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ZAUM' AS THE RECOLLECTION OF PRIMEVAL ORAL MIMESIS

What follows may at times appear to be a discussion of the origin of language. However, it is not my intention to reopen a discussion *per se* on a subject so shrouded in obscurity that it is available only to futile speculation. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the ideas on the meanings of language sounds current among some members of the Russian Symbolist and Futurist literary movements of the second and third decades of this century. The ideas are interesting and explain something of the literary practice of the time, particularly in regard to *zaum'*, and they may even say something about the nature of language, but while they suggest a theory of the origin of language, they have no more claim to validity than other conjectures.

The key to the matter is the gesture theory of language origin which had great currency at the time. The idea is that language began as a series of bodily movements which depicted and communicated concepts. Speech arose as an involuntary or perhaps conscious paralleling by the vocal apparatus of those bodily gestures. Darwin theorized that speech gained ascendancy because it "left the hands free for other tasks" (Pei, 1966: 22; Darwin 1874: 105); /it was also effective "in the dark and around obstacles"/ (Pei: 22). He further theorized: "we can trace the formation of many words further back than that of species, for we can perceive how they actually arose from the imitation of various sounds" (Darwin: 106). The "imitation of various sounds" is not confined to simple onomatopoeia ("ding-dong" or "meow") where the voice attempts to reproduce the sounds of the external world (which is of limited communicative value) but involves more complex considerations, as is clear when Darwin follows the above quotation with the example: "The letter *m* in the word *am*, means *I*; so that in the expression *I am*, a superfluous and useless rudiment has been retained" (Darwin: 106). Clearly the sound for which the letter *m* stands does not obviously exist in the external non-human world or demonstrate any link to the concept *I*, while its oral articulation may perhaps be related to the concept. Though in practice it is not always easy to separate ono-

matopoeia from voice gesture, all but the most naive writers reject the simple onomatopoeic theory.

Variations on Darwin's gesture theory can be found before the fact in Wilhelm von Humboldt (1836), concurrently in Max Müller (1861), and afterward in Wilhelm Wundt (1900), to name the most prominent Germans who were influential in Russia. Such theories contributed directly to the thinking of A. Potebnja, A. Veselovskij and A. Belyj, who in turn influenced the Futurists and Formalists. Wundt's *magnum opus*, *Völkerpsychologie* (1900 - 1909) in particular received considerable attention in Russia for its theories of the origin of language, being the subject of a substantial essay by the popular writer F. F. Zelinskij, "Vil'gel'm Vundt i psihologija jazyka" (1901 where the concept of "zvukovoj žest" (Wundt's *Lautbilder*) is extensively discussed /see also Gornfel'd and Batjuškov/). Zelinskij's essay is rather clearly the source of Šklovskij's knowledge of Wundt's theories, as evidenced in Šklovskij's key essay on *saum'*, "O poézii i zaumnom jazyke" (1919).¹ The linguistic speculations of these prominent theoreticians lent a certain aura of validity to poets' efforts to remove the accretions of time and evolution and penetrate back intuitively, to reconstruct, to *recall*, as it were, the original meanings of the sounds of language, to find in the way sounds were created in the oral cavity by the vocal apparatus the parallel gestures, the sign language, the mimesis that Darwin and others had posited. If with imagination it is possible to read a meaning into sounds and articulations, then it is natural to assume that the meaning was there originally and we are simply rediscovering or remembering it.

Humboldt may also have been the one to provide another rationale for this quixotic attempt when he said "All understanding... is always at the same time a misunderstanding" (1824-26: 235). He appreciated that even when clarity is most sought, communication is always to some degree faulty. One person using a common word never has quite the same meaning in mind as another who hears him. If standard language is only partially successful, then perhaps something better can be found, either by creating a new language or by rediscovering the old, primeval language which has since become spoiled by cultural evolution.

Creating a new language represents the natural aim of the Futurists, with Chlebnikov among them having this as his most explicit goal, while the rediscovering of primeval sound symbolism is closer to the hearts of the Symbolists. But these orientations are not as divergent as they seem on the surface, since, to be better than the present language, the future language must achieve a close bond between sign and meaning, or regain the closeness it once had. This bridge between the newest and the oldest was established by Vjačeslav Ivanov (1904: 7) in his essay "Poët i čern'":

творчество поэта - и поэта-символиста по преимуществу--можно назвать бессознательным погружением в стихию фольклора... Символы--переживания забытого и утерянного достояния народной души. ...Что познание - воспоминание, как учит Платон, оправдывается на поэте, поскольку он, будучи органом народного самосознания, есть вместе с тем самым--орган народного воспоминания. Чрез него народ вспоминает свою древнюю душу и восстанавливает спящие в ней веками возможности. ...Поэт хочет быть одиноким и отрешенным, но его внутренняя свобода есть внутренняя необходимость возврата и приобщения к родимой стихии. Он изобретает новое и обретает древнее.

Ivanov did not himself develop theories on sound symbolism or oral mimesis but several of his fellow Symbolists did, notably Belyj and Bal'mont.

Of all the poets we will consider, Belyj showed the most specific interest in oral mimesis, constructed the most complete and elaborate system around it, and demonstrated the most thorough knowledge of German theories and their Russian offspring, as his *Simvolizm* (1910) and review of Potebnja's *Mysl' i jazyk* of the same year amply testify. However, it is a later work, *Glossalolija*,² written in 1917, but not published until 1922, that is the culminating fruit of this concern of Belyj's and the place where he fully elaborated his system. The foreword to *Glossalolija* states:

Так же звук я беру здесь, как жест, на поверхности жизни сознания, - жест утраченного содержания; и когда утверждаю, что "Сс" - нечто световое, я знаю, что жест в общем - верен, а образные импровизации мои суть модели для выражения нами утраченной мимики звуков. Что мимика эта в нас вспыхнет и осветится сознанием, в это твердо я верю. (10)

The key words for our purposes are *žest utraćenog sadržanja* and *modeli dila vyraženiža nami utraćennoj mimiki zvukov*, and they provide a clear statement of what the present investigation is about, even though the work itself appeared on the scene on the far side of the heyday of *žaum'*. If we ignore the chronology a bit, this strange, controvertial, maligned essay provides us with an excellent starting point, because of its thoroughness and clear exposition of the orientation that lies at one corner of the foundation of *žaum'*. At the same time, this work has yet to receive any serious attention, typically being dismissed as the work of a crackpot on the verge of insanity.

Let us begin by quoting some of the significant statements in the opening pages:

все слова - напоминанья о звуке старинного
смысла. (12)

словари звуко-образов, бременя память нам, не
взирают нам в душу былым своим явственным жестом;
так: ясность звучного смысла - в умении видеть
танцы танцовщицы с шарфом - воздушной струей. (13)

Жесты рук отражают все жесты безрукой танцовщицы,
пляшущей в мрачной темнице: под сводами неба; безрукую
мимику отражает движение рук; ...Жест руки нам безрукий
язык подглядел; и повторил его звуками (15)

Звуки - древние жесты в тысячелетних смысла; в
тысячелетних моего грядущего бытия пропоет мне
космической мыслью рука. Жесты - юные звуки
еще не сложившихся мыслей, заложенных в теле моем (16)

In these quotes we have all the important premises necessary to proceed: the attempt to recover the "ancient meaning" hidden in the sounds of words, the significance of the oral articulation as the key to this meaning, the Darwinian principle that oral mimicry was originally a parallel to hand gestures, and finally that these gestures (oral and hand) were reflections of as yet incompletely determined thoughts. The image of the tongue as an armless dancing girl with a scarf of air (see illus.) can be attributed to the strong influence of Rudolf Steiner's eurhythmics, a preoccupation of Belyj's essay not shared by any other figure in this study. Steiner's influence can also be seen in Belyj's presentation of his material as a cosmogony, as if the arrival of sound-gestures paralleled the creation of the universe as described by Steiner in his *Die Geheimwissenschaft im*

Umriss (1909).³ The following quotation illustrates early on the basic structure of Belyj's presentation:

Образование спирант - образование горящих туманностей газа: тончайшей материи звуков; в "w", "v", "r", "h" и "s" мы имеем распад на тепло (w), энергию (r), воздух холодный (v) и воздух теплый (h), на свет и огонь ("s" и "r"); а в сонантом ряду u-w-r-l-n - образование: из воздуха влаги; l-m-n -- явно жидки; три взрывные -- g-d-b - почти тверды: "b" - вязко, "d" - звонко, "g" - рыхло-рассыпчато; k-t-p (ряд глухих, глухо-взрывных) - тверды; я сказал бы, что - каменны, еслиб "p" не являлся нам символом твердой животности, "t" - растительной тканью; "k" - каменный, минерально-безжизненный звук; вот три царства: животных ("p", "b"), растений ("t", "d"), кристаллов ("k") и аморфных земель ("g"). (14-15)

The Steinerian elements will be minimized in the present discussion, but they cannot be entirely avoided, since they thoroughly inform Belyj's presentation of material and tend to dictate his choice of examples, though the specific parallels between sounds and Steiner's cosmogony are not drawn from Steiner's book (or from elsewhere in Steiner's work, as far as I am aware) but are Belyj's invention. Belyj, along with other poets, analyzes not only phonemes but proceeds immediately to roots and words; however, the range of examples and approaches makes comparison among them difficult. I will therefore throughout this paper attempt to limit discussion to phonemes.

Belyj's procedure is to present the whole process of creation in a nutshell (as quoted above) and then review it in detail several times and from several angles. The first sound to emerge from chaos is "ha": "Poluglasnaja 'h' (vernej 'a' s pridychaniem) -- pervoe vezhanie vozducha zvuka iz žara, iz glotki" (14). Later he characterizes "a" not only as *žar*, but also as *polnota duši* and *udivlenie* (ach) (69, 106). Not surprisingly, key words, such as *žar*, reflect the concept or purported content of the sound gesture, "a" being the most direct expression of unobstructed hot breath, breath being the expression of spirit (*spiritus*; *duch*, *duša*, *dychanie*), and *ach* being the exclamation of spiritual exultation (and surprise).

Belyj's second sound gesture is "r", the expression of the first motion, thus of energy, and is an emanation of *žar*. Hence "ar" is the "koren' dejstviija"-*"borozda"*-*"rabota rabot"*, (42-43),

while "er", which contains the "e" vowel expressive of "polovinčatost', kolebanie, somnenie, no zorkost', veduščaja k mysli" (70), is the "koren' tečenija vremeni" (42).

This should give some notion of Belyj's method. Unfortunately it is impossible to give a full impression of the various levels of treatment on the different "days of Creation". The key words and phrases associated with such of the sounds are contained in the Table. It has been necessary to be selective, sometimes drawing examples from various levels, but I have tried to choose the most characteristic words with the most obvious relation to articulation and the least Steinerian influence. An interesting feature of Bely's presentation is his focus on latin letterforms rather than cyrillic for identifying the sounds. Thus we have "h", "w" and "th", and thereby a much less ethnocentric orientation than is the case with other Russian poets. However, since these sounds are not dealt with by others, they have been omitted from the Table. A glance at the Table reveals that some of Belyj's associations (such as z, m, p, t) are quite unusual, a product of the Steinerian cosmogonic influence, while others are, as we shall see, close to the standard interpretation. For comparison the Table also includes the suggested meanings of certain similar sounds from Plato's *Cratylus*.

By contrast, Bal'mont, who also takes a cosmogonic approach, covers the vowels completely, while he treats the consonants only very selectively. The Table contains selected associations drawn from his *Počatija kak volšebstvo* (1915). He says: "Každye slovo - est' ten' pervomysli" (54). It is interesting that the sounds selected are much the same ones selected by Plato and seem therefore to be those in which some meaning is strongly suggested by the articulation. Thus there is significant agreement among these first three: "l" is liquid, "r" is full of motion, "i" is associate with height or subtlety, "a" with fullness, "o" with roundness, "n" with inward containment. Among the vowels, Belyj and Bal'mont agree that "u" is dark and both associate the word *ugol*. Plato says nothing. The two Russians find "e" unstable, while Plato associates it with length. Here one cannot avoid the impression that the words in the language native to the writer which contain the given sound and the specific articulation of the given sound in that language

strongly influence the writer's interpretation. It is probably that "u" would be generally associated with darkness and depth because of its articulation (distinctive features: diffuse, low tonality (Halle, 1959: 45)), regardless of one's native language (here one recalls Mallarmé's distress that *nuît* and *jour* have their vowels reversed vis-à-vis their meaning (Jakobson, Waugh, 1979: 193)), but why *ugol*? What is angular about the sound except the word *ugol* in Russian? And is "e" unstable or indefinite because it is reduced when unaccented in Russian? Or because its jotization seems to be a more prominent feature of its articulation than is the case with the other vowels, and the sliding of the tongue creates an impression of instability not unlike that of "l"? Or because the considerably greater statistical frequency of the "soft" variant of the letter causes Russians to focus on the "soft" variant, while with the other vowels the "hard" variant is considered typical?⁴ While some linkages between articulation and meaning may be international, clearly others are rather language-bound.

Let us move quickly to the Futurists before considering the total picture. The Table contains the results obtained from Kamenskij's *Ego - moja biografija velikogo futurista* (1918a), and the poem "Kamen'" (1918b), several of David Burljuk's poems (1914: 39, 44; 1915: 95-96), several of Chlebnikov's essays (1913-1919),⁵ and A. Tufanov's *K saumi* (1924). It is interesting that Kamenskij and Burljuk focus on the vowels, but treat the consonants only fragmentarily, despite the supposed preference of the Futurists for consonants and rejection of the vowel music of the Symbolists. Chlebnikov, on the other hand provides us with a fairly complete system which concentrates on the consonants. The vowels are characterized briefly in one place (1972: 189) where their meaning corresponds mainly to their use as conjunctions (a, i) or prepositions (o, u), but find their most active role in Chlebnikov's system of "internal declension" because of their morphological function as noun endings (1972: 172-173). The consonants are treated in detail several times. Many of Chlebnikov's initial interpretations are idiosyncratic, not to say strange, such as M -- "razpadenie celogo na časti (bol'shogo v maloe)" (1972: 184), with little evident rationale in either sound, articulation (closing of the mouth?) or word

association; while others fall in the mainstream eg. "K - ob-raščenie sily dviženija v silu položenija(bega v pokoj) tvėrdoe" (1972: 189). However, by the time we get to the essay "Chudožniki mira" (1919), the controlling factor in these interpretations becomes obvious, namely, the shape of the cyrillic letter. Thus: "V na vseh jazykach značit vraščenie odnoj točki krugom drugoj ili po celomu krugu ili po časti ego, duge, vverch i nazad" (1972: 217). The meaning is derived from a moving point, the path of which forms the shape of the letter. This would also better explain the earlier meaning of M, repeated in the later essay nearly verbatim. One of the clearest cases is Č (У) associated with the word *čaja* (chalice) and indicating "the emptiness of one body, filled with the content of another" (see Table). Other interpretations are, on the other hand, changed to accord with this emerged principle, eg. L, R, T, Z. The artists of the world, with their visual acuity, are invited to design a new writing system that best reflects the meaning of these letter-sounds as seen by Chlebnikov; but, strangely enough, the cyrillic alphabet seems to do this rather well already. Chlebnikov's meaning is already visibly conveyed, for example, by the cyrillic letterform В, but considerably less so by the latin letterform V. One indeed wonders whether Chlebnikov's interpretation of this letter would seem even vaguely apt to anyone but a literate Russian, let alone to "all languages".

Clearly Chlebnikov's visual principle takes us largely out of the realm of oral gesture and articulation and into the realm of geometry and the meaning of visual shapes, though the two realms may be related somehow because they are both spatial to some extent. However, even when Chlebnikov seems to have moved decisively into the latter realm, there remain traces of the former, eg. "K značit otsutstvie dviženija, pokoj seti n toček, sochranenie imi vzaimnogo položenija; konec dviženija" (1972: 218) (not in Table) where, unless he is proposing that the letter be written as a dot, it is hard to see a letterform in the description, but it is not difficult to relate the interpretation to other poets' interpretations based on articulation or word association. Nevertheless, Chlebnikov comes closest of anyone to shifting the emphasis away from sound toward sight, and thus of reflecting the standard Symbolist-Futurist shift of emphasis.

In many ways, Tufanov's study parallels Belyj's in its international scope (Tufanov resorts to the latin alphabet and includes Russian, English and Chinese roots), in its demonstrated knowledge of the previous German theoretical literature (Humboldt, Wundt, etc.), in its genetic-historical approach (though Tufanov is anthropological, not Steinerian), and in its obvious focus on articulation. Yet Tufanov does not mention Belyj's book and may not have known of it when writing *K zaumi* (1924).⁶ In any case, Tufanov saw himself as a successor to Chlebnikov, calling himself Velemir II (spelling *sic*, 1924: 11), and was influenced to some extent by the Matjušin School of "Expanded Vision" in painting.⁷ Illustrations for the book were done by a member of that school, Boris Ender.

Tufanov states his position in the following way:

Материалом моего искусства служат произносительно-слуховые единицы языка, ф о н е м ы, состоящие из психически-живых элементов - к и н е м и а к у с м.

"Звук" речи сам по себе есть движение кинем и акусм, с параллельным им движением акустического ощущения; он также близок к природе, как музыкальный звук и как жест в оркестике Isedora Duncan (*sic*), где материалом искусства служит с а м о д в и ж е н и е, наполняющее время музыкального ритма. (1924: 9).

He explicitly relates this position to Wundt:

На заре рождения языка, в качестве рефлекса, происходит движение органов артикуляции, возникает уподобительный жест, "звуковая метафора" (по Вундту), локализованная в полости рта и исполняемая с ощущением мягкого нёба и пропуском в нос текущего из легких воздуха (15).

As a follower of Chlebnikov, Tufanov neglects the vowels and concentrates exclusively on the consonants. The Table presents his brief interpretations from pp. 14-15. He follows these by standard linguistic descriptions of phoneme articulation drawn from Baudouin de Courtenay (1912) and examples in words from various languages. Tufanov's analysis is subtle and interesting, not unlike later efforts by Sir Richard Paget (1930) and A. Jöhanncsson (1949), and worthy of more attention than we can give it here, but it has an avant-garde artistic, rather than scientific goal, the statement of which is worth quoting at length:

Эти звуковые жесты, производные движения, были основаны на уподоблении (сравнении); и в то время как в позднейшие века, сравнение предметов привело к комплексам звуков для выражения отношений между вещами, сравнение д в и ж в н и й привело к закреплению за фонемой прямого значения, с утратой значения звуковой метафоры...

Ощущение основных движений первобытный человек передавал звуковыми жестами органов артикуляции, а сочетание жестов-рефлексов на однородные ощущения движений принимало форму представления. Условия общественной жизни закрепили за звуковыми жестами функцию передачи ощущений двигательных процессов. И если бы человечество на дальнейших ступенях своего развития не перешло от уподобительных жестов к сравнению предметов (абстракции) с сопутствующим ему словом (после изобретения первого топора), а передавало бы при общении, с развитием производственной техники, только самые двигательные процессы и само движение, тогда, надо полагать, на земном шаре была бы только одна Заумь - страна, с особой культурой, богатой миром ощущений при многообразном проявлении формы (ритма) на материи (ритмичном сознании), но без признаков ума, без представлений о смерти, без развернутых при пространственном восприятии времени, идей и эмоций. Было бы царство без-умия с искусством за-умия. Если ошибок земного шара не повторили обитатели Марса, там, несомненно, должно быть такое "Государство". (16-17).

To complete the picture, the Table includes the standard linguistic descriptions of the phonemes in terms of articulation and distinctive features.⁸

This brings us to the end of our survey and we can now take an overview and engage in some generalizations.

It is clear that there is substantial agreement on some sounds across the board regardless of whether the writer is an ancient Greek, a Russian Symbolist or Futurist. This is true of the vowels in general and of the consonants b, k, l, m, n, r and t. I think we could conclude that this is because the articulations of these sounds most lend themselves to expressive interpretation. The roundness of o, the full openness of a, the tight forwardness of i, and the low backness of u provide rather clearcut parameters for meaningful expression in both Plato and the Russians. Reasons for the agreement among the Russians and disagreement of Plato on e have already been discussed. In regard to the consonants, it is interesting that there is close agreement on precisely those consonants which Plato chose to discuss, from which we might conclude either

that he influenced them, or, perhaps more likely, that he chose to discuss only those sounds in which the expressiveness was obvious and he avoided the less obvious cases, such as d, p, and ch. Where Plato and the Russians show differences in choice, this seems to reflect whether their language affords them good examples of lexical items to illustrate their point. For example, Plato discusses g in combination with l probably in part because Greek offers words with the gl combination that have a glutinous, clammy quality (*glischros*, *glukus*, *gloiodes*), while the Russians may prefer the voiceless partner k because Russian offers so many good examples of words in k to do with hardness. One wonders, however, why Plato neglected m, given its well-established maternal significance in Indo-European. Plato does not distinguish fricatives z, s and f from each other, but groups them together as all requiring a "great expenditure of breath". Significantly, the Russians agree on the fricative quality, but do not make much of the other distinguishing features (voicing, place of constriction).

This leads to several obvious hypotheses. One is that the agreement among speakers of the same language is sometimes a function of the stock of commonly used words that can be drawn upon to illustrate the meaning required. That is to say, word association plays an influential role in the interpretation process and may overshadow articulation or produce greater agreement among interpreters than could have been achieved purely on the basis of articulation. The second hypothesis is that certain articulatory features are more easily open to sementization than others. Voicing seems to be unimportant, while motions of the tongue and lips (which are more preceptible by the speaker than voicing) are important. The exact position of constriction that would distinguish one fricative or plosive from another (f, s, š, ch/v, z, ž; p, t, k/b, d, g) seems of only slight importance. Thus a kind of interpretational hierarchy emerges in the consonants in which the kinetic features (plosive, fricative, nasal, lateral, rolled) are most prominent, while the other features are much less prominent. Significantly, the prominent features are even named expressively (the explosiveness of a plosive, the friction of a fricative), while the

names of other features are neutral. The exception, labiality, which is inexpressive as a term, has a stronger expressive content because of the close association of the lips with kissing and sucking.

One surprising result of this study was that none of the Russians paid the slightest attention to palatalization of consonants and lumped the palatalized and unpalatalized partners under one heading. Here I suspect that spelling and the only weak and slowly emerging concept of the phoneme in this period was an important factor.

This brings us to another consideration -- the extent to which letter forms influenced interpretation. Greatest agreement is achieved in cases where an interpretation is also supported by the letter shape. This is most obvious in the case of the roundness of o and the thinness of i, but it may also be a contributing factor in the angular, wedge-shaped pointness of k, and to some lesser extent in other consonants. Obviously, as discussed above, it is the controlling factor of Chlebnikov's interpretations, which in turn seem to have influenced Tufanov's, though the latter had an ostensibly articulatory focus.

I have included as the last column in the Table the distinctive features as arrived at by Halle (1959). These are, of course, based on acoustical spectographs rather than on articulatory descriptions but they nevertheless also reflect potential expressivity in the terminology used, particularly if we add that the high/low tonality feature can be paraphrased as acute/grave for consonants. Thus the generally-accepted linguistic doctrine of distinctive features essentially corroborates the interpretations of the poets. Phonemes of and by themselves, at least some of them, have a kind of abstract, generalized meaning.

The personal link between *zaum'* and the concept of distinctive features is, of course, Roman Jakobson, a friend of the Futurists, himself the author of at least one *zaum'* poem written under the pen-name of Aljagrov,⁹ and subsequently the chief codifier of the concept of distinctive features. Jakobson in many places¹⁰ argues for the meaningfulness of sounds, yet when talking of the phoneme in the context of distinctive features he states: "The smallest meaningful unit in language is called

morpheme... The distinctive features and the phonemes possess no meaning of their own" (Jakobson, Fant, Halle, 1955: 14). Obviously the crux of the matter is the definition of "meaning". Distinctive features define phonemes by a series of binary relations out of which is created a phonological system. It is their place in the system that gives them their definition; "meaning", in the sense of something you can look up in a dictionary, is lacking. A comparison might be in art the color wheel and its binary oppositions of complementary colors, or the musical scale with each note defined by its place in relation to the tonic. Jakobson himself makes such comparisons. But we can ask: Does red not have a meaning of its own, based on inherent qualities? Kandinsky thought so (1911: 73 ff). Or middle C of a certain duration and timbre? As we have noted, both the standard articulation descriptions and the distinctive features contain such comparably meaningful qualities as "plosive", "fricative", "grave", "acute", "continuant", "compact". Articulation may be unconscious or preconscious--present but unattended, even in silent reading (inner speech)--but then linguistic structure is extensively of this kind.¹¹ This does not mean that it is not active, functional, influential. Linguistic drift occurs on this level: speakers express preferences by making choices without knowing consciously why they choose one form and not another.

It probably is not possible to separate out the kinetic, acoustic, associational and visual components of the sounds discussed and decide in most cases which of them played the determining role in the writer's interpretation. All these factors doubtless contribute to some degree in each interpretation. Yet under the influence of the Darwinian concept of vocal mimesis, the Russian poets we have surveyed, and they include all the ones who have spoken on this topic that I am aware of, each to some extent has relied on the gestures implicit in articulation of sounds to give those sounds meaning in and of themselves. Even Chlebnikov's moving dot is an abstracted geometric gesture of sorts. And the poets focus on the most gesture-like features of articulation.

Poets have long known that there is more in words than can

be found in a dictionary. One element inseparably bound to each word is its oral gesture, about which we usually forget. The *saum'* poets were not, I believe, trying to create meaningless poems; rather, by removing the distraction of denominative content, by avoiding recognizable morphological units, they leave us with a collection of oral gestures which we cannot help attending to, recalling in the process that familiar words, too, are made up of such elements. This is not unlike the removal of recognizable objects in abstract painting, the purpose of which is to liberate the painting from the artificial constraints of representation so that the "inner necessity" (Kandinsky, 1911: 81) of the composition may be more clearly preceived. At the same time, *saum'* strives to affirm the existence of oral expression that is pre-verbal, expression that cannot, need not and does not want to be translated into a cognitive verbal description any more than a painting or piece of a music can be so translated.

N o t e s

1. For a recent article which also covers the present topic to some extent see MANDELKER (1983).
2. Since Belyj anomalously but consistently misspelled the title this way, we will also do so.
3. Russian title cited by BELYJ, *Očerĭk tajnovedenija*.
4. Using the results from STEPANOV (1966: 76), we obtain the following relative vowel letter frequencies:

o	- 0.090
e, ě	- 0.072
a	- 0.062
i	- 0.062
ja	- 0.018
y	- 0.016
ju	- 0.006
ě	- 0.002

The first four are the most frequent letters in general. If we take into account that "ě" is relatively infrequent and that the results for "i" include a doubtless large proportion of unjotized initial "i's", then these statistics would support the point made in the text.

5. "Neizdannaja stat'ja" (1913), "Razloženie slova" (1915-16), "O prostykh imenach jazyka" (1916), and "Naša osnova" (1920). In: CHLEBNIKOV III, 1972, 187-90, 198-209, 216-21, 228-43).
6. Tufanov claims (1924: 9) to have been working on this project for the past four years. Belyj's book was published in Belin in 1922. However, Belyj had returned to Russia from Steiner's colony at Dornach in 1916 and lectured on anthroposophy and poetry extensively. The basic text of *Glossalolija* was completed in Carskoe Selo, a suburb of Petersburg in October, 1917. Given Tufanov's interest in the subject and Belyj's prominence, it would seem unlikely that Tufanov did not know something about Belyj's ideas on this subject.
7. On the Matjušin School see POVELIKHINA and DOUGLAS.
8. Articulation features were drawn from JONES and WARD (1969); distinctive features were drawn from HALLE (1959: 45).
9. Last page of A. KRUCHENYCH and O. ROZANOVA, *Zaumnaja kniga* (1915). See JANECEK, (1984: 179-82) for a discussion on this book and of "Aljagrov".
10. The most recent and thorough treatment of this theme is the final chapter of JAKOBSON and WAUGH, (1979).
11. On "inner speech" and the link between motor processes and meaning see SOKOLOV, (1975: 39 ff).

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TABLE

	Plato (Cratylus)	Белый (1922)	Бальмонт (1915)	Каменский (1918a,b)	Бурлак (1914,1915)	Хлебников (1913-19)	Туфанов (1924)	articulation	distinctive features
vowels									
a	size	жар, полнота души, удивление	самый гласный звук без всякой преграды исходящий изо рта	арка, радуга, мать, ау; сцепление, жидкость, начало	широки, просторны	против		open front unrounded	nondiffuse compact
e	length	половинчатость, колебание, сомнение но зоркость ведущая к мысли; неопределенная	неверная, трудно определяемая	день, свет, селенье, дерево, элей	приплюснутость мель	упадок, упадать		half-closed front unrounded	nondiffuse noncompact high tonality
и	subtle elements which pass thru all things	восхищенность, духовность	тонкая линия, крик, острое, быстрое	связь, прибавление, вода (пить, дить, нитка, вино)	высоки проворны	соединяет		front unrounded	diffuse high tonality
o	roundness	душа, ощущение	горло, рот, восторг, огромное, темное	колесо простора, округлость воздуха, небо, высоко	горба	увеличивает рост		back, less-than-half-open, medium lip-rounding	nondiffuse noncompact low tonality
y		темнота, угол, узкость, глубинность, дух природы	музыка шумов, ужас, угрюмая дума, угол	розовоутренность, гибкость, возбуждение, мность	пустая труба	покорность		close back rounded	diffuse low tonality
consonants									
b	binding, rest in a place	силы давящие		божественностическое начало (бог, бытие)		рост в большее, с ощущением лин-наибольшая ейного направления по закону жения; встреча инерции после рас- двух точек дви-саянного, при осла- жущихся по блении преграды прямой с разных(t...d). стовок		voiced bi-labial plosive	noncompact low tonality mellow non-nasal voiced

consonants (cont.)	Plato	Белый	Бальмонт	Каменский	Бурлюк	Хлебников	Туфанов	articulation	distinctive features
в		воздух сияний	(г, г) голос, вох, голос ветра, дух, ветер, влаги			проникновение малым большим; волновое движение; вращение одной точки кругом кругой или по целому кругу или по части его, дуге, вверх и назад	с ощущением кругового дви- жения при опре- деленном радиусе	voiced labio-dental fricative	nondiffuse low tonality strident voiced
г	heavier + 1 =, glutinous slammy	рыхлость, рас- сыпчатость, леса, поверхности мин- ералов				малое от недоста- тка силы положен- ия, голод	с ощущением хаотического вне прикрытия	voiced velar plosive	compact low tonality interrupted voiced
д		место, всякая форма, растения			ощущение твердости, стойкости	переход части из одной силовой области в другую	с ощущением ослабления преграды и перехода в линейное направ- ление, по закону инерции (d)	voiced denti-alveolar plosive	noncompact high tonalit mellow non-nasal voiced
ж		з+л				увеличение от избытка силы (обжог, жечь); свобода двигаться независимо от соседей; движение из замкнутого объ- ема, отделение сво- бодных точечных миров	с ощущением прекращения лучевых из многих точек и поглощения встречным движением	voiced post-alveolar labio- velarized fricative	compact high tonality continuant voiced
з	expenditure of breath	зар тепла, луч тепла; свет огня	шипение мелест			созвучное колеб- ание отдаленных струн, отражение, зеркало; отражение движущейся точки от черты зеркала под углом, равным углу падения, удар луча о твердую плоскость	психическое сцепление с ощущением лучевых дви- жений из многих точек	voiced alveolar fricative	noncompact high tonality strident continuant voiced
й	(Not considered by any of the poets)								

к

Plato

Белый

Бальмонт

Каменский

Бурлик

Хлебников

Тупанов

articulation

distinctive
features

минеральная
почва;
удушение
смерть
стильность

твёрдо-
холодно-
острая
материальность
(корень,
клинок,
камень, кирка
кость, сук)

обращение силы
движения в силу
положения (бега в
покой) твёрдое;
слова около смерти
или слова лишения
свободы

психическое
сцепление с
ощущением
движения из
хаотического (g)
в сжатое

voiceless
velar
plosive

compact
low tonality
interrupted

л

liquid
smoothness

влага

влажное
люблю
светлый

нежность
ласка
плавность
лето
блеск
плеск

движение без власти
большой силы
свободы (прошлое
время...); переход
тела, вытянутого
вдоль оси движения,
в тело, вытянутого
в двух измерениях,
поперечных пути
движения

с ощущением
волнового
линейного
направления к
подвижной
точке

voiced
velarized
dental
lateral

vocalic
consonantal
continuant

м

плоть
жидкое
тёплое

первый
звук
закрытого
рта, стон
сдержанной,
скользящей
муки

звон животных,
ощущение
тепла жизни,
миросоздание

распадение на части
(большого в малое);
начаты имена самых
малых членов
нескольких много-
образий (мол, мука,
мышь)

психическое
сцепление с
ощущением
пространственно-
замкнутого
движения,
свободного под
покровом

voiced
bi-labial
nasal

compact
low tonality
mellow
nasal

н

inwardness

прохладно
(вода)
глубина,
пучина
холодная

второй
звук
закрытого
рта

мистичность
(некто, неведомый,
ночь)
отрицание: нет;
-ень: звук
падения

обращение в ничто
всего; отсутствие
точек, чистое поле

с ощущением
преграды в
замкнутом
движении

voiced
denti-
alveolar
nasal

nongcompact
high tonality
mellow
nasal

п

плоть
животных
уплотнение
чувств

маловесомые тела,
заполнение пустоты
телом якобы пустым;
движение, рожденное
разностью давлений:
порох, пушка, пить

психическое
сцепление с
ощущением
движения из
сжатого в
рассеянное

voiceless
bi-labial
plosive

nondiffuse
low tonality
mellow
non-nasal
nonvoiced

Page 4 consonants (cont.)	Plato	Белый	Бальмонт	Каменский	Бурляк	Хлебников	Туфанов	articulation	distinctive features
Р	all motion rapidity hardness	первое действие; энергия	скорое, узурное (чёрный)	кровь, труд, гром, раскат, удар	ощущение жестокости	непокорное движение, неподвластное целому; разделение тела "плоской пещерой" как след движения через него другого тела	психическое сцепление с ощущением волнового движения у неподвижной точки	voiced alveolar rolled	vocalic consonantal interrupted
С	expenditure of breath	свет, огни, свист, рассеяние, луч	шипение мелест			собрание частей в целое (возврат); действие умножения; движение посланных неподвижной точкой нескольких точек, под узким углом и в одном направлении (солнце, сиять, лучи, смысль, семя, сол)	психическое сцепление с ощущением лучевого двойного волно- образного движения	voiceless alveolar fricative	noncompact high tonality strident continuant nonvoiced
Т	binding, rest in a place	ткани земные лучей, растения			см. Д	подчиненность движения большей силы, цель; разрушаю- щий природу; остановка движения; закрытое для зрения и луча света; отрицательный путь и его направление за неподвижной точкой	психическое сцепление с ощущением усиления пре- град, вызыва- ющей изменение направления	voiceless denti- alveolar plosive	noncompact high tonality mellow non-nasal nonvoiced
Ф	expenditure of breath	воздух; фантазии					психическое сцепление с ощущением кругового движения при неопределенном радиусе	voiceless labio-dental fricative	noncompact low tonality strident nonvoiced
Х		дым (ха = тепло); засыхает → к; воздушные жары, радость рождения; смех облачения жизни; возлетно, разведенные руки				Имена сильной, раз- рушающей точки: холод корь, хам; имена сла- бой точки, нуждающей в защите: хилый, крупный	псих. сцеп. с ощущением при- крытия и сво- бодного движе- ния: а) к центру и б) к прикрытию	voiceless velar fricative	compact low tonality continuant

Plato	Белый	Бальмонт	Каменский	Бурляк	Хлебников	Туфанов	articulation	distinctive features
ц	вспышки лучей, зачатки растений (цветы)				проход одного тела через пустое место в другое	псих. слеп. с ощущением усиления пре- град (t) к лучевому (s)	voiceless alveolar affricate	noncompact high tonality strident interrupted
ч	прозрация темноты на материю, чёрное; уголь сухой порошок, порох, взрыв- чатость; чирикание				одно тело, закованное пустотой другого (чаши); оболочка, поверхность, пустая внутри, налитая или обнимаемая другой объём; полый двумерный мир, служащий оболочкой трехмерному телу — в пределах (череп, чан, чулок)	с ощущением нарастающей преграды (t) к прекращению лучевого (s)	voiceless palatalized alveolar affricate	compact high tonality interrupted
ш	см. ж	шипение шелест			оближение и уменьшение числа поверхностей при сохранении их площади, союз поверхностей в одну (шить, ширь, шут, шар); слияние границ между поверхностями	с ощущением прекращения лучевого уменьшением длины и погло- щения встречным движением	voiceless post-alveolar labio- velarized fricative	compact high tonality continuant nonvoiced
к	процессы сухой пере- гонки и вязкая масса растительной ткани				наибольшая поверхность при данном объёме, на- близие углов (церть, щель, непровитый, шурить); разбивка поверхности, целой раньше, на разные участки, при неподвижном объёме	с ощущением перехода в сжатое состояние		