Russian Symbolist nonfiction marked a sharp break with tradition. As Dmitrii Maksimov once observed of its criticism, "Comparing Symbolist criticism with the criticism of the Russian literary and social 'thick' journals, it is easy to convince one's self that the former and the latter have between themselves little in common." Dikman has argued that this break stemmed largely from the "impressionistic character of the Symbolist review." Such sharp divisions often led to complete and mutual incomprehension between the Symbolists and the reading public at large. To take but one example, when Blok submitted his article "The People and the Intelligentsia" [Narod i intelligentsiia] to the journal Russian Thought [Russkaia mysl'], the editor, Petr Struve, called the article "naive" and refused to place it even though there had been a tacit understanding that the article would be published.


3. Struve's comment is typical of the criticisms levelled against Blok throughout his career as a social thinker. See J. Michaut, "Blok, le peuple et l'intelligentsia: Étude d'une théorie à travers la prose de Blok," Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique, 10 (1969): 475, in this regard. Where readers, such as Struve, expected analytical methodology, Blok advanced a highly syncretic, and as I shall argue here, carnivalistic approach.

Maksimov and Shabel’skaia note that when Blok read the paper for a second time at the Literary Society on December 4, 1908, "The majority of those who spoke accused Blok of 'whining,' 'affected originality,' 'decadence.'"\textsuperscript{5} Even Liubov’ Mendeleeva-Blok was forced to concede that her husband "was much attacked."\textsuperscript{6}

This incomprehension stemmed largely from the deformation of prose genres by lyric elements. That this was a poet's prose led to no end of consternation because poetic tropes filtered through into the prose.\textsuperscript{7} As Jan Mukaiovsky has argued, an unadulterated transposition cannot occur between even different artistic genres, let alone between artistic and non-artistic texts. Mukažovsky observes, "Even when the poet sometimes expresses himself in a different genre from the one which is basic for him, this expression bears traces of his dominant genre."\textsuperscript{8} Mukažovsky's comment takes on special relevance since Blok at one point planned to include at least a volume of "lyric articles" in his collected works.\textsuperscript{9} In this sense, Dmitrii Mirskii is surely right to insist, "In essence all of Blok's articles are 'lyric articles'."\textsuperscript{10} Blok was, according to Mirskii, "a lyric poet in everything."\textsuperscript{11}

Blok was quite aware of the chasm that separated his prose from tradition. Moreover, he himself pointed to lyricism as the distinguishing characteristic of his prose and affirmed it. For instance, when Blok submitted his second review of Valerii Briusov's \textit{Urbi et Orbi}, he wrote to the editor Petr Pertsov, "I am sending you a review of Briusov in the driest tone. I can in..."