

Georgij Yu. Somov

The interrelation of metaphors and metonymies in sign systems of visual art: An example analysis of works by V. I. Surikov

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Abstract: The interrelation of metaphors and metonymies is manifested in non-verbal sign systems of visual art in various forms: in the fundamental intentions of the works, in the forming of the works' concepts, and in the sign systems of the texts. The systematicity of the interrelations between metaphors and metonymies on these levels can be revealed through the analysis of works by great masters of visual art from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this essay, Surikov's art serves an example. The metonymies of an intentional character appeared in his mind in his youth and were later realized in the ideas of his fundamental works, in their connections with various metaphors, in the composition of the works, and in various sign systems related to them. These connections are manifested in systems of differences and identities in layers of denotations and connotations. These systems are connected by common organizing structures that allow the sign formations of metaphors and metonymies to emerge.

Keywords: metaphor; metonymy; denotation; connotation; visual art; Vasily I. Surikov

Georgij Yu. Somov: Urban Design Institute in Moscow. E-mail: georgij.somov@gmail.com

1 Introduction

Metaphors and metonymies in their interconnection are the central object of semiotics (Chandler 1994). Investigating them in visual art allows one to find their essential links in the formation of artistic works as specific sign systems. The interrelations of metaphors and metonymies are viewed as interrelations of signs that are perpendicular to each other (Chandler 1994). In simpler terms, one can say that a metaphor equals signs within the layer "separate-common," and a metonymy equals a representamen with an object (or interpretant) in the dimension "separate-common." In the widest approach, a metaphor can be regarded as an identity of a sign with another one. Such common metaphors "intensify"

metonymies. Otherwise stated, metonymies “rely on” metaphors while the latter “rely on” metonymies. The identities in terms of one aspect are based on the identities in terms of the other ones. The links between metonymies and metaphors are fostered by the links between their designata. As the author intends to show, the interrelation “metaphor-metonymy” is rendered in denotations and connotations (Tseng 2010). It is specifically manifested in three semiotic aspects as well: pragmatics and the corresponding sign formations of intentional character; semantics and the corresponding sign formations of identification character; syntax and the sign formations of organizing character. In the three given aspects, the meanings of metonymies, metaphors, and synecdoches that connect them correspond to the concepts of orientational, representative, and organizing meanings (Lemke 1988). Thus, the object of semiotic research includes these basic interconnections that can be represented schematically.

It is key that most characteristic interconnections of metonymies and metaphors are realized in the following transformations: stable systems like codes and languages \leftrightarrow intentions and metonymies of intentional character \leftrightarrow metonymies and metaphors that form a work’s idea \leftrightarrow sign formations of metonymies \leftrightarrow metaphors in a work’s sign systems \leftrightarrow differences and identities in denotations and connotations of the works \leftrightarrow differences and identities \leftrightarrow organizing structures of a layer of representamens. Some metonymies and metaphors take their origin in cultural texts. Other ones evolve as units of individual emotions, memories, and unconscious human intentions. On the whole, the given differences correspond to the idea of the existence of a pre-linguistic level of deep sign systems (Kristeva 1969). The systematicities of intentions, codes, and metonymies that influence the development of the elements and their relations in syntagmatics on the whole and in the sign system of a work in particular are formed in a stable systematicity-paradigmatics. This corresponds to the following scheme. Sign systems of reality, according to Lacan, are based on dominant sign formations, codes, intentions, and metonymies that are formed in their interrelations. In the auto-communication processes and its manifestation in ideas and works, various codes and signs are integrated. They are also linked with the sign systems that have developed in communication processes in intersubjective, interpersonal relations. As a result, metonymies and metaphors of a more concrete character are realized. This interrelation of metonymies and metaphors is fulfilled in sign systems of various levels and layers (memories, ideas, various sign systems of visual inhomogeneity in the works). This is most clearly seen with through an approach to an individual artist. The European art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is characteristic of movements that originate from individual, unconscious impulses (intentions) of personal memories, based on individual codes and signs. The manifestations of these tendencies vary from realistic

visual art to various trends of post-modernism, surrealism, expressionism, and other trends of the twentieth century. All of these trends demonstrate, first of all, individuality, disapproval of canons and prototypes, a novelty of approaches, and a diversity of sign systems in works of visual art. The works of a great Russian artist, Vasily I. Surikov, are of particular interest for those investigating sign systems of this kind.

2 The sign systematicity of works by V. I. Surikov

As the artist noted himself, the memories and feelings of his childhood and youth spent on the Yenisei river in Siberia played the decisive role in his art (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). His ancestors came to Siberia following Yermak's army and kept up their traditions, utensils, and clothes from the seventeenth century (Voloshin 1985 [1911]; Tepin 1916). As the painter recalled, Siberia seemed to him a huge, boundless unknown space full of wild animals, convicts, and robbers (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). One was always ready to face a danger there. The confrontation between the aspiration for freedom and the fact of constraint was felt rather sharply. This confrontation burst into protests and rebellions against the lawlessness of the *voivodes* – the representatives of state power. According to Surikov, his ancestors were particularly notable for seditious deeds (Voloshin 1985 [1911]; Tepin 1916). The memory of his rebellious ancestors and their striving for freedom was connected with personal memories of harmful events. As a child, the artist and his mother fell into the hands of a robber and killer and only managed to avoid death by chance. As a boy, he almost drowned when he dived under some rafts; he was able to swim out only by a seeming miracle. He also saw his friend killed with an axe and heard his killer's admission. And he saw state convicts clattering with their handcuffs. He was even able to look out of the school window at the scaffold where physical punishments were arranged (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). These impressions made Surikov accustomed to the dangers and cruelties of life. But the unique inherent abilities of his visual memory – to see and remember what is happening in detail – became apparent even in dangerous moments (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). What he saw was connected to the stories he read in books. He saw the slain prince Dmitry in the lying figure of the killed friend; he saw a *strelets* who was being carried to execution in an injured Cossack on a cart. He seemed to see the disgraced Menshikov and his daughters in exile in the window of a snow-covered hut (Tepin 1916). The impressions that appeared from wandering around the forests, riding horses, moving from one place to another along the difficult, dangerous roads also played their role. As a result, there appeared the idea of the discomfort of the surrounding world, the idea of permanent wandering, and the

whole impression of life as a movement along a difficult and dangerous path. These ideas were evidenced in the artist's way of life, in the comfortlessness of his house, for example, which surprised his contemporaries (Tepin 1916). On the whole, some stable metonymies that determined the painter's art were formed on the basis of individual codes and signs of personal experience and cultural texts. These metonymies can be divided into three types: pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic.

2.1 The metonymies of pragmatic character

The metonymies of pragmatic character were formed primarily on the basis of intentions. They include: the desire for moving, the need for a way; striving for freedom, overcoming obstacles, liberation and victory; the confrontation with constraint, lawlessness, and humiliation, and the related sympathy for seditious and rebellious moods, sympathy for the humiliated and oppressed, the feeling of freedom, calmness, independence from so-called circumstances; the aspiration for a calm understanding of life. Life metonymies and the metonymies that arose in their interrelations showed themselves in the ideas and meanings of the paintings. The *metonymies of way*, movement, discomfort, and temporariness of staying in a given place appeared in all of Surikov's works. The impression of way and the related emotional states of road, temporary and uncomfortable staying, and the overcoming of obstacles was realized in parting and exile scenes, and in the dynamics of military attacks and revolts. The *metonymy of overcoming obstacles and striving for victory* was rendered in the middle period of the artist's work in the subject of the heroic deed: for example, the crossing the Alps by Russian troops, a dashing attack on a snow fortress, the fearless attack of Yermak's detachment, the strength and rhythm of the oarsmen of Razin's dugout moving towards victory. The power of the rhythms makes material the unstoppable force and energy of the masses. The *metonymy of confrontation with the authorities* is manifested in the tragic picture of a seditious *streltsy's* execution and in the powerful images of the disobedient rebels Razin and Pugachev. The *streltsy* and *boyarina* functioned as visual signs of rebelliousness. The *metonymy of sympathy* is connected with the expression of this confrontation. The *metonymy of calmness, the hero's reflection* over the historical events and his destiny was realized in calmness, gloomy faces, and the stiff figures of the heroes who rose above the events. The figures of Peter I and his henchmen standing and watching their business are exaggerated. The *metonymy of meeting and parting* is also a kind of a fixed idea in Surikov's creative work. This metonymy appears as integration of the metonymies of way and sympathy. The influence of the last way, the last stop be-

fore death and saying goodbye, is especially strong in this respect. In *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution*, this is saying goodbye to the *streltsy* brought on carts to the place of execution. In *Boyarina Morozova*, the final journey is expressed by the quick movement of the sledge that is carrying the boyarina away to her death. Parting with her is expressed in the picture by a basic diagonal movement and perspectival imaging where all looks are directed at the boyarina, and the whole imaging of the painting is depicting the final journey. Similarly, the imagery of Surikov's unfinished painting *Duchess Olga near Igor's Body* is subordinated to the idea of meeting and parting.

2.2 The metonymies of semantic type

The metonymies of semantic type are formed by identification codes and signs (Somov 2006; people, events, the objects of the environment). The metonymies of situations and types of people taking part in them can be singled out among them. *The metonymies of human types* are formed in the people's reference to classes. The concrete depicted people (their actions, intentions, emotions, features of character, inner world) are included in more general, typical images of people and situations. One can speak of generalized sign formations: the metonymies of life situations and types of people and the models that synthesize such metonymies. Due to active identification signs, concrete people appear as types, as generalized (typical) people. A warlike, red-bearded *strelets* on a cart is not merely a concrete one, seen in Siberia earlier, but the human type that is characteristic for this or that ethnos, temperament, behavior, and way of expressing emotions. The typical features of concrete people whom Surikov saw earlier with a certain genotype and good or bad temper form the knots of distinctive features that function as signs of the human types. The artist singled out human types in such knots on the basis of distinctive features. The peculiarity of Surikov's metonymies is in the artist's somewhat preliminary knowledge of these features and types. Otherwise stated, human cognition is of minor interest for the painter, the denotative-cognitive processes – the semiosis of cognitive character – are not formed in the connection with this cognition. This peculiarity of Surikov's works has been noticed and has surprised researchers (Allenov 1997). It can be explained by the fact that the metonymies of human types are formed via extraction from memory and materialized in the paintings. These human types appeared from the memories of concrete people. Later, these human types were typically found in the surrounding reality, painted from nature, generalized and acquired the character of generalized types – metonymies – in the pictures. Such a peculiar approach can be compared with collecting plants or insects by a ranger, when all

the species of the collected objects are well known beforehand. In other words, the object of Surikov's cognition was not a separate, individual person but a kind of structural organization of their variety, a picture of human types. *The metonymies of life situations* were rendered in the generalization of these situations, the integrity of life pictures being formed, distancing the spectator from them and creating a generalized image/event. Some kind of general contemplative calmness enlarges the spectator's distance from the depicted events (Allenov 1997: 36). Surikov avoided making showy emotional displays in his work. The artist refused to follow Repin's advice to depict the hanged *streltsy* and commented on Repin's work *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan* in the following way: "... too much blood there" (Surikov 1937: 419). Strong emotions within the authentic depiction of tragedies hampered the development of a more general albeit isolated outlook on the world. Thus, the description and expression of human emotions in Surikov's works are specific. They are subjected not to the emotional impact of the works but to the wholeness and structural organization of human types in the general depicted event. Personal emotions *qua* character relationships are a part of the whole and are subjected to the formation of typical metonymies, generalized (typical) human features. The basic states and relations of emotions were expressed by the artist as allied with interjections "oh," "ah," "ouch," "alas," and were rendered in poses, gestures, and facial expressions (Allenov 1997: 41). *The metonymy of human type* is a generalization that is created due to relationships with other people and the characteristics that define their types (ethnic, psychic, social etc.). Therefore, each person is opposed to another according to this or that feature (as a participant of a situation or a personality type) in Surikov's works. This promotes the creation of the effect of the unity of human diversity and of the significance of each of them in the world and life situation. The artist claimed that each person's life is reflected in the life of all people (Allenov 1997). Surikov differentiates human types first of all as personality types in society in their reference to the state. The first ones are the expression plane of the content plane of the second ones. The people in Surikov's works are involved in the authorities' businesses and subordinated to collective unconsciousness. Therefore, these people are deprived of independence, individuality, and activity. Moreover, some of them are happy to see personal violence and are ready to take part in it, getting pleasure from it. The importance of such an artist's generalization is illustrated by an interesting fact. As Surikov said, he was delighted with Lermontov's poem "A Song about Tsar Ivan Vasilyevich, the Young Oprichnik, and the Valorous Merchant Kalashnikov" (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). The poet showed the typical contradictions between the people and state power in an historic episode describing Ivan the Terrible's epoch: the arbitrariness of the Oprichnina, the offence to and the inner vengeance of a free person oppressed by the "state people," the Tsar's

oprichniki. The episode corresponded to the general model of Russian statehood and the confrontation between an individual man and the lawlessness of the power. Surikov delivered this generalization into a metonymy in his illustration for the poem. The executioner who fulfills the “justice” of the unrighteous power is a cheerful person who is happy about his merry profession and feels like doing it for the Tsar’s and his henchmen’s benefit. Surikov depicted his merriness quite naturally and vividly. He saw such happy executioners as a boy as well as seeing how people, both adults and children, are happy about the punishments (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). Some characters in the painting *Boyarina Morozova* are taking delight and unholy joy in execution in the same way. They enjoy seeing the victim, taking part in the suppression of the people by the authorities. This demonstrated the original contradiction between human individuality and collective subordination to the Empire’s affairs. Human liberties, activity, individuality were worn off and destroyed in such social de-individualization (Allenov 1997). These were the peculiarities of the people depicted by Surikov in which composer Asafyev saw the artist’s basic generalization of the Russian people and was terrified (Allenov 1997).

The metonymy of the people and the state is the center of Surikov’s paintings that generates close derived metonymies (sympathy for the rebels and repression victims, malicious joy about these victims by certain groups of people, etc.). The confrontation between the people and state power was realized, in the first turn, in the plots of Surikov’s historic paintings. These confrontations were stacked into his memory from childhood, as some of the artist’s ancestors rose against the lawlessness of the *voivodes* and even led the revolts (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). A semantic metonymy of such kind (like any semantics) has its pragmatics – its intentions, emotions, values, likes, and dislikes. This came out in the artist’s sympathy for rebels. Some state people sympathize with their victims: the guard’s sympathy with his mate-rebel in the *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution*, the sympathy of the woman who is walking next to the *strelets* convoy in *Boyarina Morozova*. The general picture of the confrontation between the individual-personal and the collective-state arise from the artist’s knowledge of Russia’s history as well as his political. A series of Surikov’s fundamental works *The Morning of Streltsy Execution*, *Boyarina Morozova*, *Stepan Razin*, the unfinished *Yemelyan Pugachev* described the historic events referring to the confrontation between the people and the authorities. As researchers frequently note, Surikov’s sympathies were with the opponents of the state power in these paintings (Allenov 1997). It is no coincidence that in his declining years the artist returned to the expression of the aspiration for liberation from serfdom on the part of rebel heroes. The choice of characters for his late works, the leaders of revolts, S. Razin and Ye. Pugachev, was in defiance of the Empire and autocracy. This confrontation with constraint

was expressed by the artist's seditious behavior as he kept away from authorities and official art; he thrice rejected the offer to teach in state artistic institutions of Moscow and St. Petersburg (Allenov 1997). *The metonymy of tragedy is a historical driving force* that, according to the artist's works, usually happens in critical moments. Surikov pointed out that he did not depict the old days but real contemporary life (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). At the same time, due to the historical context of the paintings, the tragic nature of the events is transferred into history, turns history into a big field of tragic events.

The metonymy of life verisimilitude is conditioned mainly by the aspiration for the plausible presentation of life, the depiction of the direct way reality appears in the perception of life situations. The artist considered any deviation from truth, any artificiality as a work's shortage, which provided the metonymies of life with an extra importance in Surikov's works. In the artist's paintings, the metonymy of life plausibility was formed as the development of direct perceptions and feelings, confrontation with academism and classicism in visual art in the first turn (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). Contemporaries clearly saw these confrontations with the mainstream trends. Repin wrote about Surikov's passionate, vivid nature with deep tension. He created only by pouring himself out fully; he couldn't subject his strength to any school or canon. Faces and coloring, lines, spots, light and shade – everything in him was peculiar, powerful, and ruthless in a barbarous way (Allenov 1997). This barbarous ruthlessness of Surikov's works is largely explained by the materialization of underlying individual unconscious sign systems. Semiotic universals of unconscious character are formed in his works: in structures, rhythms, intonations that did not fit the accepted classical rules, canons, patterns. The confrontation with classicism appeared mostly in the structural organization of sign systems in the works, in the difference between the two approaches: the consistent, right, predictable classical one and the plausible, close to direct perception, anti-classical one. A search for occasionalities is most characteristic of the anti-classical approach. Surikov's techniques were associated with the search for such occasionalities. The artist always observed groups of people in the streets. He used to come home and immediately paint the way they are combined in nature. For one cannot invent this. He learned to appreciate chance (Tepin 1916). Surikov's attitude to great masters of visual art is connected with his aspiration for plausibility. Confining himself to naturalness as the key principle, he took particular delight in Velazquez, distinguishing his approach from those of the masters of Italian Renaissance (Surikov 1937: 431, 434). The reason for Surikov's delight for his contemporary, Manet, (Allenov 1997) seems to have been the same, as the composition of Manet's late works is characterized by emphatically unpredictable accidental features. *The metonymy of environment* complemented the metonymy of plausibility. The generalizations of the environ-

ment arouse from memories. The visual memory recalled the objects of everyday life that were remembered since childhood at home and in the neighbors' environment, houses, suites that were kept since old times; moods of nature with boundless expanses, snow, dirty soil, lumps of mud on carriage wheels and sledge runners were all recalled. Thus, the artist paid so much attention to the details of various environmental indices. The environmental attributes turned into metonymy-like sign formations in the contexts of the depicted situations. In particular, the peculiar interest in wheels, collars, and other objects of everyday life in *The Morning of Streltsy Execution* is explained by the metonymy of a cart in which the victims are carried to the execution place. This last vehicle in their way acquires a sacred character.

The metonymy of primordial Siberia creates an independent layer of connotations in Surikov's works. Animal skins, masks and amulets, bows and arrows remind one of shamans and nomads, of indigenous Siberian peoples who surrounded Cossack villages (the eye of the artist's grandfather was knocked out by a Tatar arrow). Such signs were unconscious elements of individual memory. They also promoted formation of the connotations of a huge space filled with people and the objects of Asian ethnicities. The appearance of such a metonymy is most obvious in *Boyarina Morozova*. Animal snouts and shaman masks seem to show through its kaleidoscopic diversity of colors, being just covered over with Christian symbols (Somov 2005). In the context of this work these connotations form the general metonymy of pagan origin, a deep feature of the national subconscious. In the work *Conquest of Siberia by Yermak* rhythmical formations, configurations, active lines, contours, color, and texture characteristics have specific features of a numerous moving cavalry, bows and arrows, leather and fur clothes of the Kuchum Khan's army (see below). Thus, the author creates the impression of wild and unruly Siberia in the unity of the brown color spectrum.

2.3 The metonymies of syntactic character

The metonymies of syntactic character are divided into three types: the relations of the units of semantic systems-designata (people, their types, etc.); the interrelations of signs; the interrelations of representamens and the signs of the images. The author has explained the differences between these levels of elements and relations in visual art elsewhere (Somov 2005).

The metonymies of interrelations between the semantic system units are mutually connected in the semantic aspect with the structures of situations, human types, environmental object types, which were examined above. For example, several groups of human relations of this level are singled out in *Boyarina*

Morozova: sympathizing sad – gloating merry; parting with Boyarina – looking at her in silence; those who accompany the sledge – those who stay. The following metonymy is formed in these relationships: those who sympathize prevailing in number, those looking at the boyarina in silence, and those who stay marking the passive approval of the revolt by the people and their obedience to authorities.

The metonymies of sign relationships play an independent role. Development of such metonymies is most clearly seen in differences and contrasts. In *Boyarina Morozova*, the identities and differences of oval shapes that indicate the protecting veil of the Virgin and the configurations of the *streletsy*'s poleaxes that hang over the crowd are important contrasts on the connotation level (Somov 2005). The opposition between these signs creates the metonymy “suppression by the state – protection of the Virgin.” In the *Conquest of Siberia by Yermak*, the main contrast – sign formations of Yermak's and Kuchum Khan's armies – is presented as an opposition, mainly a differentiation between a strict meter-rhythmical system, gonfalons and flags of the Yermak's army, and the flowing, floating waves, the element of the Tatar army. This key, active sign difference forms the metonymy “the army of Christ's soldiers – the Oriental element,” “an accurately organized army versus a different army.” *The metonymy of the relations between representaments and signals* evolve on the basis of the whole “relationship grid” of visual inhomogeneity. In Surikov's paintings groups of relationships of configurations, color elements, and various textures are differentiated. Each group fosters formation of metonymies. *The metonymies of relations of configuration groups* (rectilinear, directional, having no directions, triangular, trapezoidal, rounded, etc.) appeared in Surikov's works as organizing sign formations, trends and organization of multiform visual material. The groups of organizing signs took the semantic load and hence turned into stable metonymies or the metonymies conditioned by texts and contexts.

The metonymies of color attributes and relations developed due to the semantic load of organizing signs and the relations of the color spectrum. The basic semantic functions of this spectrum in Surikov's works indicate the impressions of a cold, frosty environment, winter atmosphere, and the human condition in this environment. Depending on the season and a certain emotional state or event, the work's color spectrum acquires its peculiarities. On the whole, cold color relations immersed in haze prevail. They provide the painting with visual integrity and the visual meanings of the work's general moods, mostly tragic and calm ones. *The metonymy of dark and light contrast* was formed largely as organization of the visual material of the paintings. At the same time, their combination created the meaning of a certain confrontation of forces, or the meaning of tragedy and death. In *Boyarina Morozova*, the opposition of dark and light configurations was the connotation of the opposed groups of people, kindness and sympathy

versus aggression and malice. In the work *Menshikov in Berezovo*, fading away of life was represented by a white light that merged into the white light of the burning candle – the metaphor of a life being extinguished.

The metonymies of color diversity and texture inhomogeneity in Surikov's works are found in the wide use of these attributes, in the differences between groups of elements, in order to express life integrity or diversity. The variety of colors in Surikov's paintings distinguished them from the one-color palette of other artists. The coloristic integrity in his pictures was based on the prevalence of cold or warm colors. The coloring that organized the picture formed visual integrity and acquired the character of a sign formation of metonymic character. Multi-colored, embroidered costumes depicted the clothes of seventeenth century, which were known and dear to the artist, as he had seen them since childhood (Tepin 1916). This color diversity extended to the pictures' fragments.

3 The interrelations of metonymies and metaphors in idea creation

As was shown above, life peculiarities influenced the formation of some fundamental metonymies that determine the formation of sign systems in Surikov's works in their pragmatics, semantics, and syntax. The perceived objects and emotive meanings of reality generated sign systems of metonymic character for symbolic and imagined reality. Contrariwise, metonymies and metaphors for symbolic and imagined reality were materialized in the depicted objects and moods of reality. In particular, realizing his creative ideas, Surikov searched for concrete people, fragments, and objects of the real environment in their trustworthiness. Despite the naturalism of the images, Surikov denoted situations, people and objects in a generalized way. The generalizations arouse in the interrelation metonymies \leftrightarrow metaphors, materializing from symbolic and imagined sign systems of such kind. The attributes of sign formations enable identifying an object with a class of objects (a metonymy) or an object with another one (a metaphor). Hence, their interrelation is the basis of the idea that is clearly seen in Surikov's works. The metaphors of the works' ideas appeared spontaneously, in the collision of his unusual, bright sight with image-memories and historic texts. Surikov's historic visions grew from his skill of seeing the historic events and their characters he knew from books in real life scenes, people, landscapes, the ability to transform verbal texts into imagined and real ones and vice versa. One can easily see in these transformations the integrity and mutual transition of the three semiotic systematicities of Lacan: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real.

Surikov's artistic vision is characteristic of the interrelations of metonymies and metaphors of a concrete character. This is illustrated by the appearance of the ideas for his paintings. These ideas are known from the artist's words put down by his biographers. The importance of a metaphor as the basis of an idea is determined by some of its characteristics. A certain pattern was memorized according to the basic features and later became a metaphor in a painting devoted to a famous historical event and its characters. Such an idea immediately got the opportunity to be realized in a convincing work. There was no need to invent a reality fragment. It was necessary only to process it artistically as a sign formation, connecting it with famous historic texts and organizing it as a developed sign system. But these were metaphors that lay at the basis of it. *The metaphor of the wounded Cossack on a cart with the strelets going to execution* allowed the artist to concretize the idea of *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution*. A wounded Cossack in a white shirt, met on the road, reminded him of a *strelets* of late seventeenth century (Tepin 1916). In this picture, the metonymies of death, power, confrontation, sympathy are based on various metaphors (death cart, collars, identities of human figures and towers, crooked figures and Streltsy's disobedient heads, the signs of the offended and oppressed people, etc.). *The metaphor of a small Moscow region hut* where the artist temporarily lived connected it with a *Siberian hut* where A. Menshikov and his daughters lived in exile (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). This gave birth to the idea of the painting *Menshikov in Berezovo*. *The metaphor of path* was realized mostly in the metaphors of composition, in the general movement to which people are subjected. It appeared in the most developed way in *Boyarynya Morozova*. The path of the sledge in which boyarynya is carried away into exile to her doom is a developed sign formation of metaphoric character. *The metonymy of types and interrelations of people (semantics)* is expressed in visual sign systems, in their peculiar organization. These sign systems are metaphoric. The metaphors of people as parts of the whole, of a holistic organism, excellent people as victims of state cruelties generate specific composition techniques. Separate human figures are not interpreted as being independent, actively differentiating themselves from the others, but as dependent on the movements, energies, and forces of the masses. Their poses and gestures correspond to the general mood. In particular, in *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution*, the bent Streltsy's figures with burning candles function as such extended metaphor (Figure 1). Their figures and heads repeat the waning candles in terms of color and configuration (Figures 2 and 3). Disobedience and seditious temper in the poses and shapes of Streltsy's figures are opposed to strict rhythms and shapes of the figures of the "state people" who express self-assurance and force indicating the stability of the state power (Figures 4–8). The idea of *Menshikov in Berezovo* finally came to fruition after the artist saw a flickering candlelight in an



Fig. 1: Vasily I. Surikov, “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution” (1881, oil on canvas, 218 × 379 cm, The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow)

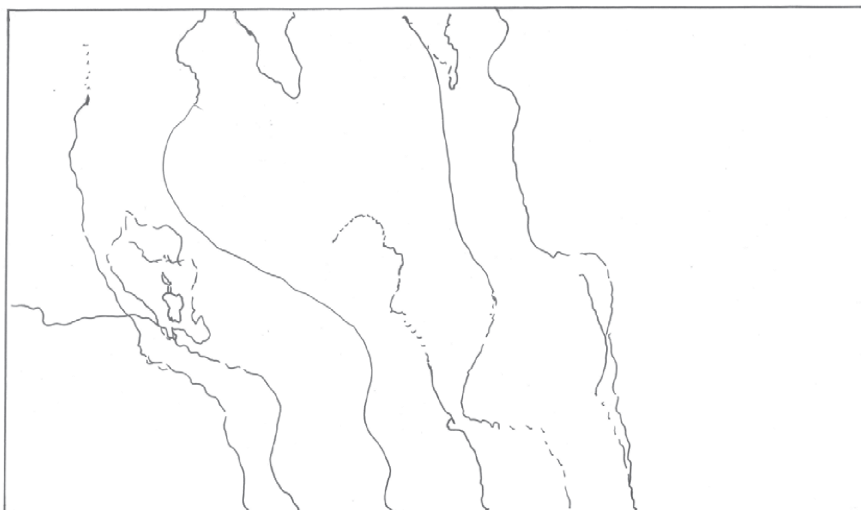


Fig. 2: “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution.” Metonymy: the fading life. Metaphor: flame of a candle burning down (denotation) and a configuration of color elements of the picture in the form of a flame (connotation)

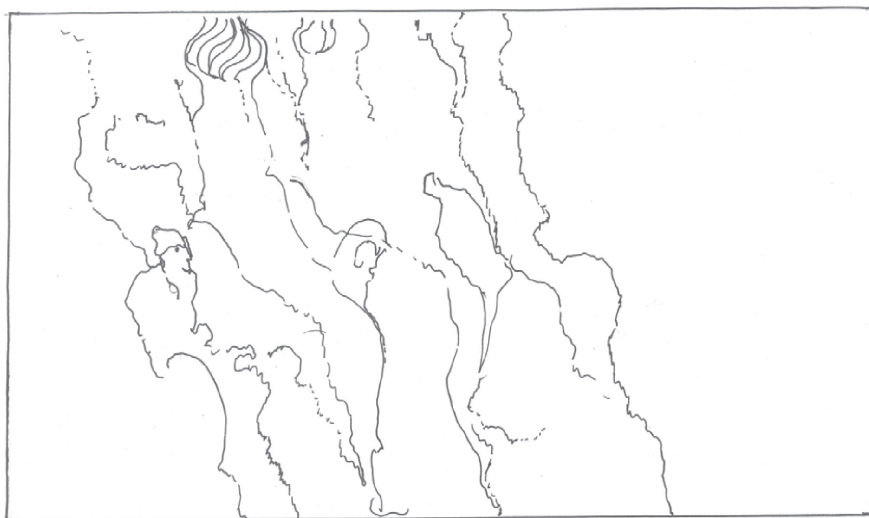


Fig. 3: “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution.” Metonymy: the people and the highest truth, the Divine protection. Metaphor: the people and St. Basil’s Cathedral are identified by the unity of configurations and lines. The Cathedral is named after the holy fool who spoke on behalf of the people for truth

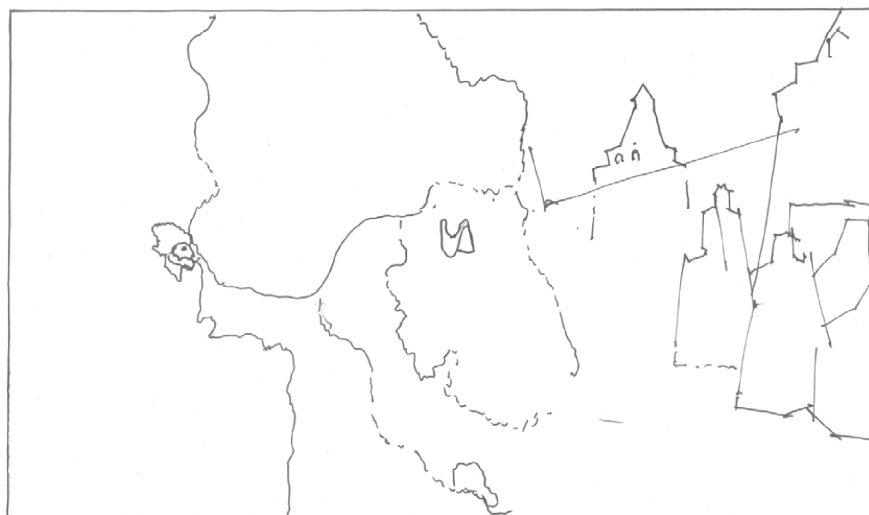


Fig. 4: “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution.” Metonymies: the people and state power; rebelliousness and rebellion. Metonymies are developed in opposite configurations of the picture. Metaphor: a strelets-rebel (denotation) and outlines of his head in lines and configurations of people and architecture (connotation). Metaphor: the state people inflicting reprisals are impregnable like towers of the Kremlin

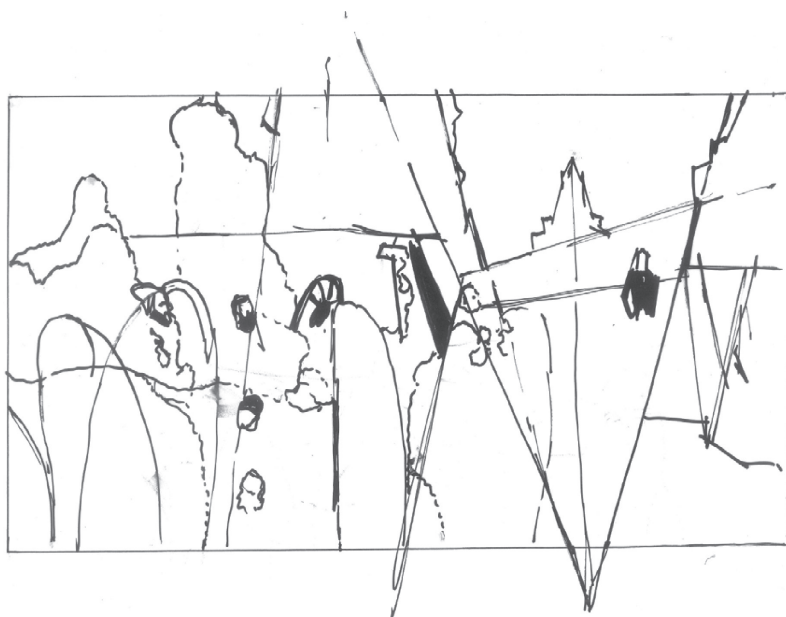


Fig. 5: “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution.” Organizing sign formations. Basic visual elements of the picture (representamens) are included into two types of organizing configurations – triangular-trapezoid and wheel-shaped. Together, these configurations represent the state reprisal (see Figures 4 and 8)

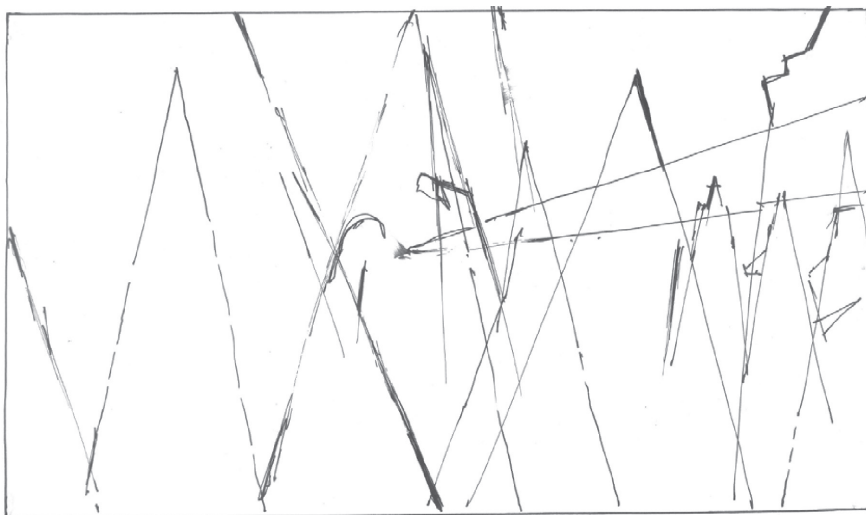


Fig. 6: “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution.” Organizing sign formations. Representamens are included into triangular outlines that imply the state power (see Figure 4)



Fig. 7: “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution.” Connotation of execution. Horizontal line of gallows is continuing through the whole picture. Heads of convicted persons are visually cut on the same horizontal

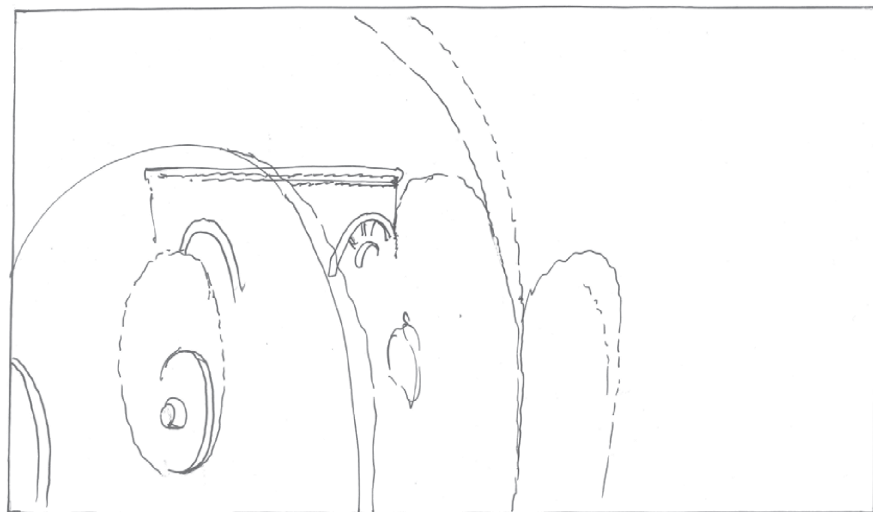


Fig. 8: “The Morning of the Streltsy Execution.” Metonymy: oppression, connotation of execution. Metaphor: the place of execution as a circle is comparable to wheels and horse collars; human bodies, heads and faces are in collars and wheels; people are ground by millstones



Fig. 9: Vasily I. Surikov, “Menshikov in Berezovo” (1883, oil on canvas, 169 × 204 cm, The Tretyakov’s Gallery, Moscow)

icy hut window (Tepin 1916; Figure 9). These impressions reminded the painter of the story of Peter the Great’s attendant, A. Menshikov, who was sent into exile in Siberia with his daughters (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). The generalization of the fading lives in exile relies on the metaphors of organization of the visually active elements of the picture (Figures 10 and 11). The exiled are staying in a cold hut. Menshikov’s bent, heavy figure, his daughters’ figures squirming with cold, candles burning down, and ghostly light in a small window form the metaphors – metonymies of fading lives. Separate organizing groups of elements are also metaphoric. Bent and pinned down figures in *Menshikov in Berezovo* are enhanced by the proportions of the components. The configurations of the sitting figures, close to the rectangle of the window in terms of proportions, activate the window as a visual element. Thus, the signs of the window as an exit to the world of freedom and the set limits of this freedom are also activated. And thus the basic elements of the painting are visually organized identically with the window. This allows for strengthening it as a sign formation. The meanings of limitation, unfreedom, and a life space that is pressed down are created. The fundamental color composition and proportions of the elements foster the development of the metonymy of a “small window” as the link with the world, the crookedness of life, and fate by external forces.

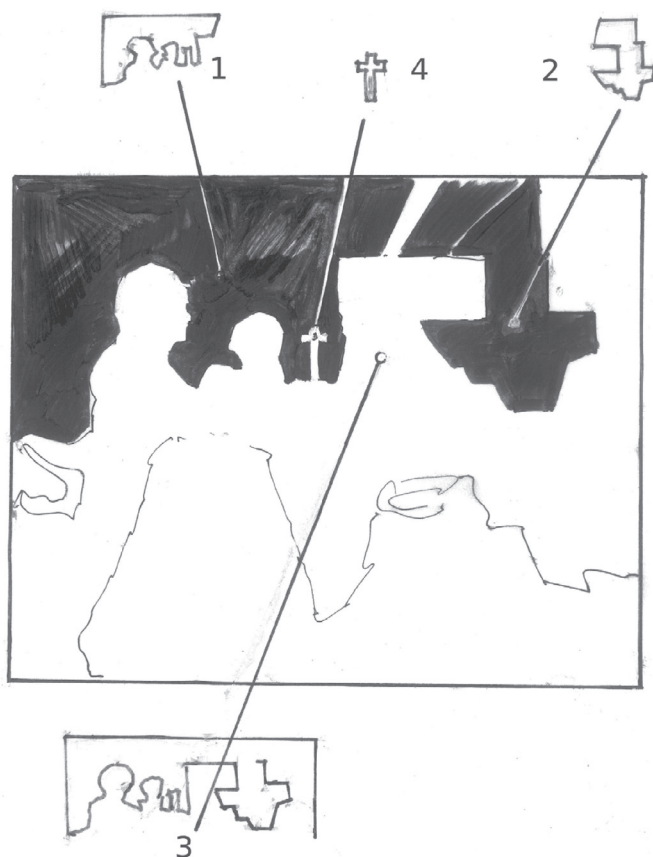


Fig. 10: “Menshikov in Berezovo.” Metonymy: repression, oppression. Metaphor: pressing ceiling. 1 – black configuration intensifies the metaphor; 2 and 3 – light configurations intensify confrontation; 4 – light configurations round candlestick forming cross intensify opposition

The idea of *Boyarina Morozova* is based on a bright metaphor from which another sign system grew up (figures 12–19). This idea appeared when the artist saw a black crow on white snow. He immediately imagined a heroic defender of the old belief, dressed in black, carried in a sledge in the snow (Voloshin 1985 [1911]; Nikolsky 1918). The crow’s wings and sharp beak reminded Surikov of the sharp silhouette of the *boyarina* who heroically opposed the authorities and was sent to die in exile. The sharp contours of the black silhouette of the bird that aggressively spread her wings perfectly express the state of the fanatic defender of the old belief who became a martyr, her curses raised against the power of the state.

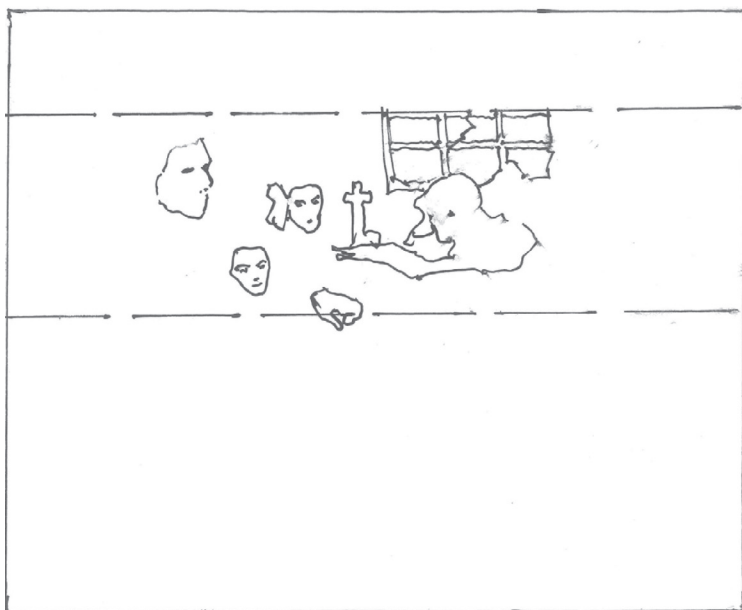


Fig. 11: “Menshikov in Berezovo.” Strengthening of metonymy of oppression. Reducing the space from bottom to top on three tiers of the picture



Fig. 12: Vasily I. Surikov, “Boyarina Morozova” (1887, 304 × 587,5 sm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow)



Fig. 13: “Boyarina Morozova.” Metaphor: black crow on white snow. Metonymy: confrontation of remaining victim

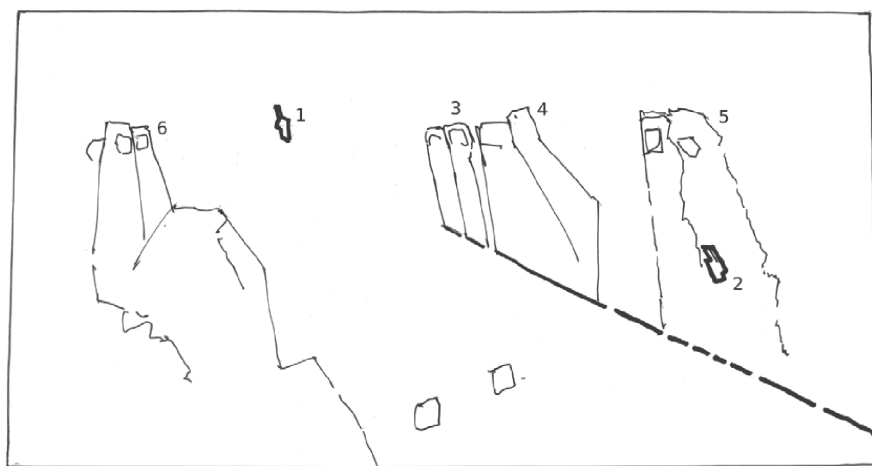


Fig. 14: “Boyarina Morozova.” Metonymy of Old Belief – two-finger crossing. 1, 2 – denotation of the metonymy; 3, 4, 5 – connotations of the metonymy; 6 – metonymy forming structure

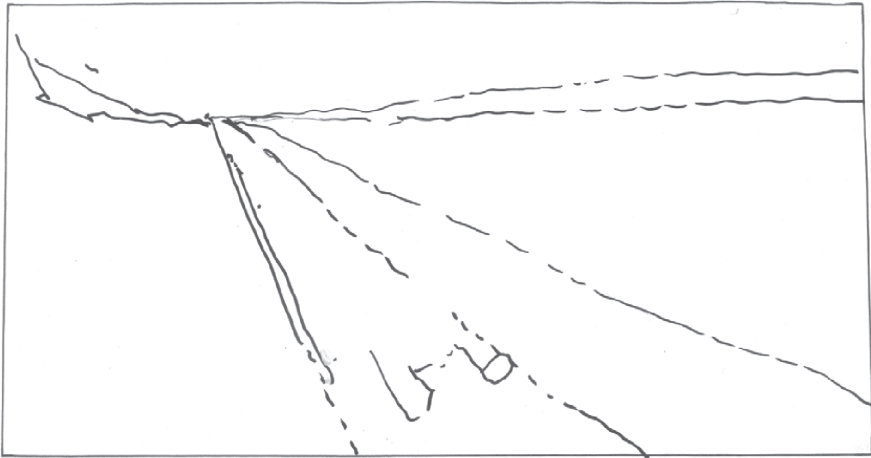


Fig. 15: “Boyarina Morozova.” Metonymy of way

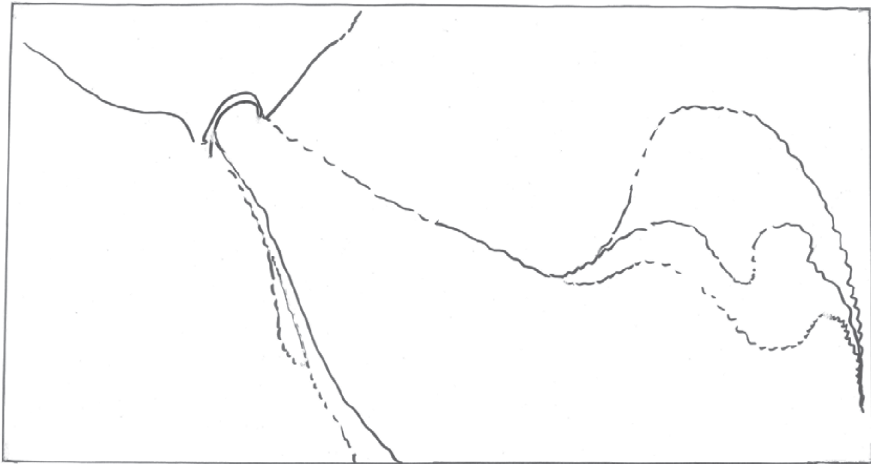


Fig. 16: “Boyarina Morozova.” Sign of metonymy of Judgment Day – trumpeting angel of Apocalypse

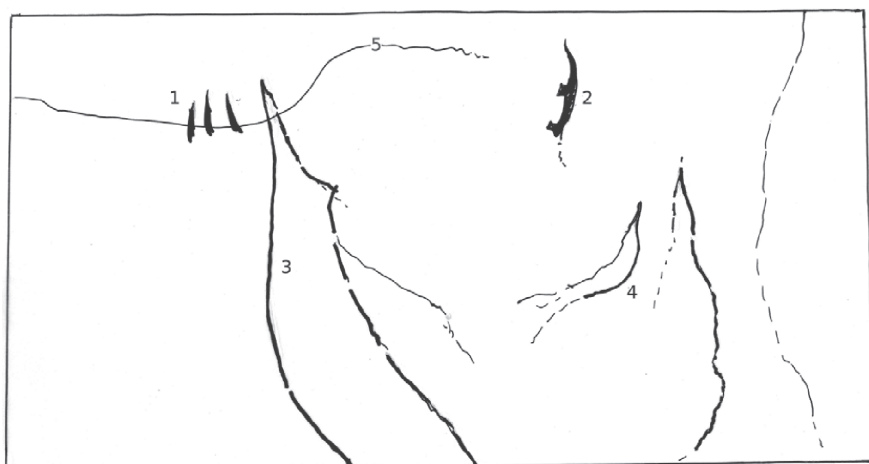


Fig. 17: “Boyarina Morozova.” Metonymy of suppression of the people. There are Strelets poleaxes in the picture. 1, 2 – denotation of the metonymy; 3, 4, 5 – connotations of the metonymy

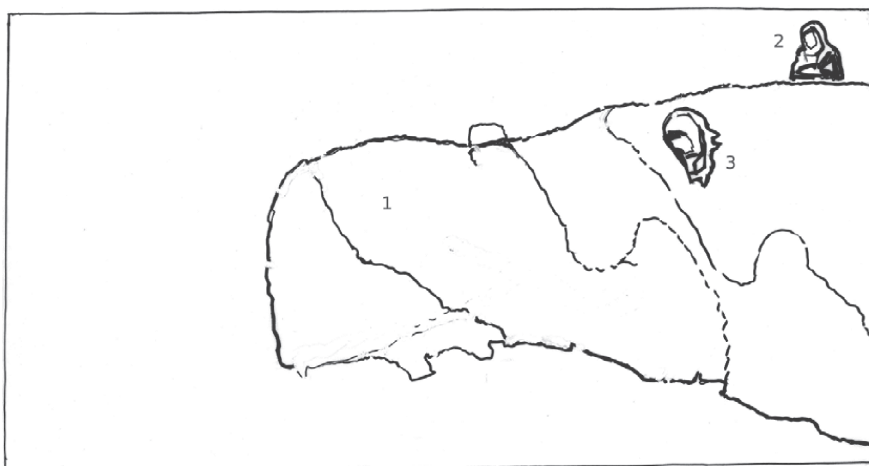


Fig. 18: “Boyarina Morozova.” Metonymy of the Mother of God – in Russian Orthodox Church, protector of paupers, homeless, and oppressed people. 1 – “falling Mother of God” connotation; 2, 3 – denotations of the Mother of God



Fig. 19: “Boyarina Morozova.” Metonymy of paganism of Russia – beasts’ muzzles and shamanistic masks of Siberia



Fig. 20: Vasily I. Surikov, “Conquest of Siberia by Yermak” (1887, 304 × 587,5 sm, The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow)

A bright, youthful reminiscence of playing with a snow fort was the metonymy for native Siberia, overcoming, struggle, fight, victory; the game itself was the metaphor for struggle. Such youthful memories important for self-actualization (sign fundamentals) encouraged the painter to create the *Storming of the Snow Fortress*. The remembrance of the ancestors’ heroic deed (the metonymy of a heroic deed) is the basis of the work *Conquest of Siberia by Yermak* (Figure 20).

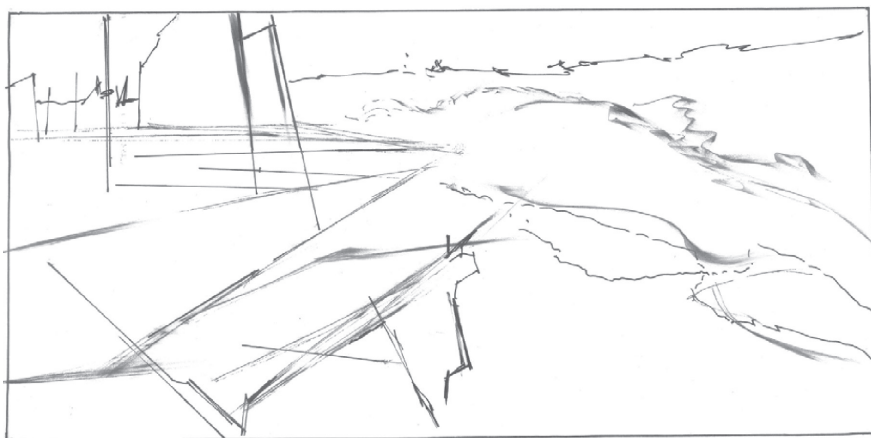


Fig. 21: “Conquest of Siberia by Yermak.” Metonymy of confrontation – orderliness of the Christian state and chaotic elements of the Eastern Khanate

Coming from the Don to Siberia among Yermak’s troops was a most important event in the history of the generation from which the artist descended. The conquest of Siberia thus became an event of individual value, a memory that linked the artist with his ancestors. Painting the picture was an act of the author’s self-identification and, at the same time, materialization (in the sense of Lacan) in the imagined and the real of the deep symbolic – the metonymy (hidden, subconscious intention à la Kristeva). In the *Conquest of Siberia by Yermak*, the two troops are metaphorical. They are presented as two elements, one of order and fortuity, indicating the movement of an organized state and the other, the spontaneous opposition of the East. The basic metonymies of the work are extended into the metaphorical sign systems of strict order versus chaos, the disorderly movements of the Khan’s army (Figure 21). The close-knit Cossack group under the banner on dugouts seems to cut the opposition of the enemies and the elements (Figure 22). The attack on the patrimony of Kuchum Khan meant the movement of the Russian state, Christianity, and order to the East. Razin’s deep thought seeming to rise above the events is a metonymy that develops metaphorically. A wide dugout rising over the silver water repeats the powerful figure of a calmly sprawling rebel leader in deep reflection over the righteousness of the revolt and robbery and the revelry of the feast. The dugout is opposed to the wide illimitable space and, cutting the water, is carrying the national hero to his coming death.

It is seen from the examples adduced above that Surikov’s idea is a kind of a *sign formation connecting metonymies and metaphors*. This sign formation expanded in the systems of the corresponding icons and other signs that contribute

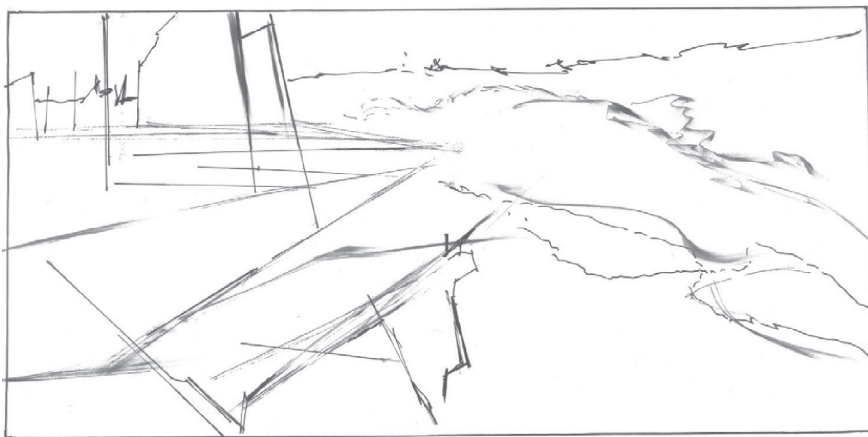


Fig. 22: “Conquest of Siberia by Yermak.” Metonymy: memory of an heroic deed. Metaphor: composition of the Yermak’s army like memorial relief

to the signified situations, historic events, and their verbal texts (knowledge of these events were obtained from books on history). In other words, metonymies and metaphors are manifested in the syntagmatics of the paintings in the relation systems. The basic signs of the main characters (or a character) depicted in the painting and expressing their emotional state, intention, and action create the metaphor that is consequently repeated in the work’s structures and replicates in the groups of visually active elements. People’s moods are indicated in the general structure of their relationships in the depicted situations. Structural features of the movements, poses, gestures, and movements of groups of people are subjected to the expression of the inner state of people and their appeal to each other. They are the components of more general intentional codes and indices. *Idea materialization* in the sign system of the work is fulfilled in inhomogeneity, in relations, differential features, elements, and structures. This is clearly seen in a composition search of Surikov’s multi-figure paintings. He usually made the sketches of the paintings with a pencil. The arrangement of actions, the depicted situation in space was designed in these sketches. The composition followed the sign system of the idea, i.e., the basic formation of metonymies and metaphors was developed in denotations and connotations in a denoted space and visual sign system on the painting surface. This determined the peculiarities of organizing the works’ elements. Numerous people are depicted in these paintings, the interconnections of these people on various levels (semantic units, signs, representaments, signals) are essential. Each of these systematicities acquires a certain structural organization as it happens in various works of visual art (Somov 2006,

2009, 2010a, 2010b). The compositions of these multi-figure pictures are organized as groups of elements – human figures expressing common motions, impulses, elements – the metaphors meeting the key metonymies. The peculiarities of these metonymies are in the way the relationships of human figures are connected in the depicted (three-dimensional) space and on the image surface. In Surikov's multi-figure pictures, the role of organizing connections belongs to large configurations and lines as well as various structures of relationships of color, texture, and proportion systems.

The organizing sign formations proper of Surikov's multi-figure pictures are connected with sign formations – metonymies and metaphors. This happens on the basis of using characteristics, groups of identical elements, and those contrasting to each other.

4 Sign formations of the works as the manifestation of their key metaphors and metonymies

The Morning of the Streltsy Execution (1881) is an important historic painting by Surikov, which he composed when he stayed in Moscow during his trip from Siberia to St. Petersburg (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). In Moscow, he went to Red Square in front of St. Basil's Cathedral; in St. Petersburg he was near the monument to Peter I and at the place of Decembrists' revolt of 1825. The combination of these signs reminded him of the revolt arranged by the *streltsy* executed by Peter I in 1698 in Moscow. The links between the places and events were enforced by the signs of the gloomy and frightening cathedral. This cathedral reminded Lermontov of Tsar Ivan the Terrible (Brunov 1988); to Surikov it seemed bloody (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). The connection between Moscow and St. Petersburg in this sign system later was strengthened by a historic metaphor. In the same year *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution* was created, Tsar Aleksander II was assassinated in St. Petersburg. The organizers of the murder were hanged, and the Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood, similar to St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, was built on the place of the murder. This way an idea is woven from metaphors, supplying them with persuasiveness and plausibility, connecting them with verbal texts of historic events, thus expanding the world of visual meanings. Similarly to other ideas of Surikov's, the ideas of the *streltsy*'s figures in the carts with candles appeared from realistic metaphoric impressions. During his stay in Siberia, he

saw wounded Cossacks carried in the carts. The artist remembered one of them – in a white shirt with an expressive red beard – for all his life (Tepin 1916). When Surikov imagined the *streltsy*'s execution, he recalled this wounded Cossack and made him the painting's main character who is angrily watching the Tsar and his attendants. The *streltsy* were a privileged estate. They oppressed the common people with impunity and robbed and killed them during the revolts. Thus, Peter the Great's reprisal over them was a fair answer for the rebels' provocation. But still the *streltsy* attracted sympathy in the minds of people and in the texts of legends and stories. Their mass execution arranged by Peter I was too cruel. Thus, Surikov also seems to sympathize with the *streltsy*.

The semantics of historic events connected with *streltsy*'s revolts is the signification of the confrontation between the old state, the one of the boyars, and the new power, the emperor's absolutism. The *streltsy*'s free life, their liberties, and arbitrariness were abolished in the centralized state of the Empire. This confrontation is the core of the work's semantic system. Old Russia is symbolized by the *streltsy*, their wives and children, and the carts on which they were carried to execution; the cathedral over the crowd connected with the name of a fool-for-Christ and the Protection of the Virgin, the people's protection. The Emperor's state power is manifested by Peter I on a horse, his attendants and the soldiers of the Preobrazhensky regiment standing aside from the crowd. Fortress walls and the Kremlin's towers are rising above them. The painter developed the opposition of sign systems for the old and new by expressing it via the contrasts between the features of groups of elements (Figure 4). In diachrony, the two meanings of the words in the title itself, "morning" and "execution," form controversial denotations of "beginning" and "end." This semantic controversy is expressed in the visual sign system. A coldish light of the early morning is coloristically combined in the picture with the white candle of the fading candles and white shirts defining death. White tints of the dying old world are changing into gloomy grayish tints of the morning, the start of the new history.

The founder of the new Russian history, Peter I, is sitting upright on a horse. His attendants, the Patriarch, the soldiers of the Preobrazhensky regiment, are standing in the background seeming to grow into the earth. The clothes of the state people, the new European-style coats and hats, are similar to the configurations of the Kremlin towers. The metaphor of the figures of the "state people" and towers generates the meaning of the force and strength of the new power. This metaphor is enhanced by the similarity between the design of Peter the Great's hat and the Kremlin wall merlons. The metaphor of the Emperor's figure and the battlement is formed. This enables expressing the metonymy of a powerful state. The figures and faces of the *streltsy* and of their wives and children form the key theme of the painting. They create a complicated composition, attract attention,

arouse interest and excite the artist's and spectator's pity. Difficult meanings of the mass and separate people are produced by developed sign systems. The main event depicted in the painting is the *streltsy*'s parting with their families, relatives, and the people. The work's sign means are largely subjected to this denotation and its meanings. Researchers view the *streltsy* as coupled images forming a kind of a division into two characters (Allenov 1997); in particular, the figures one of which is supporting another develop an integral sign formation. The configurations of overcoats, hands, and feet of both figures are elongated and inclined. They form T- and Z-shaped configurations and are characterized by visually active signs and strong structure. This facilitates remembering them. The penitent is dressed in a different form. The guard's uniform is thrown on him. This does not mean an enemy, a *strelets*, but a traitor guard. He joined the revolt, violated the oath, and is repenting now. The figure that indicated repentance is repeated in a metaphorical sign formation. The penitence of the guard who joined the rebels and the sympathy of another soldier are the sides of one meaning: the integrity of different parts of people. This is the reason both human figures have similar contours.

Metaphorical sign formations of inclined triangles and elongated trapezia form a considerable, active systematicity of the middle part of the picture. They connect the configurations of uncertain, repenting characters sympathizing with the *streltsy* with the correct configuration of this type on the right. Triangle and trapezium-shaped elements of the picture are enhanced by a common proportion system (Figures 5 and 6). A certain important meaning that can be seen is this mutual penetration of the elements. Uncertain, inclined triangle or trapezium-shaped contours of the guard's figure that carries his mate *strelets* to execution are similar to the contours of the penitent who joined the *streltsy*. Those who simply follow the will of the Tsar and his attendants are not so sure, not so clearly and toughly definite. This might imply the sympathy of the state people, the executors, with *streltsy*. This meaning is also expressed by a tender, sympathizing gesture.

The light of burning candles on a white background seen by Surikov in the morning twilight in the Novodevichy Monastery became an important metaphor for the work. The candle means a fading life. The metaphor of an ending life is rendered by the image of a smoking candle that is burning down. The lives of the exiled are fading away in the morning twilight in a small hut in Siberian taiga (Allenov 1997: 82). The white color of the *streltsy*'s death shirts contributes to the meaning of the death moment. This calm white light combined with the flame creates the impression of feverish movements. The calmness of the sitting figures and signs of the restless motions of their souls form a semantic contrast, supplying the work with the meaning of unsaid essence of what is happening. Irregular

candlelight trembling in the morning twilight means fading lives. Due to this unsteady shimmering, the picture is filled with the meanings of anxiety and the fragility of human life. The configuration and color spectrum of the burning candle, a Christian symbol of a burning soul, acquires the character of a connotation. It has been already pointed out above that carts, sledges, and collars function as metonymies in paradigmatics. The configurations of wheels and collars are important connotations of the painting (Figure 8). In the given context, a cart is a place of a temporary life before death. A cart wheel becomes similar to a rack and a place of execution, a big executioner's block behind the crowd on the left, and thus means moving to death. The given metaphor promotes a metonymy. A collar over the horse is the sign of unfreedom. The importance of wheels and collars as metaphors for the formation of the work's meanings determined the connotative peculiarities of these metaphors. The configurations of wheels and collars are developed in the organization of the groups of visual elements of the motley crowd and in the similarities between the key configurations and lines. They mean that people on carts and in the shirts are doomed to death. Wheels and collars even more intensify the meaning of doom by its active form. The forms of wheels repeat the round cylinder of the executioner's block, rotation of the victims on them and the breaking wheel (the widespread means of execution in Russia). The forms of wheels and collars move from the layer of denotations into the layer of connotations in the picture, they become organizing visual formations.

The calmness of Surikov's picture, the silence in it combined with wheels, collars, mud, and waning candlelight create visual meanings connected with pacification of sacral character.

A *strelets* with a candle is angrily looking at the new power. His head with a jerked pointed beard has characteristic features that are developed in the picture's composition (Figure 4). The features of a disobedient rebel acquire a peculiar activity due to identifications in various visual elements. The configurations and contours of the cathedral's hipped roofs and domes become representamens of the general metaphor of the revolt's energy and the burning candle flame. *The metaphors of execution* create a particular sign formation. Rows of gallows behind the Tsar are a sign concretization of this action. The horizontal line that is "cutting" heads off is a connotative metaphor – the continuation of this meaning (Figure 7). A part of the rectangle proportional structures form the analogy of the gallows. The key symbol of the event is intensified by the structure of the painting. On the whole, metaphors that are actively developed in the work's denotations and connotations produce the basic metonymies of the old and new, the disobedient people and imperial state.

The development of sign systems of a multi-figure painting in the systematicities that are close to semiotic-linguistic principles and rules of constructing a

text are seen in Surikov's other works as well. In *Boyarina Morozova*, the composition was partly formed as a development of the key, original metaphor of a black crow on white snow. Here, the *boyarina*'s black figure with a raised hand with a two-finger crossing is opposed to the white snow, the main background of the picture. This metaphor was supplemented with a number of other metaphors in syntagmatics: the identity of the two-finger crossing with the crowd, the configuration of the trumpet angel of the Apocalypse; the *streltsy*'s pole axe lifted above the crowd, the comparison of the connotative figure of the falling Virgin that organizes most people visually with the Virgin's icon (Somov 2005). Metaphors from paradigmatics move to syntagmatics in the painting. The depicted people and objects are reinforced by active, similar configurations and contours. Large color configurations are organized as hidden, connotative metaphors. In particular, the lifted hand with a two-finger crossing that indicates the key symbol of the Old Belief and people's confrontation with the authorities turns into a developed sign formation in the picture composition. Visually active elements (e.g., the *strelts*'s figure and the woman following him) are organized as identical to the *boyarina*'s raised hand and remind one of fingers (Somov 2005). Semantically, the lifted hand with a two-finger crossing and the parting with the "holy fool" beggar on the snow in the picture's right lower corner are identified with the heroine. The last person who is seeing the *boyarina* off is the beggar who is half-naked, sitting on the snow. The organization of the metonymy of a two-finger crossing on the level of representamens is manifested in other elements. The contours of the horse, collar, and sledge are similar to those of the raised hand and fingers. The sledge carrying the *boyarina* away is identified with the expatriation of the Old Belief. This metaphor is based on a general historical context and turns into a metonymy. After the dissidence, Old Believers moved out to sparsely populated Northern and Eastern areas uncontrolled by the state and settled in boundless forest space. Thus, the key metaphor of the figure in black expanded from an idea to a sign formation of metonymies and metaphors connected with the historical context.

The basic movement of the *boyarina* carried away by the sledge to her grave is strengthened by visually active triangular contours. Therefore, the snowy house roofs that form the composition of the whole picture top are so essential in the composition. Sharp triangles of attic windows of these houses, abrupt slopes of the roofs, active perspective zigzag lines of their eaves form a systematicity of active visual elements that develop sign formations of metonymies and metaphors of the picture. This systematicity intensifies: 1) the metonymy of Old Belief; 2) the metonymy of the *boyarina* exiled to her grave and of the people's parting with her; 3) the *boyarina*'s moving to her grave. This systematicity is characterized by specific semantics. Abrupt straight and zigzag lines of triangle contours

produce the meaning of sharp movements, the dynamics of the depicted situation. Due to the codes of intentional character (Somov 2005), the meanings of dynamics, sharpness, and uncertainty are created. The differences between sharp straight and zigzag lines in the picture add some disorder, confusion, and uncertain excitement. The crowd is moving, seething, and surging. Public disturbance is spread around the city. *Color relations* and configurations of the painting bring their sign formations of metonymic and metaphoric character into the work. Surikov used equal distribution and opposition of cold and warm tints, dark and light, bright and monochrome in the picture including the dark zone of people in the middle. The light lower and upper zones depict snowy winter. The color elements and tints of these zones contain essential information and emotive meanings. The sky in the picture is darker and warmer than the snow. The trees, snowy roofs, and church domes are drowned in warm-grayish shadows. Distant views defining the ways to the future are vague, hazy; they point to a snowstorm. The snow at the bottom, on the foreground is clearly perceived, which is important not only for discovering the differences between the background and the foreground. The foreground indicates the ways to the past as well in this movement. This snow has distinct traces, dim untouched bluish balls, and dirty brownish traces of the sledge, boots, horse hoofs. Such attention to features/traces (to the indices of phenomena) is characteristic of Surikov's keen vision and cognition. He said that it is not the horse hoofs that are important but the fact that they are worn out (Tepin 1916). The glimmer of mud on cart wheels is important (Voloshin 1985 [1911]). The spreading of warm color tints in the snowy zones of the picture top and bottom enable not only the introduction of some sign formation of metaphoric and metonymic character, but the spreading warm and cold colors to the borders of the image as well. The color rug of the crowd in *Boyarina Morozova* is a sign system of elements and relations of color and texture that includes several basic sign formations of metonymic-metaphoric character. *Denotative sign formations of the color system* are connected with the basic historic text and life contexts of the painting. The opposition between the *boyarina* and the people is an important semantic difference that is developed in metonymies and metaphors, in the differences and identities of the work. As researchers note, the *boyarina* is actively opposed to the crowd (Allenov 1997). The color contrast of the picture's center is formed by the opposition of the *boyarina*'s black clothes and the lightest, indeed white, spot of the kerchief of the woman who is seeing her off. These two women are looking at each other. The woman in the white kerchief who folded her hands in entreaty and sympathy with the people. It is essential that the woman in red clothes is following the sledge being rolled into one with the *strelets* who accompanies the exiled. This inseparable couple (obviously, wife and husband) indicate an important idea of Surikov's. The people who fulfill the state

will sympathize with their victims. Similarly, in *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution* a guard joins in sympathy the *strelets* whom he conducts to execution. In *Boyarina Morozova*, the wife of the *strelets* who accompanies *boyarina* to exile sympathizes with the victim. The people are divided into the sympathizing and gloating ones (Kemenov 1963). Basically, the gloating ones are the dressed in rich clothes (the group in the left part of the picture) and slow-witted boys. Most people are sorrowful, blessing the heroine, and parting with her. They do not share her religious fanaticism but sympathize with the victim of the repressive state, the rebel who rose up against power. The whole of Russia is shown in the picture as an oppressed, humiliated, and suffering country (Stasov 1952). *The metonymy of the judgment day* (Somov 2005) grows from the key sign formations of the work, primarily, from the metonymy of way. A way in the historical context of the painting means the *boyarina's* way to death. Moving along an unclear, dark way to uncertainty leads everyone to the day of reckoning. All come to a common judgment day, at the same or different time appearing in front of the higher court. This indefinite, unclear generalization acquires a dim but materialized connotative manifestation: most active color configurations and lines of the painting form the contours of a trumpet angel that the author illustrated above when considering the role of connotations in visual art (Somov 2005; Figure 16). The trumpet angel in the given context means the fifth angel of the Apocalypse. This connotation of the metonymy acquires an independent impact in the work. Trumpet sounds add the meaning of solemnity to the depicted scene of the last goodbye. *Connotative sign formations of the color system* are connected with the key cultural signs in a verbal historical text and life context for the picture. *The connotative metonymies of repression and sympathy* are manifested in several sign formations. As the author tried to show above, the sign formation of the *strelets' pole axe* is semantically important and visually active in the picture (Somov 2005; figure 17). *The metaphor of the strelets' pole axe* naturally appears here in the depiction of the *strelets* who is following the sledge with the *boyarina*. Surikov depicted the pole axe carried by the *strelets* in sharp silhouette contours.

The denotative metonymy of a two-finger crossing is in the global significance of this sign (Figure 14). A two-finger crossing was the key sign of the Old Belief abolished by the new church in favor of a three-finger crossing, indicating the Holy Trinity. In the context of historical events, the two-finger crossing of the *boyarina's* raised hand means a fanatic devotion to the Old Belief. At the same time, it means resistance to state violence against the freedom of religion and irreconcilable struggle against the Tsar who sent the Old Belief defenders to die in confinement under the violent authorities. The irreconcilability and inflexibility of the fanatic *boyarina* are expressed in the harshness of the straight, raised hand. As researchers pointed out, this gesture signals a curse directed at state

power rather than the defense of the belief (Allenov 1997). The two-finger crossing of the holy fool who is sitting cross-legged (in the lower right corner of the picture) in interconnection with the *boyarina's* gesture grows into a new metonymy. The *boyarina's* two-finger crossing, which means an appeal for the irreconcilable struggle for the purity of the Old Belief, receives a different meaning in the fool's gesture. The beggar is saying goodbye to the *boyarina*, blessing her. In the contrast to the *boyarina's* hand, his hand is relaxed, shows a lack of tension, and has round, calm features. A distinction between the irreconcilability and bitterness and the two-finger sign of blessing, kindness, and love arises. Here the distinctions and identities of denotations expand to the connotative layer of the image on the picture color field. *The metonymy of sympathy* is rendered by a huge Virgin's kerchief turned bottom up. The Protection of the Holy Virgin, the protection of the beggars and paupers is the connotation that might hold the key meaning of the painting – the sympathy to the people who suffer from humiliation.

Denotative and connotative sign formations of individual memories burst into the color gist of the work. The color diversity, hipped roofs, small churches, kerchiefs, fur coats: all of these objects indicate artist's individual memories of life in Siberia. Creating the environment of the seventeenth century, Surikov depicted kerchiefs, embroidery, and tracery well-known to him, which remained from the Siberia of the seventeenth century and thus followed both historic authenticity and bright individual memories of childhood. *The connotative formations of the color system of individual memories* have been already demonstrated by the author while considering connotations in visual art (Somov 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010a, 2010b). Numerous beast snouts reminding one of the taiga and the accessories of shamanic rituals that fill Siberia are hidden in the picture's color pattern. Animal features appear in the surging sea of the many-colored crowd.

The Conquest of Siberia by Yermak is the artist's tribute to the memory of his ancestors. *The metonymy of the opposition between the West and the East, order and wild elements* – this could be the name of the key sign formation of the painting. This metonymy is manifested in various features, structures, and elements. The picture is divided strictly into two parts, right and left. The movement from the left to the right means the movement of Yermak's troop to the East. The sharp bow of the big dugout is cutting into the amorphous masses of the Kuchum Khan's troops. The ordered, sharpened movement of the dugouts is opposed to the small disorderly movements of the Asian troops spreading along the riverside. The metonymy of the West and the East thus acquires a materialized character in the visual inhomogeneity of the picture. This metonymy is intensified by metaphors. *The metaphor of order and natural elements* creates a sign formation that enhances, materializes, and concretizes the key metonymy of the painting. Disorderly

broken rhythms of the Khan's cavalry flowing above the high bank contribute to the general meaning of the disordered, spontaneous movement of the Asian army. Kuchum's cavalry appears over the high bank. The figures of horses and horse riders cut off by the steep line produce particular meanings and sign formations. The meaning of the uncertainty of what follows these first horsemen (emptiness or hundreds of other horsemen?) appears. In this silhouette, the breaks in the light blue sky between the silhouettes of the horses and the steep line become particularly important. The sky breaks are informative and structurally organized. This allows feeling the movement of the horses, their race. The silhouettes of the horse riders, horse feet and light sky breaks form groups of active elements that are structurally (rhythmically) organized and at the same time are occasional, unexpected as a complicated musical melody. The given technique semantically continues the tradition of depicting troops in multi-figure paintings. In these works, since the Renaissance, strictness and orderliness of the rows was formed largely from the strictness and orderliness of vertical copies (works by Uccello, Carpaccio, Bruegel the Elder's *Massacre of the Innocents*; *The Surrender of Breda* by Velazquez). Surikov used straight strict lines of standards and gonfalons and introduced the basic vertical lines that form the orderliness of the military rows in the pattern of Cossack figures. However, the essence of the technique in Surikov's work is the same as in the repeated vertical copies. The vertical lines of human figures, their contours and configurations form a strict formation that obeys the rhythm of marching military columns. In the dissected zone of horse feet silhouettes and coastlines one can see sharp stripes of the bright blue sky, the impressions of numerous perceptions of horse races well-known since childhood. The cavalry's movement is joining the grass roots movement of the mass of people on the shore. On the whole, *the metaphor of water flows similar to the elements* is formed due to flowing movements. The indices of dynamics introduce the meanings of anxiety and excitement into the picture. The dynamics of the battle is rendered in the general movement of the basic configurations of the picture on the left on the bottom → up to the right. The dugouts of Yermak's troop seem to move upwards along the river. This diagonal movement allows for the creation of a sign formation – *the metonymy of a shaped attacking army*. *The metonymy of "Christ's army"* originating from the historic context is materialized in the picture's sign system. On the whole, *the metonymy of the fearless movement of Christ's army – the metonymy of a heroic deed* is formed. A technique of metaphoric character concretizes this general metonymy. To emphasize the strictness of the meanings of confrontation, solidarity, and determination of the great masses of people, Surikov turned human figures, color configurations, color spots, and clothes textures into metric-rhythmical systems with vertical or close to vertical formations of active visual elements. The close ranks of Yermak's detachment are opposed to

the scattering and flowing cavalry (Figure 21). Researchers also point out that the Russian troop is presented as a memorial (Allenov 1997). This similarity is explained by some peculiarities of the “superimposition” of the soldiers’ figures on each other. Left figures overlap the right ones, which is defined by the conventionality of the sculptural relief in which the distinctions between the fore- and the background are indicated by laying a deep bas-relief (Figure 22). Such techniques of sculptural layers can be seen in the famous works of classicism and the Empire style. Thus, the metonymy of a memorial of heroic deed is formed.

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Bionote

Georgij Yu. Somov (b. 1946) is a professor at the Urban Design Institute in Moscow (georgij.somov@gmail.com), home page: gsomov.com. His research interests include the problems of design, composition in architecture, semiotics of visual art, and theoretical semiotics. His publications include “Conviviality problem in the structure of semiotic objects” (2004); “Semiotic systemity of visual artworks: Case study of *The Holy Trinity* by Rublev” (2007); “Structures and semiotic systems” (2007); and “The role of structures in semiotic systems (analysis of some ideas of Leonardo da Vinci and the portrait *Lady with an Ermine*)” (2008).