маршу - from marsh, marshirovat'.
оскалеляю - from sklepat' (to rivet), sklepaiu; and oslepliat' (to dazzle, blind).
распошу - unclear. Raspakhat' (to plough up), first person singular raspashu; rasposhit' ("to sew"), Dal', III, p. 1629.
по кустямь - from kust.
обглодки - obglodok ((coll.) bare bone).
написей - from nadpis', napisat'.
божу - bozhit' ("to worship, deify", Dal', I, p. 263).
впалачу - from v-, palach (executioner).
законю - zakonit' ("to execute the law, admonish, reprove, to teach good (uchit' dobru)", Dal', I, p. 1470).
Мечо - from mech.
положайте - from polozhit' and polagat'.
Доланахь - from dol or dolina, perhaps also a combination with dilan', a variant of ladon' (hand), for example, the connection of mountains and hands is made in the line "Gory ruki podniali prodn" ("Slezhit riabidii trun'ga sno—").
Долистыхъ - from dol, dolina, dolimnyi; Ukr. dolinistii. Analogous adjectives (root + 'istyi') might include duplextyi, kamenistyi, and penistyi.
кишнить - unclear. Kishet', kishet' kishma (to swarm).
Мечаку; Мечаеть Мечак - from mech, metat' (to throw), metat' (to aim), and mechtat'. Compare Kruchenykh's neologism "mechar'", a russified 'gladiator'.
кровка - from krov ("roof; building, house, hut", Dal', II, p. 502); krovnyi ("one's own (rodnoi), dear", SRDG, II, p. 89); krov'.
выклюняются - from klonit'sia plus verbal prefix vy-.

наль Смёшной - from smeiat'sia, smekh; ‘-anka’ ending perhaps indicates a female subject as in krest'ianka, rossiianka, or a diminutive as in polianka. Compare with Khlebnikov’s neologisms in ‘Zakliatie smekhom’.

ломить - lomit' (‘to break or cut into pieces (lomti)’, Dal’, II, p. 287).

звдячий - from zverinyi, by possible analogy with derevianyi.

выхнуть - from viset’, the third person plural present tense of which is visiat.

столкнулось Σа - from stolknut’sia and stoloch’. In context, “бa” may actually be by.

polgoria - polgoria is found in the phrases “Poluradost' i polugör'e vmoste. Po polugoria ne skuchait.//[...] s dobroi zheno i gore polgoria, a radost' vdvoe”, Dal’, III, pp. 677-78.

одыл - unclear. In context, this is perhaps одна.

выши - vysh’is a variant of vys’ or vysota, Dal’, I, p. 770.

рыдаться - from rydat’, and formed by analogy with rybachit’.

derzachay - from derzat’, formed as “rydachit” above.


12. Svirel'ga

Свири́льга - from svirel’ (reed-pipe). ‘Svirel'ga’ is also the title of poem 14 and the name of the enterprise that published Gramoty i deklaratsii russkh futuristov. Similar to pustel’ga (kestrel; (coll.) good-for-nothing). Compare “Stonga”, the title of Poem 1 of Smert’ iskusstvu (“Smol'ga”, Poem 7).

Ги! - Gi is a Cossack war-cry or the shout of beaters during a hunt (Dal’, I, p. 860); gikat’, giknut’ ((coll.) to whoop).

безназнáй - from belosnezhnyi. The unsoftened ‘г’ to highlight root sneg and echo the first word “Ги!”.

раскры́ленка - from raskryliat’, raskrylit’ (to stretch out like wings); raskryt’.

неяроча - from ne- and iarkii, which has the comparative iarche.

без再多ка - from bezzadornyi, Dal’, I, p. 156; zador.
Крашенъ - from krashenie (colouring, dyeing); krasen' is a variant of krasavets (Dal’, II, p. 476).

рацифтеная - from raznotsvetnyi; Dal’ (III, p. 1649) lists raztsvet’, raztsveten’e; etc. Note tsvet and ten’.

вертовортаный - from vertet’. Ukr. vertati (“to return, restore”), vertannia (“return, restitution”), UED, p. 60.

небоклонъ - from nebosklon (horizon (sky immediately over horizon)); dropped letter ‘s’ highlights the root ‘-klon-’.

переобжитъ - from pereezzhat’.

переканчивать - from pere- and konchit’, by analogy with zakanchivat’, zakonchit’.

еляки - from el’, élka, élochka; also note Vologda region dialect word elek (“bat”, SRNG, 8, p. 339) found in ‘Kolovorot’.

подводовиль - from podvodit’, vlovyi, podvodnyi (also vodevil’?).

Гуашо - from guash plus ‘o’.

синенки - from sinii, which has the diminutive sinen’kii (Dal’, IV, p. 160). Also, the Don dialect word sinen’kie means “aubergines” (SRDG, III, p. 120).

встрёти - from vstretit’, vstrecha, also vstre’ (=vstretit’), SRDG, I, p. 82.

лока́ль - lokat’ (“to drink like a dog, sipping with one’s tongue”, Dal’, II, p. 682); lokal’nyi.

назовля́ть - from nazvat’.


еловито - from el’, élochka, eleyi, eleyvi, élochnyi, ‘-ovityi’ adjectives include darovityi, plodovityi, iadovityi.

любля́ть - from liubit’, liubliu, vliubliat’.


Синевоче - from sinii, sineva, sinjavka (the plant Knautia; russula mushroom), Dal’, IV, p. 160. Compare the endings in the previous neologisms “Veseloch’em” (‘Na vozle bal’) and the word “Galoche” (‘Kuk’).

передольчу - unclear. According to Sigei, this is from “pereedy or from peredam” (letter dated 5.10.97).
загорься сырьё борь - an allusion to the phrase *ia vizhu otkuda syr bor zagorelsia* (I see how it all started); *zagoret'sia, syroi, bor*.

doljnatovь - from *dolina, dolinnyi*, along the lines of *krylatyi, volosaty*, etc.

пожалуй - from *podzhalit* (“to sting from below, on one side”, *Dal*, III, p. 441).

кургоплясъ - from *krugoplias* (“round-dance”, *Dal*, II, p. 515), where the ‘s’ has been softened to ‘sh’, as in *pliasat’ - pliaшу*.

развинтили - from *razvintit*.

Эва! - *eva* ((coll./dial.) there/here is, what’s that?!, nonsense!).

верблюдкой - *verbludiak* ((bot.) tickseed (*Corispermum*)); the word is also pun on *verbliid*.

застонала - from *zastonat* (“to start groaning”, *Dal*, I, p. 1599).

стономь - a combination of *ston* and ëm, by analogy with *vodoëm*.

лебедовщикъ - from *lebeda* ((bot.) goose-foot (*Chenopodium*)), *lebedovy*, the neologism probably involves a pun on *lebed*.

уверхи - from *u, vverkh, verkhi* (“on top”, *Dal*, I, p. 450). Compare “Uverkhaiu” (‘Letana’).

златопляшу - from *zlato- and pliaska*.

белоснежный - *belosnezhnyi*, the ending of the neologism rhymes with “Pezhi” in the next line.

раскрытое - from *raskryvat’, raskryv, Dal’, IV, p. 1604; formed similarly to “unyvo” (‘Kuk’).

Пёхи - from *pegii* (skewbald), *pezhina*.

стоньемо - see “Stonoem” above.

целовчаль - from *tselovat’, lovchii*.

**SMERT’ ISKUSSTVU**

13. Poema 1. Stonga

Стонга - from *ston; shtanga* (bar-bell weight); *sten’ga* (foremast). Note the variants of *polyn*: “polynga, polon’ga, polonga”, *SRNG*, 29, p. 178.
Kozlo - from kozel, kozlovyi; ‘kozlo’ is a stem. Might “kozlo” be formed by analogy with gryzlo? Kozlo is also a variant of kaslo, a type of ball-game, Dal’, II, p. 236.

Bubchigi - “Bubchigi – ni v koem sluchae nikakikh bubentsov! Vse gorazdo ser’eznee: chigi – eto chto-to vrode obuvi, lapti Buby, to est’, Baby lagi” (letter from Sigei dated 5.10.97). For buba, see the later entry for ‘Bubaia goria’; ichig (“type of light footwear without heels on a soft sole”, SSRLJa, 5, p. 600).

Kozlevaia - from kozlovyi.

Sirenja - from siren’ (lilac) or sirena (siren).

Sekrmy - unclear. Skryt’, Krym (the Crimea); skryn’ (“area of a pond that touches a dam and is separated by a frame”, SRDG, III, p. 126). Ukr. skrtmutsuvati (“to bind (fasten) strongly”, UED, p. 975).

15. Poema 3. Svirel’ga
Svir’l’ga - see entry for this word in ‘Svirel’ga’, Zasakhare kry.


Prostor’chey - from prosticrochie.

Zvukona - from zvuk, konepas and svinopas, zvukopas’.

Zatumanito - unclear. Zatumniti’ (to befog, cloud, obscure).

Svir’lжитъ - see ‘Svirel’ga’ above. Svirelit’ (to play the pan-pipes); zhit’.

Rasprosstit’ - from rasprostit’sia.

17. Poema 5. Bezvestia
Bezv’stet - bezvestit’ (to leave without news; hide news), bezvestie, Dal’, I, p. 149.

Pojmu—poimy - poniat’, poimka; poima (flood-lands).
18. Poema 6. Robkot

Робкотъ - from robost', robkii; kot, rokot.

Сомъ, Сомка - som (sheat fish); samets, samka; somknut'.
—а—ні—ка - unclear.
—а—ніль—ло - unclear.

19. Poema 7. Smol'ga

Смольга - from smola, smol'; Ukr. smol'ka ("smoking-pipe", UED, p. 984); and possibly fol'ga (foil, (gold) leaf).

Кудренні - from kudri, kudriavyi, kudrevatyi.

Вышиня - vyshlyi = vyshedshii, Dal', I, p. 796.

20. Poema 8. Grokhlit

Грохлитъ - from grokh, grokhnut'. Note "Grokhlo" ("Na vozle bal"). An abbreviation of grokh literature?

Сереброй - from serebro, serebriannyi, serebristy'i; also serebrit' (Dal', IV, p. 131).

Коромысяла - koromyslo (yoke; dragonfly), koromyslit', Dal', II, p. 429.


Бубая, Буба - Gnedov stated "the word 'buba' is any grain, wheat, bean, etc., in general anything round", Sobr. stikh., p. 20; "prianik, bublic", and "berry, pea", SRDG, 3, p. 232. In Southern Russia, buba also means "tumour, bruise, swelling, sore", Dal', I, p. 329. Ukr. buba ("little sore, wound pain"), bubka ("kernel"), UED, p. 45.

22. Poema 10. Vot

Убежкаю - u, bez, krai, genitive, dative, and prepositional singular kraiu. Ukr. 'ubez' is equivalent to Russian 'obes-'; Ukr. ubezvikhid ("into a blind alley"), UED, p. 1056. Also, krait' ("to winnow grain", SRDG, II, p. 87).
23. Poema 11. Poium

Пою - from pet' - poiu, poi, voevat' - voium.

24. Poema 12. Vcheraet

Вчераетъ - from vchera, vecheret'.
Петруша - a diminutive of Petr, Petrushka.


Издавать - from izadevat'sia, izadevatel'stvo; iz-, devat'.

No neologisms.

27. Poema 15. Poema Kontsa

No neologisms!

IMMORTELI

28. Pechal'naia skazka

No neologisms or irregularities.

NEBOKOPY

The fusion of words in the word-lines of the collection Nebokopy problematises word boundaries. As noted in the analysis, it is important to view each word-line as a new entity in itself; at the same time, the meaning of each is determined by its components. The focus here is on determining the most likely, distinguishable divisions of the word lines, and these will given as they appear in each word-line. Any definitions Sigei provides for the lines will also be noted. Where it appears impossible to make out separate parts of the word-lines, and when noting rare words, neologisms, and other verbal irregularities, the components will be given in their standard forms (infinitive mood, nominative case, etc).
29. Pti'okmon'

Pi'boxokmon'

According to Sigei, "'pti'okmon' is an exclamation (in the pronunciation 'pt'ëkman', which is very close to è ko lo mane, a cry of astonishment of the type vot èb tvoiu mat')", letter dated 5.10.97; ptiitsa; oko; okno; "(tol'ko) ptich'ego moloka net" (coll. to express abundance or complete satisfaction).

Molokousla'acjikom'

moloko slashchikom. "-slashchikom" may consist of slashche and the ending -ikom (by analogy with bosikom). Other possible constituents: molokosos (colloq. "inexperienced youth; sucker; sissy; whippersnapper", Els., 2, p. 1239); slashcha ("turnip", Dal', IV, p. 245); kom.

Udalekoypratsikom'

u daleki prashchikom [prashchi kom].

Uy'mano

uimano [uima no]. Uimat' (Dal', IV, p. 977), uniat'; uima ((coll.) lots, masses, heaps). According to Sigei, the rare vulgarism kuinane can be felt (letter 5.11.97).

Futuroshnozvayreno

Unclear. Futuristicicheskii; roshcha (small wood); no, nos; vaiia (a church slavonic word for "branch"; Dal', I, p. 394); svaia (pile); varit', svarit', svarivat', svarit'.

Pomazaliserdzyo

pomazali serdyzo. The section "-serdyzo" may consist of serdityi, serdit', serdtse.

Sladosh -no- slashcho. Sladost'; ladosha (hand); slashche.
150

MOJIOKO

moloko; molokosos; kossi (slanting).

30. Zubaty'volk

Зубатый волк

Zubaty volk. Note misspelling (zubastyi).

лечаقرارةهؤکرکسی

Unclear. Lech', lechit'; gaga (eiderduck; also a dialect word meaning a “lazy-bones”, “a large woman with little intelligence” (Dal’, I, p. 831), and a cry “to express astonishment or fear” (Dal’, I, p. 833)); gagara ((orn.) loon; Ukr. “ember-goose”, UED, p. 134); gagarica ((orn.) razorbill); gagarit' (“to give a full-throated laugh”, Dal’, I, p. 831); grach ((orn.) rook; Ukr. “diver; player, gambler, musician”, UED, p. 156); rachit; rachit' ((obs., dial.) to take care, be assiduous); chicher (“cold autumn wind mixed with rain, sometimes snow”, Dal’, IV, p. 1353; “a boggy place”, SRDG, II, p. 195); chicherone (cicerone); chelo (forehead, brow); “-lenykh”-” is a genitive plural adjectival ending (e.g. zelenykh) in agreement with “koromysl”; koromyslo (yoke; dragonfly).

Втоійніпзабытым числю

V toi[-i]-pe zabytym chisl. Other possible constituents: v toi l' or v to il', peza (“lilac”, SRNG, 25, p. 314); mchat'.

Одніряднокакомушивідьль


Таких успілувивідьтілавно

Takikh uspel uvidet' i davno.

ростетгорамзаобидулихомань
rostet goram za obidu likhoman'ia. Rasti - rastet, likhomanit' ("to do a lot of harm, to do wrong continuously, to swindle or cheat", Dal', II, p. 666); likhoman'ka can be a synonym of likhoradka (fever), SRDG, II, p. 117, and Dal', II, pp. 665-66.

Забытьворкозазлезой
Zabyt' vorko za sleizi [vor koza sleizi]. The section "-vorko-" may derive from vorkagan ("thief", "hooligan", SRDG, I, p. 76); vorkovat' (to coo), vorkovan'e; vorkotnia ((coll.) grumbling).

Сиппоносакраемышеъль
Sip pones za kraem vyshel. Sip (vulture, hoarseness).

Толпобрядилъзабой
Tolpu obriadil zaboi [za boi].

31. Vchera.

чешите коломголову
cheshite kolom golovu. Also possible: kolo ("(obs. and now S.W. Russia) circle, circumference; wheel; [...] a round dance (khorovody", Dal', II, p. 348), lomat' sebe golovu.

верстусоситеблюдами
verst unosite [verstu nosite] bliudami.

Станетервблиудымы
Stanete verbliudymi. Note the misspelling (verbliudami).

Явышелепогоныга
Ia vyshe lev pogon'ga or ia vyshel [-e-] v pogon'ga. Pogonia (pursuit, chase), pogon', pogon, pogonka, Dal', III, p. 399.
32. Segodnia.

Небокопытапризвольнь

*Nebo kopyta privol'ia,* “Nebokopy” is the title of the collection.

дужапризвелморяхах

*Luzha privet moriakakh.*

бабушкакуликазеен

*Babushka kulika zelen.* Other possible constituents: *ushko* ((tech.) eye, lug; tab, tag of boot; eye of needle; (in pl.) noodles); *kak; akula; kulik* (sandpiper; stint); *kulikat' = kuliukat'* (“to be lonely and depressed”, *SRDG*, II, p. 99); *ulika; lik.*

нашигорохинутах

*Nashi gorokh i shutakh.*

33. Zavtra.

Порваласуздз

*Porvalas' uzda.*

посленасмерти


Всепрыгнутывышелб

*Vse prygmt vyshe lba.*

Огоньпримчатспасеть

*Ogon' primchat spaset ei.*
34. Khitraia Moral'

Ну—такънапасмурено—напайсмурено—

dопчелойНевозможни
*Do pcheloi nevozmozhni. “-Nevozmozn” may be a noun neologism.

ВыросъзелкйЯвонагранитныйпроходи...
*Vyros zelkii lavro na granitoi prokhodi. The section “-zelkii-” may come from zelko (“drug, medicine” , Dal’, I, p. 1687), zal’ka (“anything that is clothed in leaves, the leaf clothing (listvennaiia odelzda) of the entire plant kingdom”), Dal’, I, p. 1687), zelok (“young bright-green grass”; SRNG, 11, p. 253), zelenyi; “-lavro-” may derive from from iavor (sycamore).

ЦвятьпострекоталиплеснулиЗонты
*Tsvety postrekotali plesnuli Zonty. (Po)strekat' (to chirr, rattle, chatter).

кудраво—звончалъвечерййсвистуний...
*Kudriavo zvonchal vecherii svistuni. The section “zvonchal-” may derive from zvon, zvonkii, zvonchatyi (Dal’, I, p. 1677); “-vecherii-” from vecher, vechernyi; vecheria (supper), vecheriat’ and vecherit’ (“to eat supper”; SRDG, I, p. 63).

воротилосъподержки—заперепелила
*vorotilos’ pole rzhi zaperepel. The section “zaperepila” derives from perepel, the verb perhaps formed by analogy with zaperet’ or zapepelit’ (“to litter with ash, cinders”, Dal’, I, p. 1531).

мокхайпостелъплитасвалиласъна
*mokhaia postel’ plita svalilas’ na. Note the neologism “mokhaia-” (mokh, mokhovoi)
Прощло...Звездонеумирало...
Proshlo zvezdo ne umiralo. Note the ligature or changed gender of “zvezdo-”.

Одномалоеписка.д.ещебегала—ноги

скороподрезаный
skoro podrezianui. The section “-iaui” is unclear.

Уненавстоннылиторастаеть—
U nenastoiashny litso rastaet. Note the spelling “-nenastoiasny-” (nenastoiaschchii).

мокрыебегляквуорокнутыглаль...
mokrye begliaki uvoroknut glad’. Begliak (“person without a definite occupation, who moves from place to place”, “one of the names for spirits”, SRNG, 2, p. 170); “-uvoroknut-” may derive from uvorovat’, vorkagan.

Причинаизвестна—Ненавостное...
Prichina izvestna nenastoishchee.

Недогодирепейнецарапит—ЕстьгляГрома
Negodyi repeine [repei ne] tsarapit est’ igla groma. Note the the abbreviation “negodyi” (negodni; negodii), “-repeine-” is probably from repeinik (burdock).

иВороньеперекараетГром“Завтра”...
i voron ne perekarkait grom zavtra.

Прибгутълисицы—умиляются—поклоны
Pribegut lisity umileiutsia poklony. Note the misspelling “umileiutsia” (umiliat’sia - to be moved, be affected, stirred; (obs.) to become kind, Els., IV, p. 2909).
Вашим — Нашим — засуетят — хлопни


полысни — зблагодарят — совместне

po lysine zablagozariat sovest' ne. Note the neologism "zablagozariat" (blagodarit'; compare zablagozestit' or zablagozassudit').

рвется — можетесь удобоюрастягивать —

Rvetsia mozhete s udoboiu rastiagivat'. Note the spelling of "udoboiu" (udob', SRDG, III, p. 169; udobstvo).

закускиприятая — медяньопозолотый

Zakuska priiataia mediak -o- pozolotyi. Note the abbreviation "priiataia" (pryatmaia); mediak (copper (coin)); pozolotit' (to gild).

Укрыва Смертнот — Лисицыненснить —

U krova smerti ot lisits ne sshit'. Krov (roof).

Останешься Золотой Наплев — и головыми

Ostanesh' s zolotoi napleve [na pleve] i golovymi. Naplev (Dal', II, p. 1174), naplevat', the section "igolovymi" might derive from golova, golovnyi (and igla, igolochka, iglovatyi, etc).

Подымиснагра...

Pol'mi snega. "Pol'mi-" may derive from polymia and polomia ((dial.) flame; = plamia), polma and polmia ("in half, in two", Dal', III, p. 659).

Угрядай Лисицын сущих добрыми заседать

Ugradai lisisty pochuiut dobyt' zaslediat'. Griasti' (obs.) to approach; zasledit' (leave dirty foot-prints on; Ukr. zasliiditi, UED, p. 296).
35. Kolovorot

Коловоротъ - “whirlpool; maelstrom; fig. obs. vortex”, Els., II, p. 983.

благодарь, благодарень - either from the verb blagodarit', or a noun by analogy with gosudar'.

средьмире, средьмиро, etc. - compare “sred'mirniaia” and “sred'mir” in ‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred'mirnyi’. Note мирь (world) and мирь (peace).


споткнуться - spotknusia (to stumble, get stuck); note “spotkat', spotknut' kogo, iuzh. i zap. vstretit’”, Dal', IV, p. 462.

ядкой - from iad, iadovityi.

сквози - from skvozi' ((obs.) to be transparent, show light through; to show through, be seen through), svkoz'.

воренко - from vor, vorishka, vorkovat'.

свирелюю - from svirel' or svirelit'.

засквози - from zaskvozi' (to begin to show light), svkoz'.

покукуйль - from kukovat'.

пээко - from pegii, pezhina.

глуб - from глубокий, глуб', голуб'.

бээнежи - from bez-, nezhit' (to pamper, coddle, caress).

загули - zagudit' (Dal', I, p. 1427), gudit' (“to play the rebeck or other stringed instrument”, Els., I, p. 503); gudet' (to buzz, drone, hum).

ликоватко - from likovat' (to rejoice), likovanie.

разсеви - the deverbal noun from rasseiat'.

мохнаутка - “shaggy person or animal”, Dal', II, p. 921.

вырослить - from vyrasti, past tense vyros.

крючек' - kriuch'ek (Dal', II, p. 533), kriuk, kriuchok.

развиши - related to viset', visiu, razvesiti', razveshu.

низанку - from niz, nizina, nizkii.
Вязанки - from viazanka ("knitted garment", "knitted glove"; "bundle; truss; bunch; sheaf", Els., 1, p. 406), viazenka ("mitten", "knitted slippers", "knitted scarf", SRDG, I, p. 93), viazat'.

недаться - from povesit'.

Выкормощин - from vykormysh, a synonym of vykormok (fosterling, (pej.) creature).

пяточка - from pet', pevuchii; pevchii (Dal', III, p. 1442). Adjectives having the combination of letters ‘-shn-’ include pyshnyi, strashnyi. Note also the noun psheno (millet).

распалаешь - unclear. Rasplavit' (to melt, fuse), rasplavliu, rasplavish'.

березняк - birch grove.

елека - elek is a dialect word from the Vologda region meaning “nightjar” or “bat”, SRNG, 8, p. 339; ėłka,  élevyi.

плекатка - from plekat' ("to breastfeed", Dal', III, p. 310).

сладко сладошь - from sladkii, sladost'; ladosha (hand). Note “sladosnoslashcho” ('Pt'iokmon').

ежели - (obs., coll.) if.

ударит - from ydarit', udarnyi.

умило - from umil'nyi (touching, affecting; ingratiating, smarmy), umyt', umylit'.

скало - from skala, skalo- is found, for example, in skalolaz, skalochka, skalochmyi.

тоску скуешь Вы тоску не куйте куйте - this is a sdvig involving toska, toskovat', and skovat' (to forge, hammer out), kovat'.


шири - shirit' (to extend, expand), shir' (wide expanse).

оберточ - from obértka.

гадо - from gad ((obs.) amphibian, reptile; repulsive person; vermin), gadost, gadit', gadkii.

повалъ - the deverbal noun from povalit'; also “a large timber wood brought down by a storm”, Dal', III, p. 356.

неосвітен - ne-, -о-, tsvetoi, tsvetienie; Ukr. neosvitlenii (“obscure, unlighted, dark [...] unenlightened”, UED, p. 587).
без вязла - from viazla, a dialect word from the Tver' and Novgorod regions meaning
“an amulet with grass/herbs (s travami) which is fastened to the necks of domestic
animals to protect them from the evil eye, wolves, and illness” and “a straw braid with
which a sheaf is tied”, SRNG, 6, p. 75; viazat', viazki.
частъ - from schast'e.
грызляк - from gryzlo.
мышатки - from mysh', myshastyi.
внолосную - from v-, polosnut' (to slash).
притворь - from pritvorit' (to set ajar, leave not quite shut), pritvorit'sia (to pretend,
feign), compare zatvor.
кинжало - from kinzhal, zhalo.
скажешь можно - from molniia or perhaps molitva.
упадо - from upadat', do upadu.

36. Pervovelikodrama

Первовеликодrama

Perv -o- velik -o- drama.

dейство/ лицо/ времяюньо

deistv -o- il' litso il' vremia dlen'ja O il'. The section “deistv-” = deistvie; il' = ili;
“-dlen’ia” = dlina? Is the “O” in fact a zero?

белытавиличымоханодроби

beliata viliuchi mokha i o drobi [odrobi]. The section “beliata-” might derive from a
neologism belenok (‘small white creatures’); viliuchii (“winding”, SRDG, I, p. 66);
odrobit' (= orobet’. “to be timid”, Dal', II, p. 1686).
сычка "ульсмылятъгыдан"

sychiaka [sych iaka] ia puls miliaet [pul smiliaet] gadai. Sych (little owl), sycha ("fledgling little owl", Dal’, IV, p. 686); note the neologism “-(s)miliaet-” ((s)milovat”).

оснахъновеликайъустынысыами


одназмотъноодноичепраком


устъеустыпомеснасвидит

ustye usty pomesh yasidit.

ивилоизъдоумкипооиделякъ


ивотънасукуположостукайъкосмато

i vot na suku po lozh -o- stukai kosmato.

завивай Завивайпроносоиюуайайнемой

zavivai zavivai pronos o i ia u ai ai nemoi. The segment “-oiuauaii-” is reminiscent of the sounds in ‘Gurebka proklenushkov’ (“A-a! A-a! A-a! U-u-u!!!”, “Gua-gua-ga-oii!”).

стоуписпогънеталежутънасваюхдупи

stoi ispognet zalezhut na svaiah dupi. Ispoganit’ ((coll.) defile); svaia (pile); Ukr. dupa (“backside, hind parts, bottom, anus”, UED, p. 216; also SRNG, 8, p. 258).
Овоет: Брослоюйморе пловосива

O vot gde roslo i more plavo siva.

происходит безпомощь бездарей/Станиславских прочи

Proishkhodit bez pomoshchi bezdarei Stanislavskikh prochi.

37. Azbuka vstupaiushchim

Посолце зелено олеш’ тоскло

Po solntse zelenu olesh' tosklo. The section “-olesh’-” may derive from oleshka (“alder-tree”, SRNG, 23, p. 187).

перепел усатоершавит

perepel usat -o- shershavit'.

Осіянное сосноносить

Osiiannoe osi ponosit [osipo nosit].

красно серпопрокнувшему жаба

krasn -o- serp -o- protknuvshemu zhaba. Note krasil’noe serpukha (dyer’s sawwort; Els., 4, p. 2537).

Кудролецеберезеньбопой

Kudr -o- leshch -e- berezeven' spoi. Leshch (bream); the section “-berezeven’” may derive from berëza, berëzovyi, or berëzovnia (“a clearing overgrown with forest underbrush”, Dal’, I, p. 203).

переспой улетило солнцем

perespoi uletilo solntsem. Note the pun: “perespoi” is formed by analogy with perepel (line 2; i.e. pere-pel - ‘sang again’ or ‘out-sang’) and spoi (the previous line).

Нассчитывают дураками

Nas schitaiut durakami.
Ардурарилучеумныхъ
a my duraki luchshe umrykh.

38. Ognianna svita

Stanzas 1 and 2 are in written in imitation Ukrainian:


гриба - grib (mushroom, fungus).

булин - unclear. Budiak (thistle); buditi (to wake, awake); buda (booth, shed), budka (dim. of buda; sentry box); UED, p. 45.

цири - unclear.


здвіна - unclear. Zdinutî (“to shift, move”, URS, II, p. 206)?

хам - (coll.) boor, lout.

дяки - diaka (gratitude, thankfulness, UED, p. 218)?

коли - when.

гичь - unclear. Gich (vegetable leaves), ni gich (nothing at all), UED, p. 141.

булин - from budinok (buildings, edifice, structure), budennii (work-a-day, weekday, ordinary), UED, p. 45.

цікавче - tsikavi (“interesting”, URS, p. 386).

буляче - from budiak (thistle), budiachi (covered with thistles, UED, p. 45).

скавче - unclear. Skavchati (to whine, howl, yell).

гуля - unclear. Guliati = guliat', UED, p. 160; gulia (lump, bump; boil, tumour).


стогма - unclear. Stognati (to groan).

регота - from regit-gotu (“chuckle”), regotati, URS, V, p. 28.

цирка - from tsvirkati (“to chirr, chirp”, URS, VI, p. 372).
зiла - unclear.
сон кэ - unclear. *Son* (sleep, dream).
байдры - unclear. *Baida* (idler, drone, good-for-nothing); *baidur* (fop, dandy); *baidara* (boat covered with seal skins); *UED*, p. 14.
дьогі - unclear. *D'ogot'* (tar).
хмара - cloud.
з зiрок - unclear. *Zirka* (star).
поiв - *poiti* ("to give to drink", *URS*, IV, p. 54).
перша - *pershii* (first).
эгo—футуpия - abbreviation of (ego-)futurists'kii (Futurist).
пiсня - *pisnia* (song).
на українськiй мовi - *ukrains'kii* (Ukrainian), but not "ukrain'skoi", *mova* (language).
усім - all of us.
набврілі - from *nabridati* (to tire, weary, annoy), *nabridlii*.
гопашникъ - from *gopak* ("hopak (dance)", *UED*, p. 151)?
Кропивницький - “M.L. Kropivnitskii (1840-1910) was a Ukrainian dramatist, director, and actor (probably untalented)”, *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 158.
нiхто ни = *nikto ne*.
збрець - unclear.
свидачiй - unclear. *Svidok* (witness), *svidchii*.
забувъ - from *zabuvati* (to forget).
українцiв - from *ukrainets* (Ukrainian).
по небес - the standard dative singular of *nebo is nebu*. 
RAZVOROCHENYE CHEREPA

39. Slezzhit riabidii trun’ga sno—

слезжит - from slez’t, slezu, slezesh’t; s”ezzhat’, sleza.

рибили - from riabina ((coll.) pit, pock), riabo; riabina (rowan tree); riab’ (ripple, dazzle), riabit’. Endings in ‘-idiia’ are of foreign origin, e.g. subsidiia; also mizida (mussel).


коневама - perhaps a mixture of an old Russian dual form (e.g. rukama, nogama) and the adjective konevyi ((dial.) “= konskii”, Els., 2, p. 999).


ястреблю - from iastreb and istrebit’.

гага - eiderduck; also a dialect word meaning a “lazy-bones”, “a large woman with little intelligence” (Dal’, I, p. 831), and a cry “to express astonishment or fear” (Dal’, I, p. 833).


нечаят - made up of ne- and chaia’, by analogy with the existing adjective nechaainyi.

скачков вихры - both key words occurring in ‘Skachek Toski—Pobeda Ogne-Lavy’.


прон - Sigei explains that the relevant line concerns “mountains, which look as if hands have lifted them from from the ground […], have raised their own heights…

Gnedov quite often ‘collects (stiagivaety) several words into one, combining the significant consonants” (letter dated 5.10.97).
OTHER POEMS OF 1913

40. A La tyr'

а La тырь - the alatyr' is a “mythical stone, miracle-working stone”, Els., I, p. 29.

Вели Миро - Velimir (Khlebnikov).

упы рь - upyr' (vampire; also “an obstinate, gloomy person”, SRDG, III, p. 172).

тырь - from alatyr' and tyrit' (“to steal”, SSRLIa, 15, p. 1198).

KNIGA VELIKIKH

41. Poema nachala

томи - tom, tomy; according to Sigei {Sobr. stikh., p. 161), the word should be read as “tomn” presumably from tomen', tomit', etc.

аксамитомь - aksamit ((obs.) figured (silk) velvet).

RUKONOG

42. Eroshino

Ерошено - from eroshit' (“to beat/shake up [...] tangle, dishevel”, Dal', II, p. 1300).

The ending '-ino' is commonly found in place names, e.g. Mitino, Strogino, Liublino, etc.

устали - ustat'. Also iastl' is the noun from ustat' and can mean a “horse worn out by racing”, Dal', IV, p. 1078.

взростали - a variant related to the following verbs: vzrastat', vozrastat', vozrosti, vzrasti, vzrost' (Dal', I, p. 490).

просвисть - prosvist (Dal', III, p. 1327), prosivistet'.

птаха - a diminutive of ptitsa, similar to ptashka.

швах! - “weak in some respect, powerless [...] bad, nasty”, SSRLIa, 17, pp. 1315-16.
43. Sumerki na Donu

пещерицы - “the edible mushroom *Agaricus campestris*" (*Dal*, III, p. 270) and various other types of mushroom (*SRNG*, 26, pp. 349-50). *Pecheritsa* could come from *pechor'e* (“turf, sward […] or […] from the verb *pech*”, *Dal*, III, p. 270) and is also an Old Russian word for “cave” (*peshchera*). The word occurs in ‘*Natal'ia Goncharova*’ too.

в *лохматах лоскутах* - *lokhmot'ia; loskut*.


або - a Don dialect and Ukrainian word meaning “or” (*SRDG*, I, p. 1; *UED*, p. 1).

44. *Брос'те мне лапы скорее когот' и всhei увидан'е’*

*тикнуть* - *tknut'sia* ((coll.) to knock into/against; rush/fuss about).

*выжевать* - from *zhevat*' plus verbal prefix ‘*vy-*’.

*всю* - (obs.) in vain.

*паство* - from *pastva*.

*дреколом* - from *drekol'e*, instrumental singular *drekol'em*.

*уморы* - *umora* ((dial.) exhaustion; “destruction, death”, *Dal*, IV, p. 1017), *umorit*.

*карачено* - from *karachit’* (“to move, sit back”, *Dal*, II, p. 225); *karachit'sia* (“to climb, clamber”, *SRDG*, II, p. 51); *na karachkakh* (on all fours), *karachen'ki*, *Dal*, II, p. 225.

*ды* - as an alternative to “yet, still” (*Dal*, I, p. 1019) and the expression “Dy-ka” is a Don dialect equivalent to “da chto ty” (*SRNG*, 8, p. 288).

*дольш* - a contraction of *dol'she*.

**GRAMOTY I DEKLARATSII RUSSKIH FUTURISTOV**

45. *Glas o soglase i zloglase*

*Глас* - (obs.) voice.

*согласб* - *soglas* ((dial.) concord, harmony); *soglasie*.

*злологлб* - from *glas*, *zlo-*, e.g. *zloei, zloupotreblenie*, etc..
PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED

46. ‘Khromonogo pustynia po glazu’

повыдолблены - from vydolbit’ (to hollow, gouge out).

пазушка - pazushka = pazukha, e.g. the phrase “Ne to denezhki, chto u diadiushki, a to denezhki, chto za pazushkoi (v zapazushke), Dal’, III, p. 12. Echoes pazy.


47. Natal’ia Goncharova

пожалуста - a misspelling of pozhaluista.

росию - Ukr. Rosiia (Russia).

печерицы - see entry under ‘Sumerki na Donu’.


вышморгни - from morgnut’, vyshmargivat’ (to knock/beat out), SRDG, I, p. 92. Note the intransitive verb vyshmygun’t ((coll.) to slip out), Ukr. vishmorgnuti.

китаем - note the lower case ‘k’.

48. ‘V boku klok sena’

салазы - from salazit’ (to slide), Dal’, IV, p. 11; salazki (toboggan, sledge; (tech.) slide, slide rails. Also ‘lower jaw’, SRDG, III, p. 102).

гайтане - gaitan is a dialect word meaning “string”, Els., I, p. 413.

VREMENNIK 4-yi

49. ‘Roiut vam mogilu bogi’

No neologisms or irregularities.
50. ‘Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno’

каhootъ - from kogot’.
пухирянина - unclear. *Pukh*, for riadno, see line 3 of ‘Zubatyivolk’.
ковыляться - less common non-reflexive form, meaning “to bend, stoop”, *Dal*, II, p. 324.
солнце - Ukr. (sun).

51. ‘To skachushchii lebed’

цама - unclear. In the context of this poem, the word seems to have little in common with its standard meanings: “child’s toy, plaything, good child; big head”, *Els.*, 4, p. 3052.
CONCLUSION

The Futurism of Vasilisk Gnedov is complex and sometimes intractable, but always interesting. As an Egofuturist, the poet was part of a transitional movement, one which fused Decadent Symbolism with Futurism. This sense of transition was exemplified by the occurrence of ‘metaphysical’ themes, egoistic posturing, and nihilism in certain of his works. However, Gnedov’s entrance into Egofuturism brought a major shift of emphasis, and in many respects his poetics are those of Cubofuturism: Russian-based linguistic experimentation, Primitivism, *epatazh*, nationalism, outrageous public performances, and so on. Gnedov’s Futurism reflects the emphasis of the Italian Futurists on destruction, newness, intuition, and abbreviation; but at the same time Gnedov was basically a nature poet, and the glorification of speed, technology, and war was alien to him. In his unique combination of these various strands, Gnedov represents a certain point of convergence in early Russian Futurism. As Khardzhiev pointed out:

«Кубо» и «эго» крыло друг друга и не с такой историко-литературной изысканности¹.

In this sense, Gnedov is primarily of interest in terms of Futurist literary history, but his work arguably carries a wider significance.

The increase in knowledge of Gnedov’s work necessitates an assessment of the poet’s significance in the broader context of the Avant-Garde. A useful framework for this is the following definition provided by Richard Kostelanetz:

Used precisely, the term avant-garde should refer to work that satisfies three criteria: it transcends current artistic conventions in crucial respects, establishing a discernible distance between itself and the mass of current practices; second, avant-garde work will necessarily take considerable time to find its maximum audience; and, third, it will probably inspire future, comparably advanced endeavors².

¹ Letter to Sigei dated 20.11.83, quoted from *Sobr. stikh.*, p. 22.
In terms of the first condition, many of the works could be considered successful. For example, one product of Gnedov’s abbreviation of language, the ‘word-line’ innovations, have tended to have been overlooked but are highly interesting in this regard. However, Gnedov will typically be remembered for ‘Poema Kontsa’, a poem that was sensational in its time and continues to capture the imagination. The booklet which it concluded, \textit{Smert' iskusstvu}, should be better known than it is and can be considered a central work of Russian Futurism, and perhaps the European Avant-Garde as a whole. In terms of the second condition, there are several reasons why Gnedov is not better known. He wrote comparatively little and his period of publishing activity in his lifetime was short. For a long time, the study of the Russian Avant-Garde in the Soviet Union was deemed unacceptable. For many, Gnedov’s more radical brand of Futurism (like that of Kruchenikykh) was not treated seriously. Furthermore, Gnedov was an Egofuturist and might have enjoyed a much greater reputation had he joined the rival Cubofuturist group. However, in recent years, there has been a revival of interest in him, part of the increased access to and focus upon the Russian Avant-Garde. Finally, there is some evidence of Gnedov’s influence in the work of certain contemporary poets who have written on him; in the 1970s, Sigei, Nikonova-Tarshis, and others sought to proceed beyond the limits implied by ‘Poema Kontsa’ with their concept of the ‘vacuum’ in literature; Sigei’s poem ‘Tombo na smert' futurista Vasiliska Gnedova’\textsuperscript{3} incorporates quotations and Gnedov-like neologisms; and the hallmarks of Gnedov can be felt in Gennadii Aigi’s single-letter poem and title poem.

While Gnedov might be described as a minor writer with one major work, it should be noted that the poet was until recently almost entirely forgotten, so further analysis of his highly intriguing works may yet increase his reputation. There is clearly much more to write about the poet, and the analysis of his works and the first attempt to describe his use of language presented here are far from definitive. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this thesis has made a positive contribution to the understanding of Gnedov’s poetics and towards increasing recognition of this underrated Avant-Gardist.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the bibliography, details of the publisher will only be given 1) where reprints are listed in parentheses in addition to the original edition, and 2) for original Futurist editions by Gnedov. Asterisks indicate that I have not been able to consult the source.

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. Archive Materials Relating to Gnedov

i) State Maiakovskii Museum (Государственный музей Маяковского) (GMM)

Archive of V. Gnedov:

Items 28865-28870. Correspondence between G. Petnikov and Gnedov.

Items 28853-28855 and 28875-28891. Correspondence between V. Smirenskii and Gnedov.


The archive also includes materials relating to Gnedov's work qualifications, rehabilitation, and other documents.

Archive of S. Bobrov:

Items 29963-29965. Three unpublished poems by Gnedov dating from the 1910s.
ii) Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literaturnoy i iskusstva) (RGALI)

Fond 2554, Bobrov:

op. 1, ed. khr. 481. Unpublished poem ‘Zoiu’, dated 5.8.70, originally sent together with the letter below dated 17.12.70.

op. 2, ed. khr. 481. Two letters from Gnedov to Bobrov, dated 25.12.64 and 17.12.70.

op. 1, ed. khr. 27. Two letters from Gnedov to Bobrov, dated 2.3.14 and 25.3.14, and one separate page. Letter 1: Gnedov writes from Yalta requesting details of the ‘Rukonog’ project. Letter 2: Gnedov asks Bobrov not to publish a poem called ‘Kazn’. Separate page: Gnedov’s initials and the stamp of the Tsentrifuga publishing enterprise. The page is marked “polucheno” and dated 27.11.17.

op. 1, ed. khr. 73. Group photograph of Gnedov, Ignat’ev, Shirokov, and Kriuchkov. The same photograph was published in Dary Adonis. (p. 16).

op. 1, ed. khr. 73. Eleven letters from Shirokov to Bobrov (dated 27.2.1914; 5.3.1914; 14.3.1914; 27.3.1914; 31.3.1914; 7.4.1914; 1.5.1914; 5.5.1914; 16.6.1914; 1.7.1914; and 5.11.1914). Letter 1: Shirokov tells Gnedov of Bobrov’s proposition to contribute to Rukonog, Letter 2: Gnedov has left St Petersburg four days previously (i.e. 1.3.14) for Yalta, where he is to be found at the address “Dutschka ul., d. Kuntsevofi, No. 26, N.A. Roslavtsu dlia V.I. Gnedova”. Letter 3: Gnedov was late replying to Bobrov, which does not surprise Shirokov (“on leniv na pis’ma, [tak] chto ego molchanie menia ne udivliaet”). Letter 9: Shirokov notes that Gnedov’s address has changed. Letter 11: Shirokov writes that he himself will be leaving for the war on 4.11.1914.
Fond 1334, Kruchenykh, op. 1:

ed. khr. 288, l. 51. Inscription by Gnedov in an album of Kruchenykh ("ia poznakomilsia s V. Maiakovskim v 1913 v Peterburge na kvartire u Nikolaia Burliuka") dated 8.10.58.

ed. khr. 288, l. 52. Photograph of Gnedov with Ignat'ev (1913).

ed. khr. 1085. Note by Gnedov, laid out as if a poem and dated 15.9.17, in an album of Kruchenykh ("Kogda poluchish' otvechai/ Budu vremia ot vremeni tebia/ kak teper' vyrazhaiutsia informirovat'/ o chem budu osvedomlen sam"). The note is addressed "Moscow, Bol'shaia Spasskaia 22, kv. 5".

ed. khr. 318. Inscription in the form of a poem beneath a portrait of Kruchenykh by A.S. Nikonov ("Aleksei Kruchenykh/ Iz pervykh narechennykh/ K novomu priobshchennykh!") and signed: "Vasilisk Gnedov/1913–1964, S. Peterburg-/Moskva".

ed. khr. 319. Inscription beneath a portrait of Kruchenykh by A. I. Paukov.

ed. khr. 1081. Letter from Gnedov to Kruchenykh dated 23.5.64, in which Gnedov requests Kruchenykh to give Parnis help with research.

Fond 2823, Smirenskii, op. 1:


ed. khr. 35. Four items (1961–1966) from Gnedov to Smirenskii. 1) Letter in which Gnedov details his acquaintance with Severianin. Gnedov writes that he has nothing by Severianin nor anything of his own ("tak kak u menia net bol'she pechatnogo/na mashinke/ekzempiara, posylaiu napisanoe ot ruki [i.e. item 2:
the *spravka*. Pravda koe-chto v spravke upushcheno, no v osnovnom pochti vse za tot period imeetsia"); 2) *Spravka* copied-out from the notes of Khlebnikov’s *Neizdannye proizvedeniia*; 3) Letter enclosing an article in Ukrainian for Smireskii. Gnedov indicates that he knows Ukrainian and can translate the piece; and 4) Letter mentioning that Gnedov will be in Kherson, not Kiev, from 21.8. (year indecipherable).

**Fond 125, Grinevskaia, op.1:**

ed. khr. 149. Calling card to the writer Izabella Grinevskaia from Ignat’ev and Gnedov, written by Ignat’ev (1913).

**Fond 562, Shklovskii:**

The following items are kept separately (not in RGALI) by Shklovskii’s daughter:

op. 1, ed. khr. 552. Letter dated 28.1.63 from Gnedov to Shklovskii.

op. 2, ed. khr. 394. Four letters dated 22.1.64–22.1.73 from Gnedov to Shklovskii.

**iii) Other archive materials**


Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, St Petersburg, fond 1047. Correspondence between Gnedov and V. Smireskii.
B. Futurist Editions of Gnedov’s Work

i) Books written or co-authored by Gnedov

Gostinets sentimentam, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai I.V. Ignat’eva, 1913, 4 pp.


ii) Individual poems and works

*‘Triolet’, Nizhegorodets, 15 (28) January 1913 [unknown page number].

‘Zigzag Priamoi Sred’mirnyi’ and ‘Gurebka proklenushkov’ [under the pseudonym Zhozefina Gant d’Orsail'], in Dary Adonisu. Editsiia Assotsiatsii Ego-Futuristov IV, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai I.V. Ignat’eva, 1913, pp. 1-5, 15.


'Slezhit riabidii trun'ga sno—', in Razvorochenye cherepa. Ego Futuristy IX, St Petersburg, Peterburgskii glashatai, 1913, p. 9.

'Eroshino', 'Sumerki na Donu', and 'Bros'te mne lapu skoree kogot' i vshei uviadan'e', in Rukonog, Moscow, Tsentrifuga, 1914, pp. 7-9.

'Glas o soglase i zloglase', in Gramoty i deklaratsii russkikh futuristov, St Petersburg, Svirel'ga, 1914 [published in the form of a scroll].

'Roiut vam mogilu bogi', in Vremennik 4-yi: Aseev, Gnedov, Petnikov, Seleginskii, Khlebnikov, Moscow, 'Vasilisk i Ol'ga', 1918 [single page publication].

'Vystupaiut zhavoronki ladno', Gazeta futuristov, 15 March 1918, p. 2.


iii) Settings of Gnedov's Work to Music


C. Recent Editions of Gnedov's Work

i) First publication of individual later poems


ii) Collections


iii) Republications of individual works


iv) Translations


D. Other Primary Sources

i) Contemporary Egofuturist and Cubofuturist writings

Bei!..—no vyslushai!. VI al’manakh Ego-Futuristov, St Petersburg, 1913.

Dary Adonisu. Editsiia Assotsiatsii Ego-Futuristov IV, St Petersburg, 1913.

—, Egofuturizm, St Petersburg, 1913.
—, Eshafot. Ego-Futury, St Petersburg, 1914.

Kriuchkov, D., Padun nemolchnyi, St Petersburg, 1913.
   —, *Vzorval’*, Moscow, 1913 [Reprint: Paris, La Hune, 1993].


*Nebokopy. Ego-Futuristy VIII*, St Petersburg, 1913.

   —, *Tret’e Rozhdestvo Velikogo Mirovogo Poeta Titanizma Sotsial’noi Revoliutsii Konstantina Olimpova*, Petrograd, 1922.

*Oranzhevaia urna. Al’manakh pamiati Fofanova*, St Petersburg, 1912.

*Orly nad propast’iu. Predzimniia al’manakh*, St Petersburg, 1912.

*Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu*, Moscow, 1912.

*Razvorochenye cherepa. Ego Futuristy IX*, St Petersburg, 1913.

*Rukonog. Sbornik stikhov i kritiki*, Moscow, 1914.


*Steklianyia tseli. Al’manakh ego-futuristov*, St Petersburg, 1912.

*Vsegdai. Ego-futuristy VII*, St Petersburg, 1913.

*Vtoroi sbornik Tsentrifugu*, Moscow, 1916.
Zasakhare Kry. Ego-Futuristy V, St Petersburg, 1913.

ii) Collections, editions of Futurist and other poets

Aigi, G., Teper' vsegda snega. Stikhi raznykh let, Moscow, 1992.

An Anthology of Concrete Poetry, ed. E. Williams, New York, 1967.


—, Stikhovotvorenia i poemy, intro., text prep., and notes N. Stepanov, Moscow, 1966.


Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov, foreword V. Markov, Munich, 1967.


Severianin, I., Sochineniia v piati tomakh, comp. V. Koshelev and V. Sapogov, St Petersburg, 1995.


2. SECONDARY SOURCES


*Benua, A., [unknown title], Rech', 12 April 1913.


Doroshkevich, Ol., *Pidruchnik istorii ukraïns'koï literaturi*, Kiev, 1927.


Gorodetskii, S., ‘Puchina stikhovaia’, *Rech*, 18 February (3 March) 1913, p. 3.
Grammatika russkogo iazyka, ed. V. Vinogradov et al., 3 vols., Moscow, 1960.


Grigor'ev, V., Grammatika idiostilia: V. Khlebnikov, Moscow, 1983.


Khardzhiev, N. and V. Trenin, Poeticheskaia kul’tura Maiakovskogo, Moscow, 1970.


Krusanov, A., Russkii avangard: 1907-1932 (Istoricheskii obzor), 1, St Petersburg, 1996.


*Levin, D., [unknown title], Rech’, 11 April 1913.


—, ‘Mozhno li poluchat’ udovol’stvie ot plokhikh stikhov, ili O russkom ‘Chuchele sovy’’, in his *O svobode v poezii*, pp. 278-291.


—, ‘Slovo - lishnee kak takovoe’, *Urbi*, internet site:
http://www.inforis.nnov.su/n-nov/culture/art/urbi/nikonova.html


Oinas, F., ‘*Golubec* and Some Notions of the Soul’, *Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology*, Columbus, Ohio, 1985, pp. 77-86.


Piast, V., Vstrechi, Moscow, 1929.


Radin, E., Futurizm i bezumie, Moscow, 1913.

*Renskii, ‘Skrizhali Ego-Poezii’, Khmel': ezhemesiachnyi literaturno-obshchestvennyi i kriticheskii zhurnal molodezhi, 4-6 (1913), p. 31.


Shershenevich, V., Futurizm bez maski, Moscow, 1914.


—, Tret'ia fabrika, Moscow, 1926.
—, Poiski optimizma, Moscow, 1931.
—, 'O zaumnom iazyke. 70 let spustia', in Russkii literaturnyi avangard, pp. 253-59.


*Slovar’ russkikh donskikh govorov*, comp. Z. Valiusinskaia et al., I-III, Rostov-on-Don, 1975-76.


*Slovar’ sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, ed. V. Chernyshev et al., 1-17, Moscow, 1948-64.


Tasteven, G., Futurizm. Na puti k novomu simvolizmu, Moscow, 1914.


Townsend, C., Russian Word-Formation, Columbus, 1980.


Vengerov, S., Kritiko-biograficheskii slovar’ russkikh pisatelei i uchenykh, 1, Petrograd, 1915.


Vroon, R., Velimir Xlebnikov’s Shorter Poems: A Key to the Coinages, Ann Arbor, 1983.


