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The Muscovite King Lear: Ocular Motifs in Andrei Belyi's "Moscow" Novels

How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell:
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.
(Shakespeare, *King Lear*)

The seeing are blind and the blind see. (Andrei
Belyi, *Masks*)

Belyi's early novels, *The Silver Dove* and *Petersburg*, revolutionized Russian prose by reviving the rich tradition of nineteenth-century Russian literature. That Russia's leading Symbolist prose writer steeped his first novels in Pushkinian, Gogolian, and Dostoevskian subtexts no doubt reflected Belyi's desire to engage a Russian audience. The final period of Belyi's artistic career, embracing the years 1926-1934, on the other hand, was a time in which the tenets of Socialist Realism were fast encroaching on the arts. Inasmuch as Belyi maintained his eclectic style, his work was more and more out of touch with Russian readers, but especially so with official literary circles. In contrast to his early prose, Belyi's final novels are characterized by a sphere of reference dominated by such literary giants as Dante, Goethe, Cervantes, and Dickens, with Shakespeare as his chief inspirational guide. With *Moscow* and *Masks*, the "Moscow" novels, Belyi sought his place in world literature, in spite of his increasing isolation in Soviet Russia. The "Moscow" novels belong as much to Belyi's full maturity as *King Lear* does to Shakespeare's. And indeed, like *King Lear* they are works that are more universal in scope.

The Learean echoes in *Moscow* and *Masks* go very deep, not only in terms of plot parallels, but especially in terms of dramatic structure and organization of imagery. Throughout the composition of the "Moscow" novels, a process which spanned seven years, Belyi read and reread Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Bugaeva 147). Charged with poetic language and sustained thematic conflicts, Belyi's novels are structured on dialectical patterns of advances and retreats, successes and failures. As has been

attested, Belyi consciously depended on the image of the "madman-Lear, the homeless and abandoned old man," while molding the Muscovite Lear, Professor Korobkin (Bugaeva 147). While every reading of Shakespeare brought new insights, Belyi was particularly overwhelmed by the "dramatic depth of Shakespeare's imagery" (Bugaeva 147). Belyi revealed his indebtedness to Shakespeare in his introduction to *Masks*, where he discusses Shakespeare's practice of repeating words and figures of speech to create a unity of tone and effect. Justifying the need to choose key-words that convey resonating associations, Belyi attributes his devices to Shakespeare:

It is up to me to choose the kinds of words according to their maximal repletion: a "succulent" and "overreplete" language is all the more necessary for me in the kinds of scenes which make *Masks* more dramatic in content; and dramatic moments need to be tempered with the deliberate coarseness of popular speech: I have taken this device from Shakespeare (Lear and the Fool, Hamlet and the gravediggers, and so on and so forth). (*Masks* 1969, 11-12).¹

Replete with paradoxes, irreversible extremes and constantly changing perspectives, the "Moscow" novels are primarily poetic dramas. Such is the paradoxical pattern of blindness through sight and sight through blindness which runs through both works. Just as ocular motifs unite the Lear and Gloucester plots in Shakespeare's play, so does the motif of "seeing" unite the Korobkin and Mandro plots in the "Moscow" novels. Furthermore, these dramas are not without a moral imperative, which reveals that spiritual blindness is the primary cause of evil in the world. Belyi's theme of the growth of consciousness is portrayed in a directly proportionate measure to the frequency with which sight imagery is implemented. As insight grows, more words conveying sight and eyes pervade the novels, just as with Shakespeare the more Lear is faced with cataclysms, the more he sees. Indeed, as in *King Lear*, the motif of seeing in the "Moscow" novels develops until it has transformed into a motif of vision and clairvoyance.

Like Shakespeare's tragedy, the plot of the "Moscow" novels concerns the destruction of filial and social ties. These may be summarized by citing Gloucester's pitiable account of humanity in the first act:

Gloucester: These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies

in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked between son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the king falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollownness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us disquietly to our graves. (I, ii, 103-114)

Gloucester's words prove tragically true in the betrayal of Lear by his elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, and in the betrayal of Gloucester by his bastard son, Edmund. *King Lear* explores these apocalyptic potentialities, as chaos in the family portends chaos in the state and universe. A sense that the fissure between father and child will bring about the destruction of the state and universe likewise motivates the parallel plots of the "Moscow" novels. Two filial relationships dominate. Although Professor Korobkin genuinely loves his daughter, Nadia, his love is not marred by pride as is Lear's love for Cordelia. Rather, his blind spot comes in the form of his disbelief in irrationality. Naive and egocentric, Korobkin escapes from life's unpleasantness by taking refuge in his study, where he makes a mathematical discovery that can bring about the world's end. Although this discovery is actually never revealed, it seems to deal with optical mechanics. Because of Korobkin's conscious withdrawal from life, he never notices, until it is too late, that his son, Mitia, unwittingly delivers him into the hands of his torturer, Mandro, who intends to sell the professor's equations to a foreign firm. After Nadia dies, her place in *Masks* is filled by Korobkin's nurse, Serafima, who is named "Cordelia."

The other father/daughter relationship, that of Mandro and Lizasha, reverses the pattern of idealized filial love: in *Moscow* Mandro rapes his daughter and in *Masks* Lizasha betrays her father to the secret police. Furthermore, children inherit their fathers' sins: Lizasha attempts to murder her son/brother to blot out her father's incestuous violation against her. Mandro, we learn, also tortured his wives, raped and murdered a young boy, and enlisted victims of his sexual perversions to be his spies. The novels encompass uncanny parallels with *King Lear*. Whereas in *King Lear* Gloucester's eyes are plucked out, in *Moscow* Korobkin's eye is burned out with a candle. Lear is driven out of his daughters' homes and eventually goes mad on the heath. Korobkin loses his sanity in the course of being tortured; during his recuperation in the insane asylum, his place in the home is usurped by his wife's lover; thus Korobkin, too, is driven from his home. One of the major flaws pervading Moscow's inhabitants is not only spiritual blindness, but the absence of recognition among family members. While Korobkin claims that man is superior to animals by virtue of his reason, his Newtonian world is violated again and again by repeated instances of savagery and deceit. Nevertheless, the punishment against him does not fit the crime, just as the overwhelming sufferings of Lear and Gloucester are

1 All citations will be followed simply by page number; in the first volume of the "Moscow" novels (1968); all citations will be followed by part and page number. The first part, *Moskovskii chudak*, will be designated as I, and the second part, *Moskva pod udarom*, as II. All translations are mine.

out of proportion to their moral blindness. Madness, sex, violence and cruelty govern the Lear and Korobkin worlds and point to the gradual deterioration of all human values. Furthermore, as the microcosm of the personal cracks and breaks, its counterpart, the macrocosm of the state and universe, follows suit. In *King Lear* civil strife develops into a war with France, while in Moscow World War I rages in the background. Thus, domestic crises mirror social upheavals. The savagery inherent in both worlds reveals that we have indeed seen the best of our time, as Gloucester aptly predicted. However much both Shakespeare and Belyi chart instances of unmotivated physical violence, highly poetic patterns seem to heighten the gruesome events by contrast.

Beneath the obvious parallel plots lies that "dramatic depth of Shakespeare's imagery," of which Belyi spoke. Scholars of Shakespeare often refer to patterns of recurrent imagery as the hallmark of *King Lear*, patterns which attest to the play's symmetry and universality (cf. e.g., Spurgeon; Heilman; Alpers; Brower 133-52; Brooke; Colie; Rosenber). *King Lear* is dominated by large clusters of repetitive images concerning, for example, sight, madness, clothing, animals, and nature. But within these symbolic patterns of recurrent imagery reside different levels of dramatic irony and paradox that create gross incongruities in the play. Hence, the blindness in sight and sight in blindness pattern is riddled with strange juxtapositions. Shakespeare's alternation of high diction with vulgar speech serves to illustrate his incongruous universe. In light of the suffering that ensues in Lear's world, these juxtapositions seem unbearable. It is not for naught that Belyi singled out the scenes between Lear and the Fool, for it is there that the follies of the "blind fool" Lear are first exposed. The Fool's annihilating humor foreshadows all of the impending reversals of fate that will follow, all of the startling paradoxes that will end with a king donned in rags, a crown of flowers and a baton of straw.

Because *Moscow* explores Korobkin's failure to see and *Masks* Korobkin's power to see that which no one else sees, ocular imagery will be an appropriate example of the power of the one all-pervasive pattern in Belyi's "Moscow" novels. Like Shakespeare Belyi uses sight as a symbol for the problems confronting man's errors of perception. References to the means of seeing, the act of seeing and to things seen pervade the "Moscow" novels. The motif of seeing is couched in countless images dealing with eyes, glasses, mirrors and other reflecting surfaces, as well as looking, insight, clairvoyance, etc. Belyi's "blind fool" Korobkin is first presented as a famous luminary of science. But the faultiness of Korobkin's sight derives from his dependence on reason. His eye, "oko" (the old Russian word for "eye"), sees only what Korobkin as a beacon of eighteenth century ideas of enlightenment wants to see. Korobkin is described as the pupil, sitting in the middle of a large

"Eye" reigning like God over man's thought: "In thought he occupied the unoccupied throne of God — right in the center of his Eye: like the pupil!" (I, 38). Indeed, this "Eye" represents a type of distorting mirror early in the novel, for rather than feel, it only thinks. His dependence on rationality results in an incomplete perspective, a closed system: he selectively sees only what his logical mind perceives. As we learn from Shakespeare's play, the tragedy of both Lear and Gloucester stems from the inability "to see feelingly" (IV, vi, 149). Indeed, Shakespeare's tragedy of marred vision is transcended only when seeing becomes synonymous with feeling. Korobkin's escape into mathematical integrals represents a deliberate strategy intended "to not see" life's chaos (I, 39). For this reason he prefers the secure environment of his favorite armchair, the armchair to which he will be tied up during his torture. Early in the novel, *Moscow*, the disaster implicit in Korobkin's failure to see the full implications of his scientific discovery is already foreshadowed in his dog's eye. Tomochka, the pointer, always greets his master with a bloody eye or a bloody gaze and a vile-smelling rag (I, 14, 39). Soon Korobkin will be driven from his "throne," as reigning monarch among mathematicians, with a bloodied eye and a smelly rag stuffed in his mouth. It is in this state that he is found after Mandro tortures him.

Each repetition of ocular imagery takes on new meanings in a context that becomes richer with every new perspective. For characters consumed by perversity, like Mandro, eyes are capable of devouring others (I, 60); Mandro's gaze squelches victims like flies (I, 158). Indeed, Gloucester's pronouncement, "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods, / They kill us for their sport," (IV, i, 36-37) reverberates throughout the first volume in the recurrent comparison of Lizasha and Korobkin to flies caught in Mandro's clutches. Zadopiatov, Korobkin's university colleague and Korobkina's lover, is tortured by his wife's "squinting glasses" and by her "invisible eye" (I, 188). Here the "invisible eye" represents Zadopiatov's own guilt. As soon as she discovers that her husband and Korobkina have been lovers for twenty-five years, Anna Pavlovna is associated in the text almost exclusively with her dark-blue spectacles. While spying on her rival, Anna Pavlovna devours everything in sight with her eyes (I, 120). On the other hand, Anna Pavlovna's transformation, which occurs after she has suffered a stroke, is heralded by her so-called "alive eyes" (II, 103). Even inanimate objects possess powers of sight: "with black-eyed windows the house peered into everything silently, bursting in tears from the window's reflection" (II, 89).

But eyes are supposed to reveal spiritual truths. In the early scenes of *Moscow* Belyi presents the eye as a mere receptor of images. However, as the drama of Korobkin's failure to see develops, the eye takes on a more dynamic role. It increasingly becomes a source of spiritual insight and comes to possess its own illuminating power. As Korobkin slowly gains insight into

the truth about Mandro's purposes, he admits in a fit of delirium that whereas previously he was blind, now he can see: "Before he was blind; he didn't see himself — in the condition in which he lived and worked; and someone made a paste and opened his eyes" (II, 191).² However, Korobkin has not yet gained spiritual vision, because he disavows his guilt in this drama.

It is here that the sight pattern gradually merges with the madness pattern, for the knowledge that comes with suffering generates new vision, a vision not without startling and horrifying import. Just as the failure to see brings on destruction, so does the failure to understand. Korobkin goes mad upon losing his eye. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the events leading up to Korobkin's torture are replete with references to eyes. Indeed, these references serve the same dramatic purpose as in *King Lear*. For example, during the irreverent procession of Salvation Army members who see Korobkin and Mandro before the torture, one Iasha Kaval'kas, the syphilitic dwarf who not only acts as one of Mandro's spies, but who owes his condition to Mandro as well, pronounces: "If your eye leads you into temptation, tear it out" (II, 212). This of course echoes Christ's warning in the Gospels: "If it is your eye that is your undoing, tear it out and fling it away; it is better to enter into life with one eye than to keep both eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell" (Matthew 18: 8-9). Figuratively, we do not need our eyes to see, that is, to understand; however, Iasha Kaval'kas is alluding to temptations of the flesh, which in Korobkin's case should hardly elicit his persecution. Gloucester's blindness, on the other hand, is perceived as the direct outcome of his illicit procreation of Edmund, his bastard son. Edgar informs Edmund: "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us: / The dark and vicious place where thee he got / Cost him his eyes" (V, iii, 170-173). Although Korobkin has not sinned in the flesh, he is persecuted nevertheless. Korobkin's tragic flaw is to depend on the exigencies of reason. Nevertheless, the place where Korobkin gave birth to his discovery, namely his mind, too, cost him his eye. Thus, blind rationalism is no less a crime than to do evil.

As Mandro's impatience with the professor's refusal to part with his equations grows, ocular imagery expands into ever more startling and shocking images. At first the sight of Korobkin's burnt-out eye is described as a glass liquid pouring down the professor's swollen cheek. Then we are told that this is the way fried eggs are made. (II, 236). This image recalls the grim humor of Cornwall as he gouges out Gloucester's eye: "Out, vile jelly!

/ Where is thy luster now?" (III, vii, 82). But upon being tortured the material substance of Korobkin's eye is transformed into a spiritual agent that merges with the cosmos. Just as the madman Lear resembles Christ in bearing more than his share of the world's pain, so Korobkin, no longer a man, but an "ono," ("an it"), becomes the way in Christ-like fashion: "I became the way" (II, 245). As Korobkin is surrounded by the padded walls of the insane asylum in a strait-jacket, his altered "Ego" takes on a divine status: "it' will become lightning — from east to west: it will return with an all-devouring flame; there will be nowhere to hide from this wild gaze; and nowhere to take one's eyes away from it: the walls of universal prisons are collapsing! And everything new will come into being" (II, 246).³ The eye metamorphoses from a simple receptor to a dynamic, illuminating force, capable of altering the laws of gravity. Furthermore, the loss of Korobkin's eye seems to pave the way for all the redemption and reconciliation motifs in *Masks*. Thus, a physical loss provides the impetus for a spiritual gain.

One of the most revealing transformations in *Masks* involves Mandro; and it transpires via his eyes. In the second volume of the "Moscow" novels Mandro, in his new guise as a French publicist, is pursued by the Russian secret police. Now it is Mandro who is victimized. Korobkin's primary task in *Masks*, once he recognizes that he is as guilty as Mandro, is to reconcile his persecutor with Lizasha. And this realization occurs in the context of ocular imagery. When Korobkin recalls all the details of Mandro's violation against him, tears well up in his eyes. These are hardly tears of sadness. Instead, Korobkin accepts his torturer as his mirror self: "Like the sun, playing at dawn, the eye warmed up with a tear: 'I and Thou!'" (302). Thus, Korobkin's plan to reunite Mandro with his daughter entails not only the restoration of a child-parent relationship, as in *King Lear*, but also Korobkin's own insight into a moral order. Lizasha, it must be remembered, betrays her father to the police. Throughout the scenes prior to and during this reconciliation scene Belyi develops an incongruous chain of imagery linking the corpse-like Mandro with eyes that shine brilliantly. As the ex-rapist and murderer-Mandro prepares himself for redemption, he ceases to wear sunglasses and comes to possess "horribly living eyes." The association of Mandro with "horribly living eyes" and "vibrantly lively eyes" signals the theme of metamorphosis and the shedding of masks (218, 273, 374, 377, 384, 394). Indeed, from the moment Mandro faces Korobkin eye to eye, he sheds cataracts from his eyes (389). The transformation is a result of recognition. Whereas in *Moscow* the force of the sight pattern

2 This passage also bears striking similarities to the Gospels. See John 9: 6-7: "With these words he spat on the ground and made a paste with the spittle; ... The man went away and washed, and when he returned he could see" (cf. also Muller Cooke 217-32).

3 Although "ono" could be interpreted as Korobkin's "Ego," in this context it could also read as Korobkin's "Okko." For an anthroposophical interpretation of this passage see Elsworth (190-92).

revolved around the absence of insight, that is, the failure to see beneath appearances, in *Masks* eyes are important because they establish human bonds. The lightning-like current between both pairs of eyes is so explosive that Mandro sheds, in addition to his cataracts, his false teeth, his wig and jewelry. This scene is at once comic and pathetic, and yet Mandro's new guise as a balding, toothless old man sets the tone for redemption, just as the sight of mad Lear in rags and blind Gloucester paradoxically reveals moral clear-sightedness. Hence, it is no surprise that Mandro's growing consciousness should coincide not only with renewed vision but also a quantum leap from monster to human being. (381)

The symbolic kernel of the "Moscow" novels ripens mainly in the reconciliation scenes between Mandro and Lizasha. Although Belyi dwelled at great length on the dissolution of the family in the first volume, not unlike the fourth act of *King Lear* where Lear is reunited with Cordelia, the final pages of *Masks* chart domestic reconstitution. As Korobkin leads Mandro to Lizasha, Mandro cries out: "Give me my daughter! Let me straighten out my path towards her — so that she could see out of her eyes, that I, too — see!" (410). Both father and daughter forgive each other in tears, tears which cleanse and act as a source of renewal. Mandro's eyes at once resemble Korobkin's burnt wound and Lizasha's violated body (416). Finally, Mandro can face the next phase of his rebirth, namely, rebirth in death. This scene where eyes act as organs of forgiveness and moral obligation recalls the tearful scene between Lear and Cordelia, prior to Lear's death: "You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave; / Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound / Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears / Do scald like molten lead" (IV, vii, 45-48). By shedding masks, be they interwoven in the poetic patterns of sight and blindness or reason and madness, man returns to that stage of childlike purity and innocence untainted by evil. In anticipation of Korobkin's visit, Lizasha in her imagination likens herself to a bird, which upon seeing the lighthouse, flings itself to death as though grasping for the sun. Korobkin, the grey-haired child, offers his eye to Lizasha, that is, his moral vision (353). This act seems to transform her into a child. A similar scene occurs in *King Lear*. The ability to see and recognize is gained when Lear offers his own eyes to Gloucester. Naturally, this, too, is an offering of moral vision. Whereas earlier Lear wished to pluck out his own eyes in order to refrain from crying, now he recognizes Gloucester as one more miserable than himself and proceeds to offer his vision as a gesture of love: "If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes; / I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester" (IV, vi, 176-177). Each visitation by Korobkin, be it with Mandro or Lizasha, figures as an appeal to see, to recognize the bonds between humans. According to Korobkin, the development of consciousness is attainable via the "third eye." In a conversation with Titelev over the

consequences of his dangerous discovery, Korobkin maintains that progress is not achieved through mathematical equations, but rather through another channel: "Here in the middle eye" (351). The growth of consciousness here is synonymous with clairvoyance.

This treatment of Korobkin's clairvoyance would be incomplete without the mention of his Cordelia. In the third chapter of *Masks*, which is aptly entitled "King Lear," Korobkin develops an emotional bond to Serafima, the nurse who takes it upon herself to cure Korobkin of amnesia through non-scientific means. Serafima cures the professor of his loss of memory by instructing him in the study of Renaissance painters and of color as exercises in perception. In a sub-chapter entitled "Cordelia and Lear," the reader becomes aware of the first character in Belyi's works who is willing to sacrifice her life for another.⁴ Trained by light wherever she appears in *Masks*, Korobkin's Cordelia stands as a symbol of idealized love and is bound by her speechless duty to the professor; Serafima teaches Korobkin how to see. Affirming the recognition motif, Korobkin reveals to Serafima that: "Those imprisoned in rock do not see the stars!" (311). However, the majority of Moscow's hearts are, indeed, imprisoned in rock, and have not evolved sufficiently so as to truly see. As Lear himself proclaims during the storm: "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" (III, vi, 75-76). In *King Lear* we are made to feel that once the storm has abated and Lear is reunited with Cordelia, all will be well. But the gratuitous death of Cordelia defies all expectations. Every vision of hope is continually followed by another wave of disaster. Edgar's claim that "the worst is not, / So long as we can say, 'this is the worst'" (IV, i, 27-28) is invariably met by the worst. Furthermore, Edgar's moralizing "Ripeness is all" speech (V, ii, 11) in response to his father's despair over the lost battle and Lear's and Cordelia's imprisonment is soon followed by Cordelia's death, which Lear likens to dead earth (V, iii, 261). No ripeness is possible in dead earth. And ultimately Lear's final words before his death as he gazes at his dead daughter are replete with ocular images which bring little comfort: "Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips, / Look there, look there!" (V, iii, 309-10). Edgar concludes the play with: "The oldest hath borne most: we that are young / Shall never see so much, nor live so long" (V, iii, 325-26).

This very same dialectical structure of success and failure functions as a dramatic device in the "Moscow" novels. *Moscow* begins with Korobkin's certainty that this is the best of all possible worlds, and ends with his torture. In *Masks* the pain of insight brings home cruel truths about his

4 Ada Steinberg states that "the theme of Korobkin's rebirth is inseparably linked with that of Serafima's love-compassion" (228). For Steinberg's discussion of ocular imagery in connection with shamanistic rituals, see 224-25.

complicity in guilt; nevertheless, Korobkin insists on reconciling his previous adversaries. As with the flower-crowned Lear, one is tempted to find parallels with Christ in Korobkin. Lear's pitiful baton of straw can be symbolically linked to Korobkin's powerless paper-cutter, that image of lost authority, a poor substitute for the scepter. Certainly, Lear and Korobkin both bear more than their share of suffering. However, in contradistinction to Christ, their errors in judgment and vision bring many others to their ruin. Although Korobkin is responsible for the transformations of Mandro and Lizasha, he is likewise responsible for their demise: Korobkin unwittingly leads the secret police to the hideaway of Mandro and Lizasha's husband (Titelev, Lizasha's husband, is also wanted by the police). Mandro dies a horrifying death: he is stuffed into a sack alive, and, after a grotesque struggle, he dies. The house containing Lizasha, Korobkin, Serafima, Korobkin's brother and Lizasha's son explodes. The reader never knows what happens to the inhabitants, as Belyi leaves his novel open-ended.

Perhaps Belyi was unable to resolve the conclusion of his Learean novels, as they impinged all too intimately on his own personal life. The significance of Shakespeare's portrait of a lonely and homeless king for Belyi is all the more evident when we compare Lear to Belyi himself. In the last years of his life Belyi had reached a state of virtual artistic isolation. Due to Leon Trotsky's vitriolic denunciation of Belyi in *Literature and Revolution*, the leading Symbolist novelist was increasingly ostracized. Furthermore, the majority of his fellow Symbolists had either died or lived now in exile. Ultimately, Belyi's avant-garde style was diametrically opposed to Socialist Realism. From 1931 to 1934, the year of his death, Belyi and his wife roamed from house to house in search of a permanent domicile (cf. Magarotto 581-95). His correspondence with his Georgian friends underlines his miserable homelessness, while Klavdiia Bugaeva's memoirs attest to her husband's wretched loneliness. As if in keeping with the ocular imagery in this study, Belyi deliberately wore glasses to hide from the glances of others. Claiming that everyone was wearing a mask and was unable "to see" one another, Belyi desperately sought out kindred spirits, but found none (Bugaeva 154-55). And when questioned as to the motives of creating Korobkin's horrific torture scene, Belyi responded that it was he who was being persecuted in that scene (Bugaeva 149). Both Shakespeare and Belyi illustrated their universality by creating their poetic dramas of Everyman pitted against a world of evil. But it was Belyi's own misfortune that he was able to find so much personal resonance in the doleful tale of King Lear.

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