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IMAGES OF THE NOVEL *PETERSBURG* THROUGH THE PRISM OF ANDREI BELY'S ESOTERIC SEARCH

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Abstract. Andrei Bely's texts blur the boundaries of traditional genres, which raises the problem of genre uncertainty and text integrity. For that purpose, the article analyses the figurative language of the novel *Petersburg*, the most significant work that accumulates the stylistic and ideological features of Bely's entire oeuvre. Using the methods of semantic and figurative analysis, the authors address Bely's *Petersburg* to identify the factors of textual integrity. As the analysis has shown, the coherence is achieved through esoteric, namely, Masonic symbolism, which dominates the figurative language of the novel. Various esoteric symbols are found on all language levels: from phonetic to the level of text. There are characters in the novel that epitomize individual symbols and realia. The authors emphasize the constitutive role of the duplicated esoteric images and symbols that create multiple inline rhymes. In conclusion, the authors note that, together with traditional (characters and realia), the novel contains esoteric images, various direct and indirect esoteric terms and symbols, which Bely either records in the original form or superimposes on or combines with the former ones in the narrative. The genre blurring of Bely's texts is compensated by the language coherence aligned with the esoteric tradition. When creating literary texts, Bely does not confine himself to the artistic way of knowing and describing the world, but equally uses scientific, religious, and everyday methods of cognition. He creates a synthetic writing, previously found in the esoteric tradition, where it did not go beyond its cognitive tasks. Bely uses synthetic writing with broader functions. This type of writing may be considered as reflecting Bely's constant polemic with his father, who was an adherent of a strictly scientific method of world cognition.

Keywords: anthroposophy, freemasonry, imagery, esoteric symbols, blurred genre boundaries, "father-son" polemic

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ОБРАЗЫ РОМАНА «ПЕТЕРБУРГ» СКВОЗЬ ПРИЗМУ ЭЗОТЕРИЧЕСКИХ ИСКАНИЙ АНДРЕЯ БЕЛОГО

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Аннотация. Предметом анализа является образный строй романа А. Белого «Петербург». Статья направлена на раскрытие причин, определяющих единство текста, несмотря на наличие в нем черт различных жанров. Анализ образной структуры романа позволяет констатировать, что оно обеспечивается наличием эзотерической, в частности, масонской символики. Эзотерические символы воплощаются в романе при помощи единиц всех языковых уровней. Дублирование одних и тех же эзотерических образов указывает на их конституирующую роль.

Ключевые слова: антропософия, масонство, образный строй, эзотерические символы, стирание границ, полемика «отец–сын»

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A. Bely's legacy is diverse in terms of genre: it includes analytical, poetic, prose, memoir texts, the boundaries between which are often very blurred. As a result, analytical texts acquire the features of fiction, and fictional ones bear the imprints of analytics, in the memoirs there is a high degree of arbitrary and deliberate fantasy, and in the novels there are a lot

of autobiographical features. In this respect, the novel *Petersburg* can be perceived as the quintessence of the descriptive method, which includes all the features inherent in the work of A. Bely as a whole. The novel is equally a sophisticated artistic description, scientific study and biographical notes. A high degree of blurring raises a lot of questions for readers and researchers. Two of them, in our opinion, the most significant can be formulated as follows. What in the ideological or worldview terms determines this blurring, what determines its possibility in the author's perception of the world? What, with this level of blurring, allows maintaining the unity of the texts? The authors of the article are aware that there can be many answers to these questions, depending on the starting point of view. At the same time, they want to propose and substantiate such a type of interpretation of the text in which its integrity is perceived as a set of direct and indirect characteristics of artistic images in the traditional sense of the word. An approximation to this approach is present in many works devoted to the novel *Petersburg*. The article gives an idea of their diversity, grouping them according to thematic principle, where each separate topic fixes a certain point of application of research interest.

The reflection in A. Bely's work of his passion for anthroposophy, which is a universally known fact of his biography, became the basis for a series of conclusions and observations. G.A. Katsyuba notes that the novel is built in accordance with the anthroposophical model of dreams developed by R. Steiner, who considered dreams to be the spiritual practice of "initiates". In support of her words, the author cites a number of examples from *Petersburg*, including the interpretation of Apollon Apollonovich's dream, in which he threw off the sense of corporeality and felt cosmic dispersion [1. P. 139]. Out-of-body experiences of consciousness, described in the novel, refer to states that arise during extreme mental stress: with prolonged insomnia, alcohol intoxication, illness, vicinity of pyramids. They are also achieved with the help of anthroposophic psychotechnics [2. P. 139]. E.N. Korobkina [3. P. 110] writes that, in Bely's view, *Petersburg* is an infernal city created by an infernal demiurge. On its streets, faceless shadows become people, passers-by turn into shadows. These images of the consciousness and body of the heroes, as well as those of space and time in the novel are constituted on the basis of the anthroposophical principle of transgression, going beyond the boundaries of the world and the phenomena that exist in it [4. P. 117].

Anthroposophy as a system of coordination with the world arose on the basis of Masonic ideas and practices, among which the leading place is occupied by mystical Freemasonry – Rosicrucianism. L. Szilard notes that Andrei Bely was a Rosicrucian, despite the fact that in his printed works related to his own activities, there are more indications of anthroposophy than of Rosicrucianism [5. P. 204]. She explains that the Rosicrucian code of conduct does not recommend vain mentions of the Order, although Bely made his orientation known, allowing himself to combine Rosicrucian symbolism with Masonic in the preface to “Funerary Urn”. According to A.I. Serkov’s personal site “Russian Freemasonry” (<http://www.samisdat.com/5/23/523r-luc.htm>), A. Bely together with Vyach. Ivanov, V. Bryusov, and A. Petrovsky entered the lodge “Lucifer”, opened by the Rosicrucian chapter of Astrea, but soon closed for contact with anthroposophists. It should be noted that Steiner himself was a Freemason who revived the “royal art” of Freemasonry from 1906 to 1914 through his ritual work known as *Mystica Aeterna*. Theodore Reuss commissioned him to lead the lodge in the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, which is part of the Order of the Eastern Star [6. P. 100]. Even the celebration of Steiner’s death in 1925 under the direction of Marie Steiner was completely Masonic in nature.

The traditions of the Rosicrucians in Russian culture are inextricably linked with St. Petersburg, not just as a place of their gatherings, but as a certain type of locus that includes a mandatory mystical component. According to M. Banjanin [7. P. 103], the title of the novel itself indicates that the place is the central idea of the novel, and Petersburg is its main character. Specific details of the city, mixing with dreams and phantoms, are imprinted on the author’s lyrical self, who then modifies them into images. Bely’s Petersburg can be viewed as a part of a cerebral game that creates a conditional city conceived as a poet’s vision. O.A. Kling [8. P. 137] considers A. Bely’s Petersburg an encyclopedia of simulation of St. Petersburg life in literature. He argues that Bely consciously repeats the experience of Pushkin and Gogol, sharing the commonality of their views on the theme “Moscow and St. Petersburg”, and suggests that these three writers can be called “great melancholic personalities”. H.K.M. Draisavi [9. P. 404] suggests that with his novel, Bely “answered” the “Bronze Horseman” by A.S. Pushkin. The city is ambivalent: it is a geometric area during the day and a devilish beginning at night. The center of St. Petersburg carries destructive

principles; its island parts are represented lifeless. Bely treats the city as a person with its own character and mood, calling its name one hundred and sixty-eight times in the novel.

Specific people and characters act in the mystical space of Petersburg. N.A. Drovaleva [10. P. 84] draws attention to Bely's depiction of his heroes' appearance, which seems to her dispersed and undeveloped with a missing characterological function. The writer tries not to link the internal processes taking place in his characters with changes in their external characteristics; do not highlight certain parts of the body or face. On the other hand, he goes into details if he mixes the features of the appearance of a person and the environment or portrait details and objects. It should be noted that O.G. Tverdokhlebov [11. P. 193], examining the creative heritage of Bely, finds there a significant proportion of somatisms, which are rhymes in the poet's poems. Among them, the dominants are the names of parts of the human body and organs such as hand, chest, head, eye, face, leg. The scientist concludes that the quotation coincidence of lines between the verses created by the poet through different times strengthens the internal connections between them, turning separate fragments into a single poetic text.

Among the characters acting in the mystical space of Petersburg, a special place is occupied by the pair "father – son", which concentrates the multifaceted nature of the tragic conflict. N. Giansiracusa and A. Vasilyeva [12] focus their attention on frequent and sophisticated mathematical passages in the novel. They explain their presence by the fact that the author's father, an influential mathematician of his time, became the prototype of Apollon Apollonovich in his son's novel. In particular, the most significant symbol of Petersburg is an expanding and exploding sphere. As mystical as it may sound, this symbol can be mathematically interpreted by means of the Banach-Tarski theorem, proved 10 years after the publication of the novel. J. Janicki [13] looks at Bely's complex father-son relationship from three perspectives. The first is the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy, expressed in the rigid rationalistic behavior of the father and in the obsessive thoughts of his son about parricide. The second is the narcissistic phase associated with a primitive, child's understanding of the universe and early libidinal development of Nikolai Apollonovich. The third is Alexander Dudkin who acts as an alter-ego of Nikolai and who murders his spiritual father. The scientist

claims that in characterizing the rivalry between father and son, Bely relied on facts from his own biography.

The special locus of the unfolding tragedy associated with mystical experiences dictates a specific set of linguistic means of embodying the conflict and ways of resolving it. M. Levina-Parker and M. Levin [14. P. 68] note in Petersburg the distortion of the image and the violation of the connection as a general artistic principle, according to which Bely builds his phrases and assembles the novel. They distinguish such similar stylistic and compositional techniques as lexical and motivational repetition, cutting off phrases and themes; unnecessary words and digressions; dissonances of a phrase and contradictions between parts of the text; inversion of words in a sentence and changed story order. Nevertheless, the researchers conclude that in general, compositional technologies are an autonomous aspect of the work. N.A. Kozhevnikova [15. P. 45] finds that the rhythm of the novel is close to the rhythm of poetry, which is achieved by using such syntactic factors as the repetition of large verbal blocks that encircle phrases in rings. Another way to create rhythm is in smaller rhythmic units, based on a combination of three-syllable and two-syllable metres. In addition, in Petersburg the author uses elliptical constructions to convey the inner speech of the characters and the author's speech, but the colloquiality of these constructions is weakened by a specific rhythm. The research of E.V. Fedorova [16. P. 25] is connected with the analysis of the visual features of the novel, the aggregate of which creates a hierarchy of parts of the text, namely, punctuation marks, text shifts to the right, the graphic equivalent of the text, empty space, font printing. They are a non-verbal way of conveying information that helps not only to reveal and emphasize hidden meanings, but also to avoid verbosity that breaks the rhythm of prose.

All of these studies contain a lot of interesting and correct observations and conclusions, but they do not give a general picture of the specificity of the figurative structure of the novel, which is based on the esoteric tradition, carried out in various ways.

Fixing in artistic form the subject matter of usual conversations in Russian secular living rooms on the eve of the 1905 revolution, A. Bely repeatedly draws attention to the fact that the mention of Freemasonry was one of the persistent themes. Although it was considered from various angles, the main thing was a discussion of the destructive or construc-

tive influence of the order's activities on the socio-political structure of Russia. The very mentions of Freemasonry, focused on political essays contemporary to the depicted time, act as characteristics of the speakers. "Meanwhile was heard: // "Do you understand, madam, the activity of Jew-Masonry? // The professor could hear it no longer. Turning to the hostess, he observed: "Allow me, madam, to interject a modest scientific remark. The source of such 'information' is clear: the pogrom mentality!" [17. P. 110]. "Fat chance! They want to sacrifice us to the devil. // "What?" asked the hostess in surprise. // "You are surprised because you've read nothing." // "Excuse me, please", interjected the professor, "you are relying on the 'fabrications of Taxil.'" // "Taxil?" interrupted the hostess, who fished out her notebook and began writing it down: "Taxil?" // "They are preparing to sacrifice us. The higher degrees of Masonry have been converted to Palladism. This cult..." // "Palladism?" interrupted the hostess. Once again she began writing it down in her notebook. "Pa-lla-... How do you spell it?" // Taxil fabricated a scurrilous fiction about the Masons and people believed it. But later Taxil admitted that his statement to the Pope had only been a way of mocking the obscurantism of the Vatican, and for this he was excommunicated" [17. P. 117–118].

Three characters take part in these dialogues: the editor of a conservative newspaper, a liberal professor of statistics, and the mistress of the house. The first demonstrates a negative attitude towards Freemasonry, emphasizing its allegedly infernal nature and exploiting the myth of the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy. The second disagrees with it, appealing to exact knowledge. The third does not actually have an attitude; she is out of the context of the problem. Thus, the presence of negative, positive and neutral assessments becomes one of the means of characterizing characters. At the same time, it is important that the source of a negative assessment is emotional perception based on journalistic myths, and the source of a positive one is a nominally accurate scientific method. Moreover, the produced assessments clearly show the generalized-typical features of the perception of the object by various social groups in Russia. It is emphasized by the fact that the characters are not mentioned under their own names, although, say, the professor has prototypical features of a real historical person – the famous freemason M.M. Kovalevsky. Episodic assessments in speech become markers of the types of object perception. The dialogues are a direct artistic projection of the fact that conservatives

and nationalists perceive Freemasonry negatively, while the liberal intelligentsia takes it positively. The townsfolk watch their dispute with that measure of interest, which is assumed by the need to observe secular decency. Along the way, they fall under the influence of one or the other, not realizing the subject of the dispute and not having the possibilities, abilities and information in order to penetrate into its essence and reasonably formulate their own view or join any of the existing ones.

In this case, the author clearly demonstrates a picture of the perception of Freemasonry by Russian society at the beginning of the 20th century. To identify the author's assessment of the object, it seems important to take into account several factors.

The first is connected with the fact that the author steadily associates himself with Nikolai Apollonovich, and the latter is constantly represented as a red domino. So, the red domino is not only present, but also evaluated in the same episode where palladism is mentioned: "Apollon Apollonovich tried to hide the signs of his heart trouble. Today's bout had been brought on by the appearance of the red domino. The color red was emblematic of the chaos that was leading Russia to its doom" [17. P. 116]. The unification of a red domino (Nikolai Apollonovich) and Freemasonry is carried out through the use of words from the same thematic field, different ways of naming one character and contextual proximity. In addition, the pattern of the domino costume duplicates the chequered color of the floor traditionally adopted in Masonic lodges, which has a certain symbolic meaning: the alternation of white and black squares symbolizes the alternation of positive and negative incidents and conditions in life.

The second factor is the way in which Nikolai Apollonovich formulates his feelings from direct contact with "a sardine tin with horrible contents", that is, with a makeshift bomb or materialized death: "As if a bandage had fallen off all sensations. You know, something began stirring above my head. <...> But I've just told you: the bandage fell off all sensations" [17. P. 188]. The formula the bandage fell off all sensations directly refers to Pushkin's "Prophet", duplicates its final semantics, which is emphasized by the abundance of Pushkin's quotes in the text. Then through the "Prophet" this formula refers to the act of initiation as one of the main semantic planes of the text of the poem. In this case, intertextual link plays the following role. The author reproduces the semantic complex 'the character considers the bomb and perceives it as death, the contact with the bomb is perceived

by him as the contact with death'. At the same time, to represent this complex, he uses a text that is consistently associated with the Masonic tradition. In its turn, this text actualizes the initiation process, which also includes a symbolic death, similar in terms of fictitiousness to the one with which the character contacts. Indirect reference demonstrates that the idea of Masonic initiation is relevant for the character and for the author, since it is a source of artistically reliable associative links.

The formula the bandage fell off all sensations in terms of attributing it to one or another type of linguistic unit is also of interest. It is at the same time: 1. An expanded metaphor, including a Masonic symbol a bandage and designed after the model of a widely used metaphor all the senses (nerves) were exposed. Two of them have the same component of the meaning 'a very high degree of susceptibility to external stimuli caused by various reasons'. 2. A meaningful quote from Pushkin's "Prophet" or an element of intertext. 3. A symbol, since its adequate interpretation involves the use of at least three codes: linguistic, associated with the reading of the metaphor, cultural and linguistic, associated with perception in the context of Pushkin's lines, and historical, associated with knowledge of the process of Masonic initiation.

It should be emphasized that A. Bely, who throughout his life did not lose interest in comprehending the symbol as an epistemological, cognitive, phenomenological, aesthetic category, includes in the novel a dialogue commenting on Nikolai Apollonovich's perception of "a sardine tin with horrible contents", that is, metalanguage reflections about (including) the analyzed formula: "That is, symbolic sensations of a kind that do not correspond to the sensation produced by a stimulus." // "Well, so that? To say this is to say nothing at all!" // "Yes, you are right." // "No, it won't do." // "Of course, a modernist would call it the sensation of the abyss, and he would search for the image that corresponds to the symbolic sensation." // "But that is allegory." // Don't confuse allegory with symbol. Allegory is a symbol that has become common currency. For example, the usual understanding of your 'beside yourself.' A symbol is your act of appealing to what you experienced there, over the tin. A more appropriate term would be the term: pulsation of the elemental body. That's precisely the way you experienced yourself" [17. P. 191].

Thus, the perception of the formula as a symbol contains the text itself, which emphasizes the dynamism and individuality of the symbolic

nature of sensation. It is appropriate to perceive it not only as a way of emphasizing attention, and as a metalanguage author's comment – a hint to the reader. The commentary in the light of the problems under consideration is all the more important because it touches upon the methods of verbal fixation of the psychological process associated with the semantic component “contact with death”, which is of paramount importance both for the initiation and for the narrative outline of the novel. There is a double emphasis here: one for the intra-textual reality and the other for the extra-textual reality, which find themselves in a relationship of close interaction. The threefold attribution of the formula the bandage fell off all sensations shows how its aggregate semantics is formed: the general linguistic component is based on the presence of metaphorical transfer and synonymous formulas, the aesthetic component is based on the links with Pushkin and the measure of originality of the chosen combination, and the esoteric component is based on the connection with initiation. In this case, the Masonic symbol passes into a certain new quality in the sense that the receiver perceives not just a detailed or peripheral description of a certain Masonic symbol, which is well known to the linguistic tradition. In fact, this is a new Masonic symbol, initially not represented in the Masonic tradition as an independent unit, fixed by a combination of words and receiving, at the same time, an essential part of its semantics due to its connection with the tradition.

The third factor indicating the interaction of Nikolai Apollonovich and Freemasonry, the contextual combination of references to him and the Masonic symbol of the pyramid, is repeatedly explicated in the novel: “The oppressing confluence of circumstances, or: the pyramid of events. // it, the pyramid, is the delirium of geometry, a delirium which nothing can measure/ It is a satellite of the planet, yellow and dead like the moon. // Or – delirium that can be measured in digits” [17. P. 236]; “And he has leaned, deep in thought, against the dead side of a pyramid. He is himself a pyramid, the summit of a culture which will crash into ruins” [17. P. 307]. For the descriptive nomination of the character, the Masonic symbol of the pyramid is placed in a context characteristic of A. Bely, which involves several readings at the same time. It is difficult to answer the question: what exactly will crash into ruins – Nikolai Apollonovich, the pyramid, the culture, or all together?

The fourth factor of this type is Nikolai Apollonovich's anthropocentric view of the world around him: “Here, in his own room, Nikolai Apol-

lonovich would truly grow into a self-contained centre, into a series of logical premises that flowed from the center and predetermined thought, soul, and this very table. Here he was the sole center of the universe, conceivable as well as inconceivable" [17. P. 29–30]; "Not so very long ago he had been the sole center of the universe here. But ten days had gone by, and his self-awareness was now getting disgracefully stuck in the heaped-up pile of objects" [17. P. 286].

The linguistic means used by the author when creating the image of Nikolai Apollonovich, in their totality, indicate that the character reveals an indirect, mediated, but at the same time stable and significant connection with Freemasonry. Without using direct nominations, the author constructs such an associative field around the character that indicates his interaction with the Masonic tradition. A similar situation is observed in relation to Apollon Apollonovich: there are also no direct indications, but the general descriptive context and the totality of the character's identification means create an associative field connected with Freemasonry. Both Masonic symbols and the mention of the constants of Masons' worldview are involved in the creation of this field.

The following of the steadily reproducible characteristics of Apollon Apollonovich draw reader's attention: his attraction to squares and cubes, the anthropocentric nature of his worldview, the likeness of a face with an Adam's head, and the use of the Masonic gesture.

The attraction to squares and cubes – symbols of perfection, manifests itself in the fixation of the character's personal predisposition to these geometric figures, and in the fact that the character is constantly spatially combined with them in descriptions. The nominations of squares and cubes accompany references to the character throughout the novel, creating a type of close contextual interaction in which the character is no longer imagined without these symbols. The episode "Squares, parallelepipeds, cubes" of the 1st chapter is indicative in this respect, where the cube is named 8 times to describe the senator's journey in a carriage and his reflections. This episode becomes a tuning fork for subsequent descriptions: "In the middle of the desk was a textbook entitled Planimetry. Before going to bed, Apollon Apollonovich very often used to leaf through this little volume, so as to quiet the restless life inside his head with the most blissful outlines of parallelepipeds, parallelograms, cones, and cubes" [17. P. 168]; "With unconcealed pleasure Apollon Apollonovich was slumped

against the walls of the carriage, cut off inside the closed-in cube” [17. P. 288]. Compatibility with cubes is a projection of the senator’s desire for perfection, understood within the framework of the Masonic value system.

It is characteristic that the pyramid representing Nikolai Apollonovich is also represented among the figures that appear in the mind’s eye of Apollon Apollonovich: “<...> would unexpectedly and suddenly form into a distinct picture: of a cross, a polyhedron, a swan, a light-filled pyramid” [17. P. 97–98]. Coordination with more or fewer geometrical figures reflects bigger or smaller versatility of the characters. In this respect, the figure of the senator seems to be more universal.

Apollon Apollonovich has the same anthropocentric nature of the worldview as Nikolai Apollonovich, which is of an all-encompassing hypertrophied character, marked by the fact that the individual “I” is considered as a demiurge who constructs the space with objects filling it. This is fixed with the help of contexts in which the attribute of the senator’s brain activity becomes the ability to create and structure the world around him. The senator himself is compared with a deity, as indicated by his name: “<...> never have cast off a single idle thought, but should have continued to carry each and every thought in his head, for every thought stubbornly evolved into a spatiotemporal image, and continued its uncontrolled activities outside the senatorial head. Apollon Apollonovich was like Zeus: out of his head flowed goddesses and genii” [17. P. 21–22]; “Here, in the office of a high Government Institution, Apollon Apollonovich would grow into a kind of center of governmental institutions and green-topped tables. Here he was a point of radiating energy, a grid, an impulse. He was a force in the Newtonian sense, and a force in the Newtonian sense is an occult force” [17. P. 34]; “Thus the old senator, just before falling asleep, would get the impression that he was looking not with his eyes but with the center of his very head, i.e., he, Apollon Apollonovich, was not Apollon Apollonovich, but something lodged in the brain, looking out of there, from the brain, with the opening up of the sinciput, something could run along the corridor until it plunged into the abyss” [17. P. 98].

Fixations of the anthropocentric nature of the worldview in the text of the novel are given from two simultaneous points of view: the point of view of Apollon Apollonovich and the author. That is, these fixations correspond simultaneously to two propositional attitudes: “Apollon Apol-

lonovich is sure that this is actually the case” and “the author is sure that this is actually the case”. A. Bely’s hobby for anthroposophy explains this situation and at the same time makes it possible in this case, as in most other cases, to characterize the author of the text as a person in solidarity with the peculiarities of the Masonic worldview. It should be noted that solidarity with a certain aspect of the Masonic doctrine does not at all mean a complete identification of the author and the character. Bely has much more complex types of coordination with Apollon Apollonovich, as well as with Nikolai Apollonovich, but he turns out to be united with both in what characterizes their relationship with Freemasonry. The associative field “Freemasonry” turns out to be the narrative complex that establishes the relationship of mutually intersecting unity between one implicit object of the narrative (the author) and two explicit ones (the senator and his son). Two imaginary personalities and one real person appear in the novel as carriers of an anthropocentric worldview. At the same time, the real person – the author – also in practice proves the legitimacy and viability of this worldview by the act of creating a certain artistic reality at his own discretion. Thus, the text of the novel becomes not only a demonstration of the existence of a gaze in relation to its various carriers, but also its formal proof.

The anthropocentric view within the artistic space acquires the status of an indisputable truth, as indisputable as the fact of death. In this respect, it is deeply symptomatic that the pages of the novel, like the Masonic page as a whole, are filled with constant reminders of death. One of the main Masonic maxims: “Remember death” is fixed using the symbol of Adam’s head, which is transmitted in various ways in the novel. One of the characters in the novel becomes the personification of this symbol. The accentuated likeness of Apollon Apollonovich’s head to the Adam’s (dead) head steadily accompanies the descriptive contexts throughout the narrative: “His lightning-bolt thoughts would fly from his bald head in every direction like snakes; a clairvoyant would doubtless have seen the head of the Gorgon-Medusa” [17. P. 34]; “one such star kept drenching the senator with golden boiling water, and shiver ran over his skull” [17. P. 98]; “<...> and again ran up to the mirror (at that moment chimes rang out). Death in a frock coat looked out of the mirror; and the mirror cracked” [17. P. 164].

In these cases, A. Bely implements the principle of visual similarity between the Masonic symbol and the object of description, which has al-

ready been used in relation to this particular Masonic symbol with a slightly different target by L.N. Tolstoy. It is worth noting that the text also contains direct references to Adam's head: "A death's head raised itself up out of the Nota Benes, the question marks, the section-markers, the check-marks" [17. P. 251]. It is present on Nikolai Apollonovich's visiting card, once again emphasizing his Masonic connection with his father: "Sofia Petrovna scrutinized the calling card on which was engraved a skull and crossbones, not a nobleman's coronet" [17. P. 48–49]. It flashes among the carnival masks: "The points of their cowls flew up and down: embroidered on each was a skull and crossbones" [17. P. 114]. These cases, as well as the cases with the cube and the pyramid, demonstrate that the author does not limit the use of the Masonic symbol to one semantic complex; they turn out to be functional for the entire narrative as a whole.

The two main characters in the novel (Nikolai Apollonovich and Apollon Apollonovich) turn out to be figures closely associated with Freemasonry at the level of their psychological characteristics. The conflict between them can be read as having a distinct Masonic reflection or as a reflex of Masonic history. Parallels with the beginning of the 19th century indicate the reciprocity of the narrative, which becomes all the more obvious when the author introduces in the 7th chapter the episode "A Reptile", referring to the murder of Paul I. Let us recall that Paul I was a freemason and was killed by conspirators, most of whom were freemasons. The participation of Nikolai Apollonovich in the preparation of a failed terrorist act against his own father correlates with the participation of the future Emperor Alexander I in a conspiracy against his father Paul I. Within the narrative space, there is not only a close relationship between these two events, but also a relationship of similarity, which suggests that one event can clarify or to reveal the nature of the author's view of both of them. The assassination attempt of the senator within the artistic space and the assassination of Paul I within the historical space reveal a number of typological features. Both incidents are in the associative field of Freemasonry and are connected with it. In the first case, it is constructed by linguistic visual material, in the second case it is done by historical facts. In both cases, we are talking about indirect (or psychological) parricide, understood as a moral betrayal of one's own father, the absence of active actions to save him. In both cases, the actions of the conspirators are politically motivated. In both cases, the action takes place in

St. Petersburg. These features, taken together, make it possible to identify a historically retrospective plane of the novel's narration, containing (among other things) an indirect assessment of the events associated with the death of Paul I, that is, with one of the episodes in the history of Freemasonry in Russia. Taking into account the noted parallel, the murder of the emperor is perceived by A. Bely as a tragic accident. In the case of the senator, the interaction of random factors simultaneously brought closer (Apollon Apollonovich took the bomb) and averted the tragedy, in the case of the emperor the second did not happen.

The context of the main characters' everyday and social existence is recorded with the help of concepts that are relevant for Masons as well. The episode "Watermelon is a vegetable ..." from Chapter 8 contains a threefold repetition, once again actualizing the semantics of the chess-board drawing – the floor of the Masonic lodge: "Apollon Apollonovich strolled across the little squares of floor here, and with him was Nikolai Apollonovich. They kept stepping out of shadow – into the lacework of light cast by the street lamp; they kept stepping out of this bright lacework – into shadow" [17. P. 299]; "They walked back across the echoing little squares of parquet floor. They kept stepping out of shadow into the glittering wedges of moonlight" [17. P. 299]; "They kept stepping out of shadow into the lacework of light cast by the street lamp. They were stepping out of this bright lacework – into shadow" [17. P. 300]. The same semantics are duplicated in the Epilogue: "<...> only the glittering wedges of moonlight and the little squares of parquet floor. Nikolai Apollonovich <...> kept stepping out of shadow – into the lacework of light cast by the street lamp. He kept stepping out of this bright lacework – into shadow" [Ibid. P. 306]. Of course, this and similar contexts cannot be read directly as 'the characters were strolling through the living room, which was in fact a Masonic lodge' or 'the entire surrounding space, including private homes, is only a manifestation of a single Masonic lodge'. They are direct signals that nominations related to Freemasonry are being used as pictorial means through the double actualization of semantics. In these cases, an object not related to Freemasonry is called a Masonic symbol based on visual similarity (squares) and the use of characteristics that are part of the semantics of the Masonic symbol (light - shadow).

Similarly, with the help of the Masonic symbol, the perception of the broader context is fixed. Noteworthy in this respect is the repetition with

some significant variations of the whole narrative segment contained in the episodes “Squares, parallelepipeds, cubes” of the 1st chapter and “The lackeys were surprised” of the 8th chapter: “<...> so that the entire spherical surface of the planet should be embraced, as in serpent coils, by blackish gray cubes of houses; so that all the earth, crushed by prospects, in its lineal cosmic flight should intersect, with its rectilineal principle, unembraceable infinity; so that the network of parallel prospects, intersected by a network of parallel prospects, should expand into the abysses of the universe in planes of squares and cubes: one square per ‘solid citizen’” [17. P. 11–12]; “<...> the entire spherical surface of the planet seemed embraced, as in serpent coils, by blackish gray cubes of houses. And the network of parallel prospects, intersected by a network of parallel prospects, expanded into the abysses of the universe, in surfaces of squares and cubes: one square per ‘solid citizen’” [17. P. 287]. The repetition forms a compositional ring that closes the narrative in a space for which the symbols of the square and the cube are of paramount importance both in the visual and in the content plane. In such descriptions, as in many similar ones, one can see both the projection of Apollon Apollonovich’s gaze and the projection of a certain stage of A. Bely’s own worldview, that is, the author’s combination of his point of view with the character’s one.

The nominations of squares and cubes, consistently used by the author for the characteristics of Apollon Apollonovich, Nikolai Apollonovich, and the context of the characters’ existence are the projection of their views, the author’s position and combined points of view. They represent the Masonic symbol, the mosaic floor of the box and the cube stone in their initial meanings and assessment. These values and assessments are associated with the notions of completeness, orderliness, stability, static nature of certain parts of the microcosm under the influence of human creative activity. Their presence in the text of the work is actualized by the opposition of a cube and a deadly sphere or a sphere expanding from the explosion of a gas bomb, passing through the entire narrative structure. The cube (square) and the sphere (circle) are opposed as order and chaos, creative and destructive, harmony and disharmony, constructive and destructive: “Proportionality and symmetry soothed the senator’s nerves, which had been irritated both by the irregularity of his domestic life and by the futile rotation of our wheel of state” [17. P. 10]. It is important that the com-

ponents of semantics associated with a positive assessment are fixed using the Masonic symbol. This is undoubtedly connected with the occult hobbies of A. Bely during the period of writing the novel.

Thus, the main characters, the nature of the conflict between them, the description of the socio-political situation and the environment, that is, the main content complexes of the novel and the means used to explicate them, turn out to be closely related to Freemasonry. The novel is literally constructed from Masonic symbols, which, among other things, should be taken as evidence of the relevance of these means for the author and, given the high aesthetic merits of the novel, their significant aesthetic power.

In spite of the diversity of genres, A. Bely's legacy is characterized by linguistic unity. This unity is realized in various ways, including the constant presence of references to the esoteric tradition. These references are created in various ways, all language levels are used for their implementation: from phonetics to text inserts. Along with the images in the traditional sense, in relation to the text of the novel, one can talk about the images of esoteric constants that are present in the texts in various manifestations. In the introduction to the article, two questions were raised. What determines the blurring of genre attributions of various texts, what determines its possibility in the author's perception of the world? What, with this level of blur, allows maintaining the unity of the texts? The answer to these two different questions is the same. The esoteric tradition, which is often represented in the author's works, is realized in various ways and constitutes the linguistic, thematic and ideological plans of the novel, which causes blurring and helps to maintain the unity of texts. The esoteric tradition combines the paths of scientific, artistic, religious and everyday knowledge. Within its framework, they are not opposed, but combined both in the process and in the resulting sense. Accordingly, the text of the novel (like most other works by A. Bely) is the result of the implementation of not an exclusively artistic way of knowing reality, but all of the above. It should be remembered that Bely received his initial education in the family and at the university, where he always had before his eyes a model of strict scientific knowledge – his father. It seems that in the chosen method of describing reality, one can see another way of denying the father and opposing oneself to him.

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