The Explosive Nature and Apocalypse of the Russian Avant-Garde: Futurism vs. Bolshevism

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This article aims to examine the factors contributing to the "explosive" (in accordance with Juri Lotman"s theory) but the brief flourishing of the avant-garde in Russian culture. Furthermore, it seeks to demonstrate that the apocalyptic vision of old Russia encompassed not only societal transformation but also the demise of avant-garde poetics in post-revolutionary Russia. Paradoxically, while the early Soviet avant-garde presented itself as a revolutionary political and aesthetic movement, Bolsheviks maintained a dismissive attitude towards Futurists and the LEF group. In Literature and Revolution *Leon Trotsky asserted that futurism is no less a product of the poetic past. This disconnect suggests divergent interpretations of "revolution" and "revolutionary" between Bolsheviks and Futurists. Boris Groys emphasizes that the October Revolution was more traditional than avant-garde aesthetics, positioning the avant-garde as counter-revolutionary art.*

Keywords: Russian literature / October Revolution / post-revolutionary culture / avant-garde / futurism / Bolshevism / Lotman, Juri

Introduction

"The Russian people are a people of the end, and not of the intervening historical process, whereas humanistic culture does belong to the intervening historical process. … The unexpected is always to be expected from them," wrote the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev in his book *The Russian Idea* (*Russkaia ideia*) from 1946 (129, 1). He mentioned that Oswald Spengler was right to refer to Russia as an apocalyptic revolt against antiquity, against the perfect form and culture, and claimed that Russian people are directed "towards an end, … towards the other world, and the finality of things" (14). That can be seen in the painting *Terror Antiquus* (1908) by Russian painter Leon Bakst, who

depicts the destruction of an ancient city and its inhabitants, the end of Atlantis. But Bakst's painting is both concrete and abstract and can be interpreted as an expression of the apocalyptic nature of the modern age.

Figure 1: Leon Bakst, *Terror Antiquus* (1908).

It was the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917 that finally marked the end of the Russian imperial age, i.e., the destruction of everything that had gone before. As Andrei Sinyavsky explains in his book *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History* (*Osnovy sovetskoi tsivilizatsii*, 2002), the Bolshevik Revolution marked the end of history. Even though the Russian Revolution overturned centuries of devastating feudalism, Sinyavsky compares the peculiar nature of the revolution to the apocalypse—the old order had to be destroyed and a brave new world, a new civilization, a new man had to be born: "The revolution's watchword was 'everything anew'" (7). He also points out that violence was almost sanctified: "The orchestrators of this drama—leaders and hangmen—acquire the traits of high priests. … From here it is only a stone's throw to the deification of the revolutionary dictator who has seized supreme power and applies violence. The very idea of violence and power can imbue communism and the revolution with a sacred, even mystical aura" (7).

Shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, in the article "Spirits of the Russian Revolution" ("Dukhi russkoi revoliutsii," 1918), Berdyaev asserts the same: "A terrible catastrophe has happened with Russia. It has fallen into a dark abyss" (1). According to Berdyaev, Russian revolutionaries were extremely radical: "The Russian revolutionaries wanted a worldwide turnabout, in which would be burnt away all the old world with its evil and darkness with its sanctities and values, and upon the ash-heap would be substituted a new and graceful life for all the people and for all peoples. … The Russians however—are apocalyptic or nihilist, apocalyptic at the positive pole and nihilist at the negative polarity" (9, 6). In the works of many artists, the Bolshevik Revolution was compared to natural cataclysms, both among its opponents and advocates; in the poetry and prose created at that time, it was most often described as a flood, an earthquake, a strong wind, or fire, etc. In this article, I will try to explain (1) the apocalyptic discourse of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Russian avant-garde, which considered itself the leader of revolutionary literature and art, and (2) the apocalypse of the avant-garde that advocated, in the years after the Revolution, the death of old aesthetics.

According to Juri Lotman, "Russian culture realizes itself in the categories of explosion" (Lotman, *Culture* 173). What does that mean? It means that historical processes are unpredictable, and these unpredictable processes Lotman calls "explosions." In the book *Culture and Explosion* (*Kul'tura i vzryv*, 1992), he contrasts explosive and gradual processes in history. While predictability is the distinctive feature of gradual processes, the explosion represents an interruption to time, a suspension of time, a reduction, a "zero of time." I found that similar to Kazimir Malevich's "zero of form," his reduction to basic forms:

> I have transformed myself *in the zero of form* and have fished myself out of the *rubbishy slough of academic art*. I have destroyed the ring of the horizon and got out of the circle of objects, the horizon ring that has imprisoned the artist and the forms of nature. This accursed ring, by continually revealing novelty after novelty, leads the artist away from the *aim of destruction*. (Malevich 118)

At the base of the Bolshevik revolution, just like the Russian avant-garde, lies the idea of zero time and an obsession with the future. Sinyavsky pointed out that it was as if history had ended, and a new heaven and a new earth began. It was the apocalypse without God.

The explosion makes the impossible possible. In the space of the explosion emerges a "cluster of unpredictable possibilities" (Lotman, *Culture* 135). The fall of the tsarist empire in Russia can be seen as what

Lotman calls an "explosion." For Lotman, the explosion had the following connotations: restlessness, irreversibility, destruction. The explosion can be understood as a small apocalypse, which is why Lotman tried to metaphorically transfer it to cultural dynamics by identifying it with destruction. In accordance with Lotman's view, the binary model belongs to Russia—Tsarist as well as Soviet Russia were binary structures. In binary historical structures, an explosion embraces the whole of social reality, while in the ternary system, which is typical of Western cultures,[1] an explosion does not lead to the total demolition of the existing order. In the binary model of development, every explosion drifts toward a complete destruction of the former because it is perceived as a new radical utopia. An old structure must be demolished in order to build in its ruins a brave new world. The October Revolution conceived itself in terms of the "unconditional destruction of existing developments and the apocalyptic generation of the new" (173), which was to be understood as a final and conclusive achievement.

Spitting out the past

Nevertheless, it is wrong to associate the explosion and the apocalypse with disaster only because every apocalypse is both negative and positive—it can be a possible source of change and novelty. In analyzing the historical process, Lotman emphasized the dialogue between the explosive and the gradual processes. In their article "The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture" ("Rol' dual'nykh modelei

[1] According to Lotman, a ternary system is a combination of explosive and gradual processes, but unlike the binary social structures, explosions rarely penetrate all culture layers. Ternary models preserve some values from the past and that is why western European culture retained immutability in the process of change (Lotman even emphasized that immutability became a form of change): "In ternary social structures even the most powerful and deep explosions are not sufficient to encompass the entirety of the complex richness of social layers. The core structure can survive an explosion so powerful and catastrophic that its echo can be heard through all the levels of culture" (Lotman, *Culture* 166). Lotman provides a few examples of ternary structures, like the Napoleonic and Roman Empire: "Thus, for example, we see how the fall of the Napoleonic Empire, accompanied by real explosion in the spheres of politics, government, and culture in its widest sense, did not affect property on lands sold off during the revolution. … It is also possible to point out that the Roman structure of municipal authority persisted despite numerous barbarian invasions and, whilst it has been transformed almost to the point of non-recognition, has, nevertheless, preserved its continuous succession to the present day" (172–173).

v dinamike russkoi kul'tury," 1977), Lotman and Boris Uspensky claimed that in Russian culture novelty does not arise as a result of development, but thanks to the eschatological change of everything. According to them, there are two models of building something new in Russian culture. One model of creating the "new" is by preserving the deep structure of the old culture, but in a modified form. The other model of forming the "new" is by making a radical change in the structure of the old culture or a break with preceding cultural codes. The new can be born if the old is turned upside down. However, Lotman and Uspensky emphasized a surprising paradox, suggesting that this mechanism, as a matter of fact, perpetually regenerates the old: "The 'new ways' not only incorporated the 'old ways' in a complex way, but also served as generator of the 'old ways' while subjectively considering itself as the complete opposite" (12). For example, the new Christian culture in Russia, which constituted itself as the negation of the old pagan culture, paradoxically functioned in practice as a powerful means for preserving the latter (as a sort of anti-culture).

The same mechanism was repeated in post-revolutionary Russia, which presented itself as a brave new and free world, liberated from despotic rule. At the end of the 1920s, a surprising paradox occurred—the past was still lying secretly under the banner of novelty. It seems to me that in a dualistic system, such as the Russian one, it is impossible to eliminate the ghosts of the past. Lotman suggests that the only way to overcome the past for Russia is by transitioning from dualistic to ternary models of the West. Those first ten post-revolutionary years, i.e., the entire cultural paradigm of the 1920s, were named Culture 1 by the architectural historian Vladimir Paperny, who examines the evolution of architecture in Soviet Russia, comparing two conflicting trends—Culture 1 and Culture 2. Culture 1 corresponds to a destructive, revolutionary tendency and lines up with the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s, while Culture 2 covers a more monumental, neoclassical tendency that lines up with socialist realism and Stalinist culture. Paperny applies 14 binary oppositions to describe not only the history of early Soviet architecture, but Soviet culture in general (including literature, visual art, and film). The avant-garde culture is best described by the following categories: it is the culture of the end, the culture of demolition, movement, verticality, and collectivity. Culture 1 of the 1920s carries within itself a certain duality because it is obsessed with the idea of creating something completely new and different that is conceived as a counterpoint to the old. Nevertheless, the revolutionary Culture 1 is much more a destructive than a creative culture, because

its main task is to destroy the old world to its very foundations. Only after it succeeds in doing so, the revolutionary culture can construct a new one on its ruins.

Sinyavsky, who served in Soviet prison camps following his trial in 1966 for publishing his work in the West, claims that Bolshevik culture was so radical in denying the past that almost everything that belonged to the old Russian culture was threatened or destroyed. The purpose was very clear—to make a New Soviet Man and a New Soviet society. It is not difficult to see that the same can be said about the Russian avant-garde movement and its attempt to create a new type of art and a new type of literature. While the Bolshevik Revolution wanted to wipe the old tsarist empire off the map, the Russian avant-garde wanted to wipe the old classical literature off the map. Russian futurism fully embraced the radicalism of the October Revolution. They are oriented towards the future, but for that it is necessary to abolish the past. Anna Lawton emphasized that in their manifestos, Russian futurists "declared hatred for the past, their iconoclastic fury, their debasement of Art, their rejection of Beauty" (Lawton 18). In the manifesto *Go to Hell!* (*Idite k chertu!*) from 1912, the futurists pointed out the absurdity of the classical literary heritage: "The appearance of the New poetry affected the decrepit practitioners of petty Russian literature who are still creeping along as might a white marble statue of Pushkin dancing the tango" (Burliuk et al., *Go* 85). Therefore, they conclude: "Today we spit out the past that was stuck to our teeth" (86).

This will culminate in the manifesto *Slap in the Face of Public Taste* (*Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu*) published in the revolutionary 1917: "The past is too tight. The Academy and Pushkin are less intelligible than hieroglyphics. Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc., etc. overboard from the Ship of Modernity" (Burliuk et al., *Slap* 51). Velimir Khlebnikov—the most inventive, utopian, and radical poet of the Russian avant-garde—in his first book *Teacher and Student: A Conversation* (*Uchitel' i uchenik. Razgovor*, 1912),[2] offered a mathematical calculation that predicted the cataclysm of the Russian Empire in the year 1917:

[2] This was the first edition of Khlebnikov's book, produced by the author at his own expense in May 1912, in a tiny run of 200 copies. The title page was illustrated by David Burliuk, and even his drawing *The Dead Moon* (*Dokhlaia luna*) can be perceived as destructive, as was the political manifesto *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!* written by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1911 against the immobility of classical culture and heritage.

Teacher: And what else have you discovered?
Student: You see, I keep thinking about the action of the future on the past. But given the weight of ancient books that keeps pressing down on humanity, is it even possible to conceive such matters? No, mortal, cast your eyes peacefully downward! Whatever happened to the great destroyers of books? Their waves are as shaky a footing as the dry land of ignorance!
Teacher: Anything else?
Student: Anything else? Yes! You see, what I wanted was to read the writing traced by destiny on the scroll of human affairs. … I have discovered that in general a time period Z separates similar events: Z = (365 + 48y)x, where y can have a positive or negative value. … The conquest of Egypt in 1250 corresponds to the fall of the kingdom of Pergamum in 133. The Polovtsians overran the Russian steppe in 1093, 1383 years after the fall of Samnium in 290. And in 534 the kingdom of the Vandals was subjugated. Should we not therefore expect some state to fall in 1917? (280–281, 284)

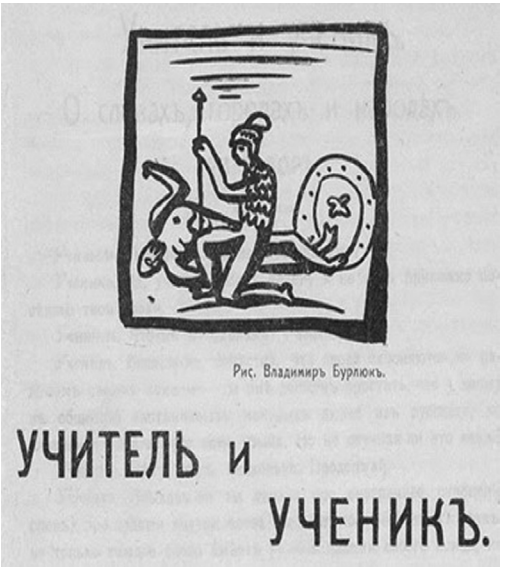

Figure 2: Khlebnikov's *Teacher and Student: A Conversation* (illustrated by David Burliuk).

Culture 1, which dominated after the October Revolution, is a mobile, future-oriented, and anti-hierarchic culture and therefore not a long-term paradigm. It is a culture of movement, collectivism, spreading, and running around, a dynamic culture of vagrancy and discontent, and as such it cannot offer the kind of stability that will be advocated by monolithic and totalitarian Culture 2, a past-oriented and hierarchic

culture of immobility and enclosure. Culture 1 hardly distinguishes a person from the crowd. The subject of every action (in literature, film, painting, or theatre) is a collective in constant motion. "WE fall, we rise … together with the rhythm of movements—slowed and accelerated, running from us, past us, toward us, in a circle, or straight line, or ellipse, to the right and left, with plus and minus signs; movements bend, straighten, divide, break apart, multiply, shooting noiselessly through space. … WE greet the ordered fantasy of movement," writes Dziga Vertov in *We: Variant of a Manifesto* (*My. Variant manifesta*) from 1922 (9).

Paperny describes the post-revolutionary culture as a horizontal culture, i.e., a relatively free paradigm without firm borders (in opposition to a vertical Culture 2). For my study of post-revolutionary avant-garde poetics, the dominant characteristic of Paperny's Culture 1 is its future-oriented nature; it is a culture of the new, of a beginning that replaces the traditional, conservative, classic, and old, but also the sentimental, spiritual, esoteric, and mystical (everything that was immanent in Russian modernism of the Silver Age). According to Lotman and Uspensky, the dominant principle in the development of Russian culture is the opposition of the old and the new in favor of the new. At the basis of the October Revolution and the avant-garde movement lies the same concept, the same opposition. Moreover, the post-revolutionary period, when the Soviet avant-garde took shape, was an example of critical but vital periods that Lotman was referring to in the book *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture (Nepredskazuemye mekhanizmy kul'tury, 2010):* "These are critical periods when one has reached the end of old paths while new paths have yet to be determined. These are periods of choice and freedom—and simultaneously—of doubt and uncertainty. In such times, a clearly formulated question or even a profoundly experienced doubt turns out to be more productive than customary answers reiterating customary truths" (37).

The new, paraphrasing Lotman and Uspensky, was considered valuable, while the old (i.e., everything that was not avant-garde) was considered unnecessary and to be destroyed. In this way, both Russian classics and Russian non-avant-garde art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became a kind of anti-culture for the avant-garde (especially for Russian futurists). In my opinion, Sergei Eisenstein's avant-garde *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosec "Potëmkin,"* 1925) embodies almost all the dominant elements of Culture 1: it shows the apocalypse of the old world and Eisenstein's aggressive and dynamic montage of attractions turns into ecstasy and violence and enables a very

emotional ideological perception. The main protagonist is not an individual but the masses. *Battleship Potemkin*, a reenactment of the 1905 revolution against the Tsar, is structured as a chronicle, which means that it is not based on a traditional plot, but on a chronicle, that had to achieve the effect of drama. In this early phase, montage is equated to a revolutionary method of filmmaking that seeks to educate the struggling masses. The scene that resembles Eisenstein's avant-garde rhythmic montage is the Odessa Steps scene, in which the soldiers massacre civilians. This dramatized and hyperbolic scene shows the dynamic use of montage. Not only did Eisenstein's use of montage and quick edits modernize a medium that was static and slow before him, but he became trusted by the early Soviet state to craft movies that had to fit into Soviet propaganda. However, Eisenstein's future work failed to resonate under the rule of Stalin, who diminished Eisenstein's voice as a revolutionary filmmaker. Eisenstein's revolutionary aesthetic did not fit the rigid narrative of the 1930s.

The common ground of the Russian avant-garde styles was their revolutionary artistic and political character. What brought futurism and revolutionary utopia together was not the idea of art as a pure form and aesthetics (as advocated by the futurists at the beginning), but the energy of action and renewal. After the Revolution, that energy became social engagement, industrialization, electrification, and so on. Aesthetics, in other words, were replaced by propaganda and utilitarianism. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Osip Brik published a radical manifesto *The Artist and the Commune* (*Khudozhnik i kommuna*, 1919), in which he announced the death of bourgeois aesthetics and literary elitism. Brik calls them privileged parasites, who are not needed in the new age:

> Their bourgeois art will perish. Artists who only know how to "create" and "serve beauty somewhere out there" will perish. … The artist creates. For bourgeois society, this was enough. It was created by a small group of people, the rest were creatures. The title of creator gave the right to a privileged position. In the Commune everyone creates. To create, to be amateur, is the duty of every communard. The Commune does not require professional creators. (26)

A slap in the face of avant-garde taste

The post-revolutionary avant-garde calls for the birth of a completely new type of art and artist (not only in literature)—a faithful servant of the common good, intoxicated by revolutionary utilitarianism, a literary worker. The Bolsheviks advocated the same kind of social

utilitarianism, on which individual survival depended. The New Man is to some extent comparable to the New Artist, more precisely the New Writer as propagated by Mayakovsky and Brik: "Only working people will find a place in it. If artists do not want to share the fate of parasitic elements, they must prove their right to exist. The artist's work must be accurately defined and registered in the lists of the municipal labor exchange" (Brik 25). Vladimir Mayakovsky, the leading poet of the Russian Revolution, continued to deny classical heritage after the Revolution, as he did in the *Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, while supporting futurism as the only literary trend consonant with the times of the revolution. At the very end of the poem dedicated to Lenin ("Vladimir Ilich Lenin," 1924), he sang about the Revolution: "Long live the Revolution with speedy victory, / the greatest and justest of all the wars / ever fought in history!" (250). In the poem "150,000,000," he manifested Russia's new national culture and he apocalyptically calls for a complete upheaval. He is determined to kill the old. Such emotional discourse, full of ecstatic feelings—from enthusiasm to anger and despair—does not fit the rationalist discourse, characteristic of both the proletarian and constructivist culture of the 1920s.

Sinyavsky points out that Lenin and Trotsky sacrificed futurism, but that is not entirely true, because avant-garde was not to their taste. They never appreciated it. Although Mayakovsky was wholeheartedly for the Bolsheviks and tried to translate both the apocalyptic spirit and ideology of the Revolution into his poetry, Lenin's literary taste was quite classical. Russian classical literature was deeply rooted in Lenin, and the work of the revolutionary avant-garde was not to his taste. Evgeny Naumov also asserts that Lenin never understood Mayakovsky's poetry and confirmed Lenin's hostile attitude towards Mayakovsky's poetry and personality: "'I remember,' wrote the artist I. K. Parkhomenko, 'that when I … mentioned one noisy poet of our days, Lenin said that he was raised by Nekrasov's poetry, and that he doesn't understand such noisy poets'" (Naumov 206). He reacted to Mayakovsky's "Our March" and "150,000,000" with hostility, calling the poem stupid and pretentious, although Mayakovsky was a vigorous spokesman for the October Revolution. Naumov emphasized that Lenin's distaste for futurism and Mayakovsky's poetry never changed, although he softened his stances about Mayakovsky.

The same aversion to futurism and Mayakovsky was shared by Leon Trotsky, who in *Literature and Revolution* (*Literatura i revoliutsia*, 1923) asserted that "Mayakovsky's works have no peak; they are not disciplined internally. The parts refuse to obey the whole. Each part

tries to be separate. It develops its own dynamics, without considering the welfare of the whole. That is why it is without entity or dynamics" (131). He accused them of being excessive, childish, and artistically weak. For Trotsky, futurism was not a truly revolutionary school but just a stylization. The Russian futurist poets, as he pointed out, caught the rhythm of the Revolution. However, instead of going to the factories as regular workers, they made a lot of noise in cafes and they threatened vaguely with their fists. Trotsky also pointed out that futurism is a product of the poetic past, of bourgeois Bohemia:

> In the advance guard of literature, Futurism is no less a product of the poetic past than any other literary school of the present day. To say that Futurism has freed art of its thousand-year-old bonds of bourgeoisdom is to estimate thousands of years very cheaply. The call of the Futurists to break with the past, to do away with Pushkin, to liquidate tradition, etc., has meaning only insofar as it is addressed to the old literary caste, to the closed circle of the intelligentsia. In other words, it has meaning only as long as the Futurists are busy cutting the cord which binds them to the priests of bourgeois literary tradition. (115)

Indeed, the avant-garde should be interpreted as radical modernism, as Mark Lipovecky emphasized, which in no way can pretend to be mass art. The revolutionary Russian avant-garde, for Boris Groys, ended in 1917. For him, the only revolutionary avant-garde aesthetic was the pre-October artistic practice of the 1910s, which fought against the status quo and social and political structures, but not the post-October practice of the 1920s, which lost its criticism. Vladimir Mayakovsky's poetics is the best example of that statement, which explains Lenin's gradual acceptance of Mayakovsky. According to Umberto Eco, the avant-garde destroyed itself. After the apocalyptic birth of the new, as Lotman defines explosive processes in culture, the avant-garde asserts itself as communist literature. In other words, the Russian avant-garde, after 1917, was guilty of "operating on the same territory as the state," as Groys already pointed out, but it did not succeed (Groys 35). The apocalyptic Culture 1, including avant-garde movements, was rejected at the end of the 1920s. Moreover, it was destroyed by the same mechanism which helped its rise in the first place. The explosive avant-garde path was replaced by a long-lasting, predictable, and past-oriented path—to use Lotman's words.

Conclusion

This process can also be described using the Apollonian–Dionysian opposition popularized by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872). While the Apollonian is associated with order, reason, measure, and structure, Dionysus was the Greek god of wine, revelry, and unbridled passion—the Earth-bound ecstasies. According to Nietzsche, the Dionysian impulse is best understood through an analogy to intoxication. Drunkenness is suggested as the pure Dionysian state. The Apollonian is rational, orderly, and critical, while the Dionysian is sensual, intoxicated, and chthonic. Nietzsche proceeded from the premise that in the Greek pantheon, the gods Apollo and Dionysus are opposite symbolic types of the heavenly and earthly principles. If the first is a sense of proportion, self-restraint, and freedom from wild impulses, then the second is excess, the violation of any measure, and the immeasurable. If sculpture is the most Apollonian art because of its pure form, music is the pure Dionysian art form. According to Walter F. Otto, Dionysus was connected to death too: "[H]e was known also as the raving god whose presence makes man mad and incites him to savagery and even to lust for blood. … Dionysus was the god of the most blessed ecstasy and the most enraptured love. But he was also the persecuted god, the suffering and dying god, and all whom he loved, all who attended him, had to share his tragic fate" (Otto 49). Dionysus is connected with suffering and death, but also with violence. Like all revolutions (political or artistic), he comes violently, in an alarming manner, with the most urgent immediacy, and that is why his arrival inspires madness, ecstasy, and terror. He arrives to break the chains, to refresh, to renew, and so does the October Revolution and the Russian Soviet avant-garde. But drunkenness is not a long-lasting state.

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Eksplozivna narava in apokalipsa ruske avantgarde: futurizem proti boljševizmu

Ključne besede: ruska književnost / avantgarda / oktobrska revolucija / postrevolucionarna kultura / futurizem / boljševizem / Lotman, Jurij

Namen članka je preučiti dejavnike, ki so prispevali k »eksplozivnemu« (v skladu s teorijo Jurija Lotmana), a kratkotrajnemu razcvetu avantgarde v ruski kulturi. Poleg tega je cilj pokazati, da apokaliptična vizija stare Rusije ni vsebovala le družbene preobrazbe, temveč tudi propad avantgardne poetike v postrevolucionarni Rusiji. Paradoksalno je, da se je zgodnja sovjetska avantgarda predstavljala kot revolucionarno politično in umetniško gibanje, medtem ko so boljševiki do futuristov in skupine LEF zavzeli odklonilno stališče. Lev Trocki je v delu *Literatura in revolucija* trdil, da je futurizem produkt pesniške preteklosti. Ta razkorak nakazuje različne interpretacije pojmov »revolucija« in »revolucionarno« med boljševiki in futuristi. Boris Groys poudarja, da je bila oktobrska revolucija bolj tradicionalna kot avantgardna estetika, pri čemer označi avantgardo kot kontrarevolucionarno umetnost.

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