

Title: Overcoming Gogol: Kruchenykh and the Anxiety of the Arabesque
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“Gogol's wisdom is still not understood, what does it consists of?” asked Aleksei Kruchenykh in 1950 (Kruchenykh 1999, 427). A cryptic response followed: “Whoever understands it will himself write like Gogol” (427). This quote reveals an interesting side of the poet's relationship with the writer, whose “wisdom” he spent much of his life trying to understand. A large part of Kruchenykh's verse, including *Igra v adu*, shows the influence of Gogolian thematics. As one colleague noted, “A. E. has some sort of intimate relationship with Gogol” (427).

This “intimate relationship” reached its peak in the little-known poetic cycle *Arabeski iz Gogolia*, begun in 1943 and left incomplete at Kruchenykh's death. *Arabeski* is something of a versification of Gogol's works. As Sergei Sigei notes in his introduction to the cycle, “[t]he late Kruchenykh did not write zaum' poems, but instead, with a mysterious grin, he rewrote classic literature” (Sigei 3-4). Had the Futurist poet finally learned to “write like Gogol”?

According to Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence*, a “strong” poet can only read the works of other poets through the lens of his own poetry. This paper will demonstrate how Kruchenykh “misreads” his nineteenth-century predecessor in a quintessentially Bloomian manner, allowing him to be seen as a “strong” poet in his own right. It will further show how his appropriation of the genre of the arabesque is crucial to this task.