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TOWARDS THE HISTORY OF THE LENINGRAD AVANT-GARDE: THE "RING OF POETS"

The "Kol'co poétov imeni K.M. Pofanova" (Ring of Poets in Honor of K.M. Pofanov) grew out of the informal meetings of the so-called "Abbatstvo gaerov" (Brotherhood of Jesters). The poets Boris Viktorovič Smirenskiĭ (1900-1970), Andreĭ Skorbnĭyĭ (pseudonym of Vladimir Viktorovič Smirenskiĭ, 1902-1972), Konstantin Konstantinovič Vaginov (1899-1934), and the playwright Konstantin Maksimovič Man'kovskij (1904-1938) formed the nucleus of both groups. The artist Nikolaj Žandarov, who would design the cover of Vaginov's first volume of poetry *Putešestvie v kaos*, also attended meetings of the "Abbatstvo".

In his account of Vaginov's early years, Leonid Čertkov describes the "Abbatstvo" as a "Bohemian group" close to Ego-Futurism, which "had neither a program, nor a charter and existed only for a very short while".¹ "Abbatstvo", with its hint of a religious order, probably alludes to the "Rectorate" (Rektoriat), the name taken by the four founding members of Russian Ego-Futurism - Igor' Severjanin, Georgij Ivanov, Graal'-Arel'skiĭ, and Konstantin Olimpov - in their 1912 manifesto "The Academy of Ego-Poetry".² The "Abbatstvo" met to drink wine and discuss literature in a self-conscious parody of a traditional literary circle. Its only stated program called for each member to wear an amber bracelet on his right arm at all times. Founded sometime in late 1920, the "Abbatstvo" was replaced by the "Kol'co" by early 1921. The only published mention of the group's existence is the dedication to Vaginov's *Putešestvie v kaos*: "Dostoxval'nomu Abbatstvu Gaerov posvjaščaeť svoe putešestvie Konstantin Vaginov".³

Unlike the "Abbatstvo", the "Kol'co poetov" seriously, if ultimately unsuccessfully, attempted to create a genuine literary mo-

vement based on a revival of the Ego-Futurism. One of the many literary groups which flourished for a short while in post Civil War Petrograd only to disappear without a trace, the "Kol'co" quickly generated all the essential attributes of an avant-garde literary movement: a manifesto (see appendix), an aesthetic program, and a small publishing outlet for its books. Nevertheless, the "Kol'co" always retained a trace of the frivolous and self-parodic "Abbatstvo". One of the conditions for membership in the "Kol'co" was an "attraction to the high falutin and incomprehensible" (vlečenie k vysokomu i neponjatnomu).

The aesthetic program of the "Kol'co", contained in its charter of June 27, 1921, articulated three basic aims: collective study of contemporary literary movements (Imaginism, Acmeism and Futurism), publication of works by group members, and posthumous restoration of Fofanov's reputation. Indeed, Fofanov's name, mentioned in five of the charter's ten proposals, dominates the program. The "Kol'co" dedicated itself to study his poetry, to publish his unpublished poems, to resurrect the "deceased fame of the poet", to execute his last will and testament, and even to establish a museum in his honor.

Konstantin Fofanov (1862-1911), a Neoromantic poet and presursor of Russian Decadence and Symbolism, enjoyed great popularity in the 1880's.⁴ Despite the publication of several editions of his poetry in the twentieth century, Fofanov's fame proved short-lived. A review published by Gumilev in 1910 illustrates how far and how quickly Fofanov fell in the esteem of the modernists:

Davno, davno K. Fofanova ljubili nazvyvat' pervym russkim dekadentom. Ego daže napečatali v "Severnyx Cvetax". No, očevidno, što proizošlo po kakim-to taktičeskim soobraženijam rannix voždej modernizma, potomu što net nikakix osnovaniij predpologat', što K. Fofanov čuvstvoval velikij perevorot v russkom iskusstve, soversivšijsja v 90-x godax. On tipičnyj epigon "školy" Apuxtina, Nadsona i Fruga.

To že, možet byt', edinstvennoe v letopisjax poezii, neponimanie zakonov ritma i stilja, te že slovesnye kliše, stertye do otčajanija, tot že krug idej, rodnoj i bližkij rjadovomu obyvatelju 80-x godov.⁵

Yet his influence lived on in the poetry of Igor' Severjanin (pseudonym of Igor' Vasil'evič Lotarev, 1887-1941) the founder of Russian Ego-Futurism. Severjanin began writing poetry under the

influence of Fofanov and Mirra Loxvitskaja (1869-1905), another popular predecessor of Decadence and Symbolism in Russian poetry. He later met and befriended Fofanov, whose poetic cult he established. In the words of Vladimir Markov, "the poetry of Fofanov and Loxvitskaja, uneven but not without old-fashioned charm, remained an ideal for Severjanin throughout his life. He commemorated in verse the anniversaries of their deaths almost every year, and once even declared that he considered Loxvitskaja superior to Dante, Byron, and Puškin".⁶

The two poets most closely associated with the "Kol'co poëtov", Vladimir and Boris Smirenskiĭ, were actually Fofanov's illegitimate sons. Vladimir (Andrej Skorbnyĭ), the younger brother and dominant organizing force behind the "Kol'co", published his first book of poetry, *Krovavye pocelui* (Petersburg, 1917), while he was still a student at Petrograd University.

During the two years that he spent at the University, Smirenskiĭ was associated with a group of promising student poets, including N.A. Ocup (1894-1958), V.A. Roždestvenskiĭ (1895-1978) and G.V. Maslov (1895-1920). The outbreak of the Civil War interrupted their careers: Smirenskiĭ and Roždestvenskiĭ joined the Red Army, while Maslov fought and perished in Siberia with the Whites.⁷

Vladimir Smirenskiĭ's literary career began in earnest with his return to Petrograd in late 1920. By 1928 he had published nine books, organized a publishing house, created several literary groups, and even won a modicum of notoriety, if not popularity, as a poet.⁸ With the end of NEP and the relatively free conditions that had reigned in the cultural world between 1921 and 1928, Smirenskiĭ's fortunes took a turn for the worse. The official critical establishment subjected him to increasingly vitriolic attacks, while the censorship made it almost impossible for him to publish. Finally, in 1931, he was arrested and sentenced to ten years in a labor camp for participation in a "counterrevolutionary" group. Smirenskiĭ would spend 23 years in the GULAG, working on several of the largest slave-labor construction projects of the Stalin era, including the White Sea and Volga-Don canals.⁹ Upon his release in Xruščev's general amnesty of 1954, he began a second career as a literary historian and journalist. By the time of his death in the seventies, he had published many articles on the history of Russian

literature, as well as editing and supplying the commentary for the 1962 "Biblioteka poeta" edition of Fofanov's poetry.¹⁰

Like his younger brother, Boris Smirenskiĭ began his literary career as a not very talented poet and ended it as a fairly accomplished literary historian and journalist. Educated as an engineer, he published five books of verse heavily indebted to Severĭanin and Ego-Futurism between 1915 and 1928.¹¹ Regularly savaged by the critics, Smirenskiĭ gave up literature soon after 1928 and became an army engineer. This change of career probably saved him from his brother's fate. He served in the Red Army during the Second World War, became a member of the Communist Party, and retired from the Army as a general. In the 1950's Smirenskiĭ began a third career as a literary journalist. He published numerous articles on literary topics, edited a collection of the verse of his former master Severĭanin,¹² and published an interesting book on literary mystifications called *Pero i maska* (Moscow, 1967). He died in Moscow in 1970.

Thus, both Smirenskiĭ brothers remained faithful to the literary masters of their youth: editing the poetry of Fofanov and Severĭanin represented a logical continuation of the work of the "Kol'co poétov". Despite the familial and aesthetic connections, the artistic practice of the Smirenskiĭ brothers' can not be adequately described by referring to Ego-Futurism or the poetic cult of Fofanov. In his poetry, Boris Smirenskiĭ was undoubtedly the closest to Ego-Futurism. As early as 1922 the poet and critic Sergej Nel'dixen noted the debt he owed to Severĭanin.¹³ The poems of *V limonnoj gavanĭ Iokogama* (Petersburg, 1922) provide many examples of the influence of Severĭanin's predilections for foreign-sounding words, stylized emotions, and precious sentimentality. For example,

V limonnoj gavanĭ Iokogama
On xrizantemy dlja nee kupil...
Vostočnyx gor sinela panorama,
I solnca luč zaliv pozolotil.

Eja xiton, zavjazannyj kistjami,
Na skladkax sprjatal nežnye cvety;
Eja rukoj s prozračnymi nogtjami
Tam vyšity kartonnye mosry.

Ona k gubam prižala tonkiĭ pal'čik,
Snimaja tufel' s kroxotnoj nogi...
A za kormoju kosoglazyj mal'čik
Budil v vode zelenye krugi.

This same collection also contains a homage to Fofanov, Shakespearean sonnets, and a translation from Rabindranath Tagore, as well as poems in the style of Blok. Smirenskiij's eclecticism, in fact, better characterizes the poetry of the "Kol'co" than his attempt to work within the tradition of Severjanin and Ego-Futurism. The poetry of Smirenskiij's brother, Andrej Skorbnyj, despite a few references to Fofanov, falls almost entirely outside of the tradition and poetics of Ego-Futurism. Critics immediately recognized in his poetry the work of an epigone of Blok and Akmatova:

Vse tvorčestvo Skornbogo - splošnye perepevy Akmatovoj i Bloka, ili, vo vsjakom slučae, pisanija po povodu stixov Akmatovoj i Bloka: ob étom glasjat i epigrafy, i posvjaščenija, i nazvanija ob"javlennoj knižki Skornbogo - *Ptica belaja* (konečno, ptica iz "beloj stai") i takie stročki, kak "perelomiljajas' sgibami ruk."¹⁴

Very little information has survived concerning Konstantin Man'kovskij. Even the circumstances of his birth and death remain unclear. Like the other members of the "Kol'co", Man'kovskij served for several years in the Red Army during the Civil War, and, intending to become a dramatist, he returned to Petrograd in 1920 or 1921. None of his works have survived, and he seems to have been more a friend, sympathizer and supporter of the group than an active member. Like the Smirenskiij brothers, Man'kovskij had more success in his second career as a historian. He eventually became the director of the Museum of the History of the City of Leningrad. He was, presumably, removed from this post during one of the purges of the Leningrad intelligentsia in the late 1930's and perished in 1938. His name resurfaced in the 1970's when a notebook of his containing poems, some still unpublished, by the Smirenskiij brothers, Vaginov, Kuzmin, Ocup, Pjast and others, found its way to one of the mayor archival repositories of Leningrad.¹⁵

Konstantin Vaginov, the most important writer associated with the "Kol'co", published his first volume of poems, *Putešestvie v kaos*, under the imprint of the "Kol'co poétov" in 1922.¹⁶ While one can find isolated images and neologisms reminiscent of Severjanin and Ego-Futurism in these early poems, Vaginov was already moving beyond the static poetics of Ego-Futurism towards an ambitious personal synthesis of elements of Symbolism, Acmeism and Futurism.¹⁷

Gumilev first noted Vaginov's potential. Already in 1921 he invited Vaginov to participate in his poetry seminar at the Petrograd House of the arts¹⁸ and then to become a member of the second "Guild of Poets" (Cex poëtov). Although he never officially broke with the "Kol'co", the beginning of Vaginov's relationship with Gumilev and the second generation Acmeists marked the end of his flirtation with Ego-Futurism. By the time *Putešestvie v xaos* appeared in print, Vaginov had become a member of the "Islanders" (Ostrovitjane), another group of former proteges of Gumilev.¹⁹ In the four verse collections and three novels that he completed before his untimely death from tuberculosis in 1934, Vaginov created a complex and original contribution to Russian Modernism which has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves.

Several other writers, including Graal'-Arel'skij (pseudonym of Stepan Stepanovič Petrov, 1889-7), Dmitrij Aleksandrovič Dorin (dates unknown), Konstantin Konstantinovič Olimpo- Fofanov (1880-1940), and Aleksandr Alekseevič Izmajlov (1873-1921) also participated in the literary activities of the "Kol'co". The poet-astronomer Arel'skij published his first book of poems, *Goľuboj ašur*, in St. Petersburg in 1911. While Vladimir Markov finds this book "full of imitations of Bal'mont and Brjusov",²⁰ Aleksander Blok and Nikolaj Gumilev viewed its publication more positively. Gumilev's review in *Apollon*, while noting the influence of Severjanin and the poet's lack of individuality ("Kažetsja, u nego net svoego slova, kotoroe neobxodimo skazat' cenoj čego by to ni bylo i kotoroe odno delaet poëta") still ended with qualified praise for the young Arel'skij's: "est' tol'ko gorjačost' molodosti, versifikacionnye sposobnosti, vkus i znanie sovremennoj poëzii. Esli podumat', u skol'kix pišuščix stixi net i étix kačestv, to ego vystuplenie nel'zja na privetstvovat'".²¹ Blok wrote to Arel'skij in November 1911 about *Goľuboj ašur*:

Dorogoj Stepan Stepanovič.

Ne mogu videt'sja s Vami sejčas (ot ustalosti, ot mnogix del, ot nervnogo rasstrojstva), no davno imeju potrebnosti skazat' Vam, čto knižka Vaša (za isključeniem častnostej, osobenno psevdonima i zaglavijs) mnogim mne blizka. Vas mučat takže zvezdnye miry, na kotorye Vy smotrite, i osobenno xorošo govorite Vy o zvezdax.²²

Blok described Arel'skij's appearance and his strange background in

a diary entry dated 18 November, 1911:

My končili obedat', prišel Stepan Stepanovič Petrov, nazvavšij sebja na kartočke i na sbornike stixov "Graal' Arel'skij", čto utrom (kogda on peredal kartočku) pokazalos' mne verxom koščunstva i mističeskogo anarxizma. Prišel - lico neprijatnoe, provaly na ščekax, malen'kaja, tjaželaja figurka. Stal zadavat' voprosy - vjalo, maxal rukoj, čto nezačem sprašivat', čto vyxodit trafaret, interv'ju. O nem dnem govoril mne Georgij Ivanov, no on ne takoj (kak govoril Georgij Ivanov). Byvšij revoljucioner, xotel vozrodit' "Moloduju Rossiju" 60-x godov, byl v partii (c.p.), sidel v tjur'max, astronom (pri universitete), rabotaet v neskol'kix observatorijax, streljalsja i travilsja, emu vsego 22 goda, no i vid i duša starše gorazdo...²³

Arel'skij's membership in the "Kol'co poëtov" in the early 1920's comes as a surprise, for while Arel'skij did represent a link with the formative period of Ego-Futurism and the cult of Fofanov, he had also been an early defector from the movement. In 1912 he participated in the founding of the Ego-Futurist movement. He wrote the manifesto "Ego-poetry in poetry",²⁴ which declared egoism the central factor of poetry, and was a co-signer, with Severjanin, Olimpov and Georgij Ivanov, of the terse announcement of the "Academy of Ego-Poetry".²⁵ By 1913, however, Arel'skij had undergone a change of heart and, along with Ivanov, left Ego-Futurism for the Acmeist "Guild of Poets". In 1913 the "Guild" published Arel'skij's second book of poems, *Letajskij breg* (Petersburg, 1913). The Ego-Futurists retaliated in Ivan Vacil'evič Ignat'ev's survey article "Pervyj god Ego-Futurizma", which attacked the "Guild": "Dlja impotentov Duši i Stixa est' 'Cex poëtov', tam obretajut pristanišče Trusy i Nedonoski Modernizma".²⁶ Following his association with the "Kol'co", Arel'skij published several poems in the *Stošary* almanachs (Petrograd, 1923). In 1925 Arel'skij's name appeared for the last time on the title page of a collection of science fiction stories, reminiscent of Aleksej Tolstoj's Martian novel *Aelita*, called *Poves-ti o Marse*.²⁷ After this he vanished from sight.

Konstantin Olimpov, a leading poet and theoretician of the first generation of Ego-Futurists, was the pseudonym for Fofanov's legitimate son. He made his literary debut in 1912, and in the next ten years published many books of poetry marked by what sometimes seems a pathological megalomania.²⁸ With hyperbole that surpassed even that of Severjanin, Olimpov proclaimed himself not only a "great

world poet" ("velikij mirovoj poët"), but the "parent of the universe" ("roditel' mirozdanija"). One memoirist recalls that in an official Union of Writers questionnaire Olimpov named as his children Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune.²⁹ But if Olimpov was a madman, he was also, at least some of the time, a talented poet.³⁰ Markov has described his poetry as "the most successful merger of egofuturist mysticism and poetics."³¹ For the "Kol'co", he seemed a natural choice: a notorious poet of the older generation who represented both a direct blood connection to Fofanov and a direct poetic link to the early stages of Ego-Futurism. Furthermore, Olimpov had never abandoned the cult of his father.

Olimpov's collaboration with the "Kol'co", however, produced few concrete results. The one book of poetry he published during the period of his association with the "Kol'co", *Tret'e Roždestvo velikogo mirovogo poëta titanizma social'noj revoljucii Konstantina Konstantinoviča Olimpova, Roditelja Mirozdanija* (Petersburg, 1922) shows that, in the words of Markov, "the last vestiges of ego-futurism have faded by 1922".³² Shortly after this, his name disappeared from literature. In the poem "Kafe v pereulke" from *Putešestvie v kaos*, Vaginov drew a satirical portrait of Olimpov's "mania gloriosa:

Odin v uglu sidit i ševalit gubami;
"Ja novyj bog, prišel čtob étot mir spasti,
Skazat', čto solnce v nas, čto solnce ne nad nami,
Čtokaždyj - bog, čto v každom - vse puti,

Čto v každom - goroda, i rošči, i doliny
Čto v každom suščestve - i reki, i morja,
Vysokye xrebtj, i gornye niziny,
Prozračnye ruč'i, čto zolotit zarja.

O, mir ves' v nas, my sami - bogi,
V sebe postroili iz kamnja goroda
I nasažili travy, proveli dorogi,
I putešestvuem v sebe my celye goda...

Dmitrij Dorin joined the "Kol'co" as yet another link with the Ego-Futurist tradition. The "Petersburg Herald" (Peterburgskij glašataj), founded by Ivan Ignat'ev as the official publishing house of the Ego-Futurist movement, had published Dorin's second book of verse, *Toskujuščij orol* (Petersburg, 1914). By the end of October 1921, Dorin was serving on the board of the publishing division of the "Kol'co",³³ which had contracted to publish two books of his

poetry, *Solnečnyj lug* and *Urny*. These books never appeared when, for reasons that remain obscure, the "Kol'co" expelled Dorin in April 1922.³⁴ After his short-lived collaboration with the "Kol'co", Dorin became a member of the literary circle of Nikolaj Baršev and published several poems heavily influenced by Blok in the first and third issues of the almanach *Stožary* (Petrograd, 1923).³⁵ With these publications Dorin's literary career comes to an end. His subsequent fate remains unknown.

Aleksandr Alekseevič Izmajlov, the oldest member of the "Kol'-co" and a well-known writer and critic of the pre-Revolutionary period, had in 1916 published his reminiscences of his close friend Fofanov.³⁶ Though he joined the "Kol'co" because of its dedication to Fofanov's memory, Izmajlov would hardly have approved of the group's aesthetic program. He expressed his attitude towards contemporary literature in the several volumes of parodies of modern movements, including Decadence and Futurism, that he had published earlier. Izmajlov, it would seem, represented a shield of literary respectability behind which the "Kol'co" could hide until it became strong enough to survive on its own. In any case, Izmajlov died suddenly in 1921, shortly after he had joined the "Kol'co".³⁷

From the beginning, the "Kol'co" realized how important influential friends could be to the successful attainment of its goals. Accordingly, the group sought literary aid from wellknown writers of the older generation such as Olimpov and Izmajlov, as well as political support from important figures within the Soviet cultural bureaucracy such as Lunačarskij. The earliest extant document concerning the "Kol'co" is an invitation, dated April 15, 1921, to Fedor Sologub to become a member of the group's "College of Experts" (Kollegija ékspertov), the five member commission charged with selecting new members. This invitation to an aging symbolist makes more sense if we remember that Sologub had admired the poetry of Igor' Severjanin and had even collaborated in one of the early Ego-Futurist miscellanies, *Orly nad propast'ju* (*Eagles over the Abyss*).³⁸ The letter reads:

Glubokouvažaemyj Fedor Kuzmič!

"Kol'co poëtov", spajannoe v pamjat' K.M.Fofanova, ubeditel'no prosit Vas prinjat' učastie v ix rabote, priglašaja Vas v kačestve člena koleгии ékspertov.

Iz"javit' soglasie nadležit' zdes že pis'menno.
Prezidium Kol'ca, znaja Vaše vseгда iskrennee
družnoe otnošenje k molodym sobrat'jam, vyražat
nadeždu na Vaše soglasie prinjat, v obščej rabote.

Predsedatel': Andrej Skorbnjy³⁹

No doubt seeing through the transparent invitation to become a figurehead leader of the group, Sologub never answered the letter. Nevertheless, the "Kol'co" tried again to enlist him in their work in a letter of March 1922. With a touch of youthful bravado, they offered to publish any poems or stories he might have ready and informed him of the 13,000 roubles he owed in membership dues. Not surprisingly, the "Kol'co" had as little success this time in convincing Sologub to join them. No established writer had any reason to link his name with a group of unknown writers who had conceived the outlandish idea of reviving the literary legacy of Fofanov.

If the "Kol'co" could not attract writers like Sologub, it often claimed, without the slightest justification, equally famous writers as active members of the group. For example, the authors of the second letter to Sologub appended a membership list that included Belyj, Remizov, Axmatova, Kuzmin, Pjast, and Volynskij. In other letters to official Soviet publishing organizations, the "Kol'co" claimed to consist of "64 members devoted to literature and art" including "Comrade" Lunačarskij.⁴⁰ In his unpublished memoirs, Vladimir Smirenskij himself admits that Remizov, at least, was never a member of the "Kol'co". According to Smirenskij, Remizov was invited to become a member in 1921 but declined because of his imminent departure from Soviet Russia.⁴¹

Another element of the "Kol'co's" strategy was to establish an independent publishing outlet which could issue works by Fofanov and new works by the "Kol'co" members. By late 1921 a major step toward this goal was accomplished with the organization of a cooperative publishing house named after the group. Although the exact date of the incorporation of the publishing house is not known, a letter dated October 25, 1921 from the "Kol'co" to the Petrograd Division of the State Publishing House stated that Man'kovskij, Graal' Arel'skij, Boris Smirenskij, Vladimir Smirenskij, Dmitrij Dorin, Aleksandr Jakovlevič Gerc and Aleksandr Nikolaevič Lavrov served on its board. Gerc, a well-known Petersburg literary business-

man of the time, served as the director of the publishing operation. They formulated elaborate plans to publish, among other things, a collected edition of Fofanov's works, and books of poetry and criticism by the members of the "Kol'co". Several notices announcing the publishing plans of the "Kol'co" appeared in literary and bibliographic journals during 1921 and 1922. For example, in *Vestnik literatury*:

Izd-stvo "Kol'co poétov" imeni K.M.Fofanova gotovit k pečati sledujuščie knigi: K. Vaginov, *Peterburskie noči. Stixi*; Boris Smirenskij, *Devjatyj val. Venok scnetov*; Andrej Skorbnyj, *Koronovannyj niščij* (kniga o Fofanove); Georgij Rimskij-Korsakov, *Stixi*; V.M.Bogdanov-Berezovskij, *Stixi*; *Almanax Kol'ca poétov*; K.M.Fofanov, *V mire prozy* (posmertnoe izdanie).⁴³

Other books, including a memoir of A.A. Izmajlov by Andrej Skorbnyj, a study of Fofanov by Boris Smirenskij (*Dobryj Fofan*), and volumes of poetry by Boris Smirenskij (*Venok iz ros*) and Vasilij Andreev (*Plen izumrudnyj*) were announced in *Literaturnye zapiski* also in 1922.⁴⁴ Most of these books never appeared in print.

If the "Kol'co" did not succeed in publishing the works of Fofanov or any group almanachs, it did manage to publish five books of poetry by Skorbnyj, Smirenskij and Vaginov: Skorbnyj's *Zvenjaščie slezy* and Smirenskij's *Lunnaja struna* in 1921 and Skorbnyj's *Bol'shaja ljubov'*, Smirenskij's *V limonnoj gavanj Tokogama*, and Vaginov's *Putešestvie v kaos* in the following year. The history of the publishing activities of the "Kol'co poétov" ends here, its most important achievement being the publication of Vaginov's first book of poems.

Towards the second half of 1922, official pressure on the "Kol'co" grew to unprecedented levels. On June 17 the Association of Proletarian Writers announced the expulsion of a certain K.Murjan from its ranks because he had joined the "Kol'co".⁴⁵ Reviews in party newspapers of books by "Kol'co" members moved from sarcastic discussions of the admittedly feeble poetry to vicious ad hominem attacks on the authors. One review of Skorbnyj's *Bol'naja ljubov'* which appeared in *Krasnaja gazeta* is typical: "Ved' on čto delaet? On - predstavitel' klassa staroj kul'tury, on, v svoej duše, ras-kryvaet pustotu éтого klassa! I v éтой duše pustota, beskrylie, smert'".⁴⁶ The official end of the "Kol'co poétov" came by order of

the Petrograd Ceka on September 25, 1922. Surprisingly, the group continued to meet for at least another month: a newspaper account of the artistic salon of Viktorija Čekan mentions an appearance by the group at the end of October.⁴⁷

While most of the poetry of the "Kol'co" has been justly forgotten, the group's history represents a valuable addition to our knowledge of the complex literary processes in Petrograd in the immediate post Civil War years. Their attempted Ego-Futurist revival adds a chapter to the history of Russian Futurism.⁴⁸ As a case study, the suppression of the apolitical "Kol'co" during the period of greatest freedom for Soviet literature should be of interest to students of Soviet literary policy in the 1920's. Finally, the "Kol'co postov" presided over the literary debut of Konstantin Vaginov, whose contribution to the Petrograd avantgarde has only recently been rediscovered.

Notes

1. Leonid ČERTKOV, "Poëzija Konstantina Vaginova", in: K.VAGINOV, *Sobranie stixotvorenij*, Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1982, 214.
2. Vladimir MARKOV, ed., *Manifesty i programmy russkix futuristov*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967, 27.
3. Konstantin VAGINOV, *Putešestvie v kaos*, Petersburg: Kol'co poëtov, 1922, 5.
4. D.S.MIRSKIJ, *A History of Russian Literature*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949, 346-347, and MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, 62.
5. *Apollon*, 6 (1910), 40-43; reprinted in: STRUVE and FILIPPOV eds., N.S.GUMILEV, *Sobranie sočinenij*, Washington, D.C.: Victor Kamkin, 1968, vol. 4, 222. See also the obituary of Fofanov written by Gumilev and published in: *Apollon*, 7 (1911), 77; reprinted in STRUVE and FILIPPOV, vol.4, 369.
6. MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California 1968, 62.
7. For information about Maslov as well as most of his extant poetry, see Gleb STRUVE, *K istorii russkoj poëzii 1910-x načala 1920-x godov*, Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialities, 1979, Modern Russian Literature and Culture. Studies and Texts.
8. In addition to the "Kol'co poëtov", Vladimir Smirenskiij founded the "Sojuz pisatelej imeni Aleksandra Alekseeviča Izmajlova" (see below, note 37) in 1922 and the Leningrad branch of the "Associacija neklassikov" (whose motto was "Vpered k Puškinu!") in 1924. See also his unpublished autobiography: Manuscript Division of the State Public Library, Leningrad (OR GPB), f.103, N.133, dated October 6, 1928.

9. Robert CONQUEST, *The Great Terror*, New York: Macmillan, 1968, 325, and Simon WOLIN and Robert M. SLUSSER, *The Soviet Secret Police*, New York: Praeger, 1957, 187.
10. For a bibliography of V. Smirenskiĭ's poetry, see A. K. TARASENKO, *Russkie poëty XX veka, 1900-1955: Bibliografiĭa*, Moscow: Sovetskij pisatel', 1966; for a selection of titles from his literary journalism, see K. D. MURATOVA, *Istorija russkoj literatury konca XIX - načala XX veka: bibliografičeskij ukazatel'*, Leningrad: Akademija nauk, 1963.
11. For a list of B. Smirenskiĭ's collections of poetry, see TARA-SENKO, *Russkie poëty XX veka*.
12. Igor' SVERJANIN, *Poslednie stichi* (S vstupitel'noj zametkoj B. V. Smirenskogo), Moscow: Ogonek, 1962.
13. *Kniga i revoljucija* (Petrograd), 9-10 (21-22) (1922).
14. *Ibid.*, 9-10 (21-22) (1922).
15. OR GPB, f. 1000, post. 1975.55.
16. The manuscript was delivered to the publisher on 25 October 1921, Leningrad State Archive of Literature and Art - LGALI - f. 2913, op. 1, but did not appear in print until Nov. 1922.
17. For an analysis of *Putešestvie v kaos*, see Anthony ANEMONE, "Konstantin Vaginov and the Leningrad Avant-Garde: 1921-1924," Diss. University of California, Berkeley 1985, 56-87.
18. The students of this seminar published an anthology of their poetry entitled *Zvučuščaja rakovina* (The Sounding Shell) in 1922.
19. For more information on the "Islanders", whose members included Nikolaĭ Tixonov, Sergej Kolbas'ev and Petr Volkov, see ANEMONE, op.cit., 88-116.
20. MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, 67.
21. *Apollon* (Petersburg), 11 (1911), 73-75; reprinted in: STRUVE and FILIPPOV, vol. 4, 274-275.
22. Aleksandr BLOK, *Sobranie sočinenij v vos'mi tomach*, Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1960-1964, vol. 8, 380.
23. A. BLOK, op.cit., vol. 7, 93-94.
24. V. MARKOV, *Manifesty i programmy*, 23-25. Originally published in: *Oranževaja urna. Almanah pamjati Fofanova*, St. Petersburg: Peterburgskij glašataj, 1912.
25. V. MARKOV, *Manifesty i programmy*, 26-27. Originally published separately in St. Petersburg in 1912.
26. V. MARKOV, *Manifesty i programmy*, 72-73. Originally published in: *Orly nad propast'ju*, St. Petersburg: Peterburgskij glašataj, 1912.
27. V. MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, 67-68.
28. For an incomplete but representative bibliography of Olimpov's poetry see MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, 432.
29. Leonid BORISOV, *Za kruglym stolom prošlogo. Vospominanija*, Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1971, 111-112.

30. See Georgij Ivanov's assessment of Olimpov: "javno sumasšedšij, no ne sovsem bezdarnyj mal'čik", in: *Peterburgskie simy*, New York, 1952, 46. See also Vladimir PJAŠT, *Vstreči*, Leningrad, 1929, 264, and MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, 75-76.
31. V.MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, 76.
32. Ibid., 77.
33. Petition of the "Kol'co" to the Petrograd Division of Gosizdat, dated 25 October 1921. Leningrad State Archive of the October Revolution of the Soviet Union (LGAORSS), f. 2913.
34. Leningrad State Archive of Literature and Art (LGALI), f. 2913, op.1, d.113, l.351.
35. See review in: *Žizn' iskusstva* (Petrograd), 27 March 1923, 121, 7: "Poëma Dorina - "U skata" - jasno navejana "Solov'-inym sadom" Bloka. Eto - splošnoj perepev."
36. *Istoričeskij sbornik*, St.Petersburg, 1916.
37. However, Izmajlov proved useful to the "Kol'co" and the Smirenskij brothers even after his death. In April 1922, they founded a new literary association called the "Sojuz pisatelej imeni. A.A.Izmajlova". This other "Union of Writers" included as members Aleksej Alekseevič Izmajlov, the brother of Aleksandr Alekseevič, Vladimir Gordin, Vladimir Lenskij (Abramovič), Nikolaj Ivanovič Poznjakov, Boris Rozov, Fedor Sologub, Aleksandr Tynjakov, Konstantin Olimpov (Fofanov), and Ieronin Ieronimovič Jasinskij (Maksim Belinskij). The group survived until Sologub's death in 1927. Their motto, from a poem by Izmajlov, sums up their impact on the history of Russian literature: "Ja žil, ja myslil, ja prošel kak dym." See A.SKORBNYJ, A.A.Izmajlov. *Vospominanija o nem*, Petrograd, 1922.
38. V.MARKOV, *Russian Futurism*, 71 and note 25, 393.
39. Manuscript Division of the Institute of Russian Literature at Puškinskij dom, Leningrad (RO IRLI), f.289, op.3, d.880.
40. LGAORSS, f.2913, also OR GPB, f.782, n.15.
41. OR GPB, f. 1049.
42. LGAORSS, f. 2913.
43. *Vestnik literatury* (Petrograd), 1 (37), 1922.
44. *Literaturnye zapiski* (Petrograd), 3, 1. August 1922.
45. *Petrogradskaja pravda*, 17 June 1922.
46. *Krasnaja gazeta* (večernij vypusk, Petrograd), 203, 9, September 1922, 7.
47. *Žizn' iskusstva*, 43 (866), 31 October 1922.
48. There is one, inaccurate, reference to the "Kol'co poetov" in Markov's *Russian Futurism*, 77.

APPENDIX

УСТАВ КОЛЬЦА ПОЭТОВ ИМ. К.М. ФОФАНОВА

27 июня 1921 г.

ПРОГРАММА ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ КОЛЬЦА ПОЭТОВ ИМ. К.М. ФОФАНОВА

1. Подробное ознакомление с современными литературными течениями: имажинизм, акмеизм, футуризм и т.д.
2. Изучение творчества поэта К.М. Фофанова и разбор его избранных произведений.
3. Деятельное самостоятельное творчество.
4. Способствование путем издания сборников и альманахов, а также устройством "вечеров" воскрешению умершей славы поэта К.М. Фофанова.
5. Коллективное чтение современной литературы и разбор ее.
6. Чтение своих произведений при свободной дискуссии.
7. Исполнение завещания поэта К.М. Фофанова.
8. Издание его произведений (изданных и неизданных).
9. Издание альманахов Кольца.
10. Устройство музея имени К.М. Фофанова.

УСЛОВИЯ ПРИЕМА

1. Знание и понимание творчества поэта К.М. Фофанова.
2. Самостоятельное творчество.
3. Влечение к высокому и непонятному.
4. Представление в Кольцо не менее десяти стихотворений с соответствующими заявлениями.
5. Глубокая любовь к К.М. Фофанову.

ОБЩИЕ ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ

1. Всею текущей культурно-просветительной, научной и художественной работой руководит Президиум.
2. Общее собрание Кольца созывается периодически, не менее трех раз в полугодие, для подведения итога сделанной работы и наличия дальнейшей, отчета в движении денежных сумм и т.д. Кворум считается при наличии половины действительных членов. В противном случае собрание переносится на следующий день, в который оно считается действительным при любом числе собравшихся.
3. Казначей и секретарь избираются из числа действительных членов. Первый обязан вести приходно-расходные книги, расходуя денежные суммы на собраниях. Второй ведет всю переписку Кольца, оповещает членов о собраниях и вечерах и принимает заявления.
4. Товарищ председателя избирается из числа действительных членов, заменяет председателя в его отсутствие, помогает ему в ведении всей работы и обязан быть в курсе всех дел Кольца.

О ДЕЙСТВИТЕЛЬНЫХ ЧЛЕНАХ

1. Действительными членами являются поэты и писатели-профессионалы, имеющие не менее одной изданной книги или вполне оформившиеся молодые поэты начинающие, по удостоверению коллеги

экспертов.

2. Для вступления в действительные члены необходимо представление Президиуму печатного труда или же, за неизменением такового, десяти стихотворений. В случае удовлетворения всем условиям приема, данное лицо зачисляется в списки действительных членов.
3. В члены Кольца могут быть принимаемы: артисты, художники и композиторы.
4. Артисты, художники и музыканты действительными членами быть не могут.
5. Лица, не удовлетворяющие условиям приема, а потому не принятые, извещаются об этом Президиумом.
6. В члены Кольца могут приниматься лица, желающие в нем работать и имеющие какое-либо отношение к литературе: издатели, критики, публицисты, редакторы и т.д.

О ВЫХОДЕ ИЗ ЧЛЕНОВ

1. О желании выйти из состава членов подается заявление, с указанием причин выхода, рассматриваемое Президиумом, который и исключает данное лицо из состава Кольца, причем обязательна сдача членского билета.
2. Исключение из членов может быть произведено по следующим причинам:
 - а) за непосещение 2-х общих собраний Кольца и
 - б) за непосещение 3-х обязательных вечеров или за непринимание вообще участия в какой бы то ни было работе Кольца в течение полугода. Президиум Кольца посылает члену предварительное извещение с предложением явиться для дачи объяснений, во второй раз предупреждение, и в третий раз исключает данное лицо из членов Кольца, о чем ставит его в известность. Означенное лицо обязано сдать свой членский билет Президиуму.

О ЧЛЕНСКИХ БИЛЕТАХ

Членский билет имеет форму:

Кольцо поэтов имени К.М. Фофанова.
Единое сплетение художников слова.
Членский билет № ...

Фамилия:
Имя, отчество:
Председатель:
Секретарь:

Членские билеты выдаются членам по зачислении их в списки Кольца.

ПРАВА ЧЛЕНОВ

Члены пользуются правом бесплатного входа на вечера Кольца, по предъявлении билета.

О ЧЛЕНСКИХ ВЗНОСАХ

При вступлении члены платят вступительный взнос в размере 1000 рублей. Казначей Кольца, ведущему книгу членских взносов. Ежегодный членский взнос устанавливается в размере 1000 рублей.

О ДЕНЕЖНЫХ СРЕДСТВАХ

Денежные средства Кольца составляют:

- 1) из вступительных взносов,
- 2) из членских взносов,
- 3) из вырученных сумм от устройства вечеров, концертов, и т.д.
- 4) из сумм, вырученных от издания альманахов, журналов, книг, и т.д.
- 5) из добровольных пожертвований отдельных лиц.

ОБ ОРГАНИЗАЦИОННОМ УПРАВЛЕНИИ

1. Изданием книг, журналов и альманахов Кольца ведает редакционная коллегия, избранная из состава действительных членов Кольца.
2. Устройство вечеров и концертов ведает художественный совет, избранный из представителей всех видов искусства.
3. Все возникающие недоразумения между членами Кольца, а также различного рода заявления и жалобы рассматриваются судом чести.
4. Суд чести избирается общим собранием Кольца из числа всего состава в количестве трех человек, из коих один является председателем. На обязанности его лежит ежемесячный созыв членов суда для рассмотрения всякого рода жалоб. В крайних случаях ему предоставлено право действовать по его усмотрению.
5. Во главе всей культурно-просветительной работы Кольца стоит Президиум и подчиненное ему литературное бюро в составе пяти членов Кольца в области художественной литературы.

Художественный совет и редакционная коллегия избираются Президиумом и утверждаются общим собранием.

КОЛЛЕГИЯ ЭКСПЕРТОВ

Коллегия экспертов избирается общим собранием Кольца, состоит из пяти членов, один из коих является председателем. В коллегия экспертов избираются действительные члены, обладающие глубокими знаниями в области техники стиха и прозы и имеющие высшее научно-литературное образование. На обязанности коллегии лежит просмотр стихов, представляемых вступающими в Кольцо и определение их художественности. Члены коллегии могут просматривать представляемые материалы как на совместных заседаниях, так и в отдельности. По даче заключений всех членов коллегии председатель ее передает материал в Президиум.

В случае убыли по каким-либо причинам члена коллегии, общее собрание Кольца избирает нового члена на существующих основаниях. Коллегия экспертов, как и Президиум, избирается бессрочно.

Представляемые в Кольцо стихи рассматриваются Президиумом. В случае же сомнений в даровании представившего, стихи передаются в коллегия экспертов, члены коей обязаны, по рассмотрении, налагать отзыв и незамедлительно возвращать их секретарю Кольца.

ОБЯЗАННОСТИ ЧЛЕНОВ

1. На официальных "Вечерах поэзии" присутствие всех членов Кольца обязательно.
2. Ежегодно чтить память К.М. Фофанова в день годовщины его смерти, устраивать публичный вечер, литературные поминки и посещая могилу его для возложения на нее цветов и чтения стихов, посвященных покойному.

"ЗАВЕЩАНИЕ ПОЭТА К.М. ФОФАНОВА"

В дни, когда меня не будет,
Завещая Вам, друзья:
Пусть металл меня разбудит,
Пусть из меди буду я.
Пусть вокруг играют дети,
И цветет сирени куст.
Пусть услышит звуки эти,
Как при жизни, медный бюст.
Хоть без жизни, хоть без слов он,
Но по-прежнему живой.
Это Фофан, добрый Фофан,
Это друг наш дорогой!

1907 г. К.М. Фофанов

"ЗАВЕЩАНИЕ ПОЭТА К.М. ФОФАНОВА"

Мои надгробные цветы
Должны быть розовой окраски.
Не все я высказал мечты,
Не все поведал миру сказки.

К.М. Фофанов

Идите новые пути!
Стал тесен мир! Его окопы
Неумолимы и суровы,
Где же вечным розам зацвести?
Идите новые пути! ...

К.М. Фофанов

Устав утвержден на собрании членов Кольца поэтов 27 июня 1921 г.
Председатель Андрей Скорбный
Товарищ председателя Грааль-Арельский
Секретарь Борис Смиренский

ЛГАОРСС ф 1001 оп. 6, д. 101. лл. 13-25.