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Mass Culture to Master: Literary Metamorphoses of Early Soviet Satire

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Maria Isabel Kisel

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ABSTRACT

Mass Culture to Master: Literary Metamorphoses of Early Soviet Satire

Maria Isabel Kisel

This dissertation analyzes the cultural and literary significance of satiricial elements in early Soviet prose. My project examines Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, Yuri Olesha's *Envy*, Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit*, and Mikhail Zoshchenko's prose trilogy (*Youth Restored*, *The Sky-Blue Book* and *Before Sunrise*) as literary works that incorporated and transformed the writers' NEP-era satirical sketches written for a mass reader. Using the language, characterization and rhetorical structure of the satirical feuilleton, each author uniquely co-opted the conventions of this didactic genre in the creation of a complex, modernist aesthetic. I argue that for these writers, the NEP (New Economic Policy 1921-1928) years represented a time of literary success and prominence. As active participants in the early Soviet project of studying and responding to a common reader, the writers continued to anachronistically draw on this ethos even after satire was no longer sanctioned by the State.

My approach establishes a middle ground between poetic and political readings; I demonstrate that these authors referenced their early careers in journalistic satire as a means to connect with an imagined Soviet reader, but their artistic re-interpretations of NEP-era mass culture did not coincide with the conventions of Socialist realism. In addition to establishing a

cultural framework which recasts the authors and their creations in a new historical light, each chapter offers an innovative, new perspective on these well-loved masterpieces.

In chapter one, I posit that in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* the author addresses the uneducated readers of the feuilleton in an effort to teach them about pre-revolutionary values and culture. Chapter two analyzes Yuri Olesha's use of satirical stereotypes in his novel *Envy* as a means to explore whether human beings have changed internally after the revolution. The third chapter demonstrates the creative transformation of NEP-era satirical language into poetic self-expression in Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit*. The last chapter documents Zoshchenko's adaptation of the "proletarian writer" psychology in the writing his prose trilogy.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War most scholars have abandoned once prevalent socio-political interpretations of major Soviet prose works.[1] Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, Yuri Olesha's *Envy*, Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit* and Zoshchenko's prose trilogy, previously read as satirical exposes indicting the Soviet State, have come to be appreciated more for their aesthetic and philosophical merits in recent scholarship. Poetics, not politics, figures as the hermeneutic approach of choice.[2] Having moved beyond the cold war-era binary view of

[1] Monographs, collections and anthologies that treat literature as political documents include: Elena Mahlow, *Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita: The Text as a Cipher* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975); A.Belinkov, *Sdacha i gibel' Sovetskogo inteligenta. Iurii Olesha* (Madrid: Natalia Belinkov,1976); Marc Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems*, 1917-1967 (New York: Oxford University Press,1967); Patricia Blake and Max Howard, eds., *Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature* (London:George, Allen & Unwin, 1965); Ernest J. Simmons, ed., *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press,1953); Richard Chapple, *Soviet Satire of the Twenties* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida,1980).

[2] Some examples of monographs focusing on the poetics of Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov and Zoshchenko include: Jeremy Hicks, *Mikhail Zoshchenko and the Poetics of Skaz* (Nottingham: Astra, 2000); Victor Peppard, *The Poetics of Yury Olesha* (Gainseville: University of Floriday Press, 1989); G.M. Rebel', *Khudozhestvennye miry romanov Mikhaila Bulgakova* (Perm': Izd-vo PRIPIT, 2001); K.A. Barsht, *Poetika prozy Andreia Platonova* (Sankt Peterburg: Filologicheskii fakul'tet Sankt-Peterburgskogo gos. Universiteta, 2005).

dividing all literature into "dissident" and "official," critics have provided myriad fascinating and imaginative insights into the aforementioned works. Many of these interpretations, however, have entirely divorced these major novels and their creators from the cultural context of their inception. In my analysis I will seek to reconcile socio-historical and aesthetic approaches by examining the paradoxical presence of early Soviet mass culture in the midst of the novels' modernist complexity.

During the years of the New Economic Policy (NEP 1921-1928), Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov, and Zoshchenko worked in various newspapers as writers of satirical feuilletons oriented toward a Soviet mass reader. Most scholars tend to minimize the connection between the authors' early Soviet satire and their longer prose works. Mikhail Bulgakov's feuilletons and *The Master and Margarita* have been linked by Edythe Haber, Miron Petrovsky and Andrew Barratt.[3] Likewise, Elizabeth Papazian and Jeremy Hicks have written about Zoshchenko's fueilletonic efforts as essential to the narrative mock proletarian voice evident on the pages of his famous short stories.[4] While these scholars have rightfully acknowledged the importance of the feuilleton, they have not analyzed the significance of this influence. As I will contend in this dissertation, the NEP-era satirical feuilleton informs the aesthetic structure and practices evident

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[3] Edythe Haber, *Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Miron Petrovskii, *Master i gorod: kievskie konteksty Mikhaila Bulgakova* (Kiev: Izd-vo Dukh i Litera, 2001); Andrew Barrat, *Between Two Worlds: A Critical Introduction to The Master and Margarita* (Oxford: Claredon Press, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[4] Elizabeth Papazian, "Reconstructing the (Authentic Proletarian) Reader," in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.4, No.4 (Fall 2003); Jeremy Hicks, *Mikhail Zoshchenko and the Poetics of Skaz* (Nottingham: Astra Press, 2000).

in Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov and Zoshchenko's masterpieces. Consequently, the feuilleton's metamorphosis within the texts of these novels has literary and cultural implications.

In the literary sphere, my work will explore the potentials of early Soviet satire, originally created to enlighten the newly literate reader, as a tool of modernist innovation. This approach is not without precedent; Morag Shiach writes that recently scholars of English literature have begun to investigate "the ways in which modernist literary fiction responds to the creation of new readerships through the expansion of education and proliferation of affordable novels, journals and magazines."[5] In the case of Soviet Russia, the State's mediation drastically changes the relationship between author and reader as compared to its British counterpart. The subtle connection between writer and Soviet reader involves a tangled web of middlemen and misunderstandings.

In his collection of essays titled *Modernism and Revolution: Russian Literature in Transition* Victor Erlich analyzes the major works of several authors of the 1920's, among them Olesha, Platonov and Zoshchenko to discuss the "encounter between Russian literary modernism and the Revolution and its aftermath."[6] Examining the aesthetic sensibilities of Russian modernity against the backdrop of political fervor, Erlich declares the artistic culture of the 1920s as "a direct sequel to, if not a culmination of, the modern ferment in the period

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[5] Morag Shiach, "Reading the Modernist Novel: An Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to The Modernist Novel* ed. Morag Shiach, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

[6] Victor Erlich, "The Masks of Mikhail Zoshchenko" (163-178), "Utopia as Apocalypse: The Anguished Quest of Andrey Platonov" (178-198), "A Shop of Metamphors: The Short Brilliant Career of Yury Olesha" (198-217); in *Modernism and Revolution: Russian Literature in Transition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

immediately preceding the Revolution."[7] In my analysis I will add that for Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov and Zoshchenko, reader centered NEP-era mass culture also served as a kind of prequel to their major novels.

Each author co-opts a different aspect of the NEP-era satirical feuilleton to fit his unique artistic purpose, thereby enlisting this simple genre to play a new role within these novels. Despite the fact that the feuilleton's status changes from light didactic writing to modernist device, the presence of this literary tool of enlightenment forces us to re-evaluate the cultural positions of the masterpieces and their creators. The very fact that Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov and Zoshchenko incorporated a form of Soviet mass culture into their prose indicates a continued (albeit anachronistic) participation in the creation of a Soviet literature for a Soviet reader.

The term "fellow traveler," coined by Trotsky in 1923, describes writers without strong political leanings, typically involved in the creation of belle letters as opposed to working in minor literary genres directed toward mass audiences. Although the expression "fellow traveler" lost its significance in Soviet circles after the dissolution of literary groups and the formation of the Union of Writers in 1932, in today's Western criticism, this label denotes a degree of detachment from the lower registers of Soviet literary activity and a strong connection to the 19th century lineage of sophisticated prose. In his seminal history of *Russian Literature since the Revolution*, Edward J. Brown identifies the fellow travelers as intellectuals at odds with Soviet sensibilities:

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[7] Erlich, 12.

> The writers whose major work I have mentioned briefly, those who came to be known as fellow travelers (a name supplied for them by Trotsky), seem to have been the direct heirs of the 19th century literary tradition, and their work deals precisely with the problem of the intellectual confronted with a new and alien world.[8]

The authors identified as fellow travelers: Pilnyak, Zamyatin, Ivanov, Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov, Zoshchenko, Pasternak, are deemed aesthetically and philosophically separate from the concerns of less educated Soviet audiences. My project challenges the view of a parallel artistic universe inhabited by such writers as Bulgakov, Olesha and Platonov, separated from Soviet mass culture, as suggested by the term "fellow traveler." I insist on a greater degree of intersection between the two. Mikhail Zoshchenko stands as an exception, as his literary works enjoyed great popularity among lower class readers and continue to fascinate critics to this day.[9]

Most of the novels in question were unpublished and thus unavailable to contemporary readers. This is not a study of reception, but my research demonstrates that these writers drew from a well of light satire aimed at common readers' sensibililites. The authors in my study began their careers in the early 1920s, a period in Russian literary life characterized by a pronounced political interest in creating a literature to engage newly literate audiences as

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[8] Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature since the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 9.

[9] Recent scholarly studies of Zoshchenko's prose by Western critics include Jeremy Hicks, *Mikhail Zoshchenko and the Poetics of Skaz*, (Nottingham: Astra, 2000); "The Masks of Mikhail Zoshchenko" in Victor Erlich, *Modernism and Revolution: Russian Literature in Transition* (Harvard University Press, 1994); Linda Scatton, *Mikhail Zoshchenko: Evolution of a Writer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

demonstrated by the widespread reader studies during the early years of NEP. By the 1930s the creative dialogue between the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia and the "mass reader" was replaced by what Evgeny Dobrenko has termed "*a comprehensive strategy of averaging out* and devouring the enclaves of autonomy."[10] That is, the artist's role as a creative mediator between the State and the Soviet reader became obsolete. Nevertheless, the now defunct position of cultural ambassador remained attractive to authors and they did not easily relinquish it, even after the State severed its relationship with real readers.

The use of the feuilleton stems from both conscious compromise and the unconscious literary momentum of Russia's reading culture, which since the end of the tsarist period increasingly included popular reading materials.[11] *The Master and Margarita*, *Envy*, *The Foundation Pit* and Zoshchenko's prose trilogy represent a negotiation between literary mastery and orientation toward the perceived simple tastes of a mass reader. The satirical feuilleton emerges transformed and transformative; raised to the level of high art within the context of complex prose it nonetheless remains recognizable as an accessible form used for educational purposes. This view counters the "lotus in the mud" idealization of these novels: the lotus plants its roots in the muddy waters, but grows pristine and untouched by the murky dirt that surrounds it. The mythical narratives about these modernist novels evoke the image of the lotus, portraying these works as created in a Soviet context but miraculously untouched by cultural homogenization.

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[10] Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of a State Reader* translated by Jesse M. Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 143.

[11] For more on trends in Russian reading culture before the revolution please see "Introduction: Russia's Reading Myth," in Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1-25.

Literary Potentials of Soviet Satire

The satirical mode represents an elusive entity, crossing boundaries of genre and tenor. Encompassing a wide emotional range from Horatian amusement at human folly to Juvenalian indignation at social ills, a satirical voice may appear in comical or serious works.[12] Satire is not necessarily tied to a specific literary form or can it be assigned stable literary value, but rather denotes a critical, yet humorous authorial attitude.

In Russia, the satirical genre has historically served as a vehicle for sociopolitical persuasion. It first appeared in Russia in the 18th century as an educational tool promoting the creation of a new European-influenced Russian culture. Antiokh Kantemir figures as Russia's first satirist, inspired by the French example of Nicolas Boileau. By 1729 Kantemir wrote his first original satire in support of Peter the Great's Westernization efforts: his biting verses held up a critical mirror to Russian citizens' medieval backwardness. The poet's satires not only commented on social manners and mores, but instructed readers in the art of interpretation by providing additional explanations in prose to elucidate the important distinction between the characters' and the author's opinions. Kantemir's efforts represent an early link between satire and literacy, whereby this satirical literary form was enlisted to teach readers how to read.[13]

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[12] Horace (65BC-27BC) and Juvenal were Roman poets, who established rules for satirical verse. Horace used playful wit to mock the shortcomings of human nature. Juvenal, writing more than a century later, took the position of a morally upright man horrified at the folly around him.

[13] Ilya Serman, "The Eighteenth Century: Neoclassicism and the Enlightenment, 1730-90" in *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* ed. Charles Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 49-52.

Catherine II actively engaged with the satirical genre as an outlet for socio-political discussions. In 1769, the empress began publishing a satirical journal *All Kinds of Sundries* (*Vsiakaya vsiachina*) as a venue for original Russian satire. At the empress' encouragement, prominent writers of the time followed her lead and branched out with their own satirical publications, including Mikhail Chulkov's *This and That* (*I to i sio*), Fedor Emin's *Miscellany* (*Smes'*), *Hell's Post* (*Adskaia pochta*) and Nikolai Novikov's best known *The Drone* (*Truten*). These publications allowed for an expression of political opinions in literary form. A tension between authority and author appears on the pages of these 18th century journals, where Catherine and Russian intellectuals, for instance Nikolai Novikov, engaged in witty polemics more befitting literary rivals than sovereign and subject.[14] Although Catherine proclaimed herself an enlightened ruler, after the French Revolution her relatively liberal policies became intolerant of criticism or dissent. Her fear of an uprising in her own country led her to eventually sentence her former literary peer Novikov to fifteen years in prison.

Much like Novikov, who criticized the nobility for their stubborn refusal to embrace new ideas, Denis Fonvizin's hit 1783 play *The Minor* satirically promoted the humanitarian values of the Enlightenment in his mockery of the brute country gentry. The narrative voice in these satires was imitative of Western models, but the characters' Russian names (Starodum, Prostakova, Skotinin) informed readers of the moral qualities embodied by each character.[15] In his travelogue, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), Alexander Radishchev adapted a

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[14] For more on the politics of publishing in the reign of Catherine the Great see Gary Marker, *Publishing, Printing and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* (Princeton: University Press, 1985).

[15] Serman, 78.

more radical view than either Novikov or Fonvizin dramatically lamenting the sad plight of the peasant. Written in a sentimental tone, Radishchev's work appeals to the reader's emotions rather than his reason. Although this work cannot be called satirical, its emotional treatment of political issues informed the satirical writings of the next century. Despite the work's mild political content, Catherine judged Radishchev's text as dangerous propaganda and exiled the author to Siberia.[16]

The famed critic Vissarion Belinsky proclaimed Nikolai Gogol the savior of Russian literature, praising Gogol's poema *Dead Souls* (1842) and the short story *The Overcoat* (1842) as exemplary exposes of Russian life and manners that would serve as an impetus for social change.[17] Belinsky's estimation missed a crucial nuance of Gogol's literary craft. In addition to his scathingly witty portrayals of "Russian types" such as the liberal land owner, the gambler, the greedy merchant, the petty clerk and others, Gogol's satire subtly communicates a sense of existential absurdity. Self-conscious narrative commentary, digressive games with the reader and compulsive verbal elaboration overwhelm any semblance of a didactic message within these works. Nikolai Gogol, much like the masters of the 1920s was too complex and talented a writer to simplify his prose to fit a clear political agenda.

In the 1860s and 1870s the satirical mode acquired a tone of passionate reproach in Russia's progressive intelligentsia's criticism of the imperial government and the nobility. The critics Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Nikolai Dobroliubov and Dmitry Pisarev called for a topical

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[16] Mark Altshuller, "Transition to the Modern Age: Sentimentalism and Preromanticism, 1790-1820*" The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, 105-107.

[17] Richard Peace, "The 19th Century: The Natural School and its Aftermath, 1840-55," *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, 189-205.

literature that addressed contemporary problems. Against the backdrop of the realist novel, writers continued to employ satire as a means to persuade readers. Mikhail Saltykov –Shchedrin answered this demand in his *History of a Town* (1869), where themes of suffering, inequality and cruel stupidity in tsarist Russia take on the literary form of a satirical expose.

Fedor Dostoevsky and Anton Chekhov stand as two examples of writers who began their careers in newspaper satires and moved on to employ the satirical sensibility in serious and often tragic depictions of human nature. In journals founded with his brother called *Vremya (Time)* and later *Epokha (Epoch)*, Dostoevsky wrote polemical feuilletons satirizing the progressive intelligentsia's often fanatical and misguided revolutionary actions. A short feuilleton called "The Crocodile" (1865) meant to mock Nikolai Chernyshevsky, tells the story of an outspoken member of the intelligentsia who continues to expound on his views even after he is swallowed by a crocodile. In his 1871 novel *The Devils* the author combines satire with terror as he depicts a group of fanatics, each possessed by his own extremist idea about humanity's future fate. The satirical mode functions to amplify the horror of revolutionary excess unconcerned with individual life, rather than lighten the mood with laughter.

Chekhov, who began his career writing short fiction and humoresques for the newspapers *Oskolki*, *Budil'nik,* and *Strekoza* in 1880, provided astute commentary on the manners and habits of the petit-bourgeois. Even after entering into the ranks of "serious writers," Chekhov continued to occasionally write light vaudevilles. His famous plays *The Seagull* (1896), *Uncle Vanya* (1899), *Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1903) are infused with satirical depictions of the waning gentry. Chekhov's characters are often bored, lazy, self-obsessed and

delusional but the author's gaze also notes the suffering of these lost souls, straying from caricatured depictions with compassionate sensitivity to human complexity.

The object of my study is not to simply discuss satirical elements in Soviet masterpieces, but to trace the presence of the NEP-era satirical feuilleton. This distinction proves crucial, as satire is not necessarily at odds with literary complexity. Used in the 18th century primarily for didactic purposes, the satirical form evolved in the Russian prose of the 19th century to complicated discussions of social life and human nature. The Soviet satirical feuilleton of the 1920s specifically targets an audience of newly literate readers. Although admittedly varying in sophistication in accordance with an author's talent, this literary form lost the confessional quality it had in the 19th century. After the Russian revolution, opinions expressed in satirical journalism did not necessarily reflect a writer's individual convictions, but parroted axioms of socialist dogma.

The transparently civic goals of early Soviet satire align it more closely with the impersonal literary ethos of the 18th century than the intensely personal 19th century satirical expression. In fact, bearing in mind the difference between 18th century didactic satire and the use of this literary device in complex 19th century prose, the transformation of satire from instructive to imaginative appears to be a cyclical phenomenon. Used by the state to introduce a new system of values to the reading public, the straightforward satirical formula mutates as it combines with an artist's idiosyncratic creative aims. A writer's preference for exploring the mysteries of existence rather than establishing a monolithic order changes the role of satire from pedagogue to trickster.

The expanding shift from lucid Soviet dogma contained in the NEP-era satirical feuilleton to the more complicated use of satirical elements within the novels evokes Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "the carnival." As a rather inclusive concept, it recalls the ancient uses of satire to open up systems of meaning to new potentials. Laughter, according to Bakhtin, provides a path of escape from any established order: "it demolishes fear and piety before and object."[18] Thus, "the carnivalesque" signifies liberation from societal norms, even from time and space, establishing a state of ambivalence and possibility. In this way, the metamorphosis of the NEP-era feuilleton comes to posesses a carnivalesque quality: the monologic guardian of Soviet morals transforms into a tool of dialogic questioning.

Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalized genre of "Menippean satire," has been applied to Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Olesha's *Envy*.[19] For my purposes, the categorization of Menippean satire(used by Mikhail Bakhtin, Northrop Frye and other critics to describe works by Lucian, Rebelais, Cervantes, Byron, Stern, Swift, Nabokov and Borges) although fitting proves too broad and does not take into account the cultural specificity of early Soviet satire. In the discussed novels, the literary possibilities of the satirical feuilleton are stretched, subverting its intended function but not so much as to render the feuilleton unrecognizable and therefore irrelevant to their study.

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[18] As cited in Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 442.

[19] Menippean satire is characterized as a seriocomic genre. In works of Menippean satire, extraordinary, supernatural situations destroy the conventions of other genres whereby characters, stripped of archetypal roles, reveal their true humanity. Mikhail Bakhtin judged *The Master and Margarita* to be a work of Menippean satire, Morson and Emerson, 462. In his monograph, Victor Peppard describes Olesha's *Envy* as carnivalesque.

The NEP-era satirical feuilleton encodes a historical reality in its particular features: language, character type and form of addressing the reader. In the novels, however, these satirical elements are improved upon by giving the reader free choice in the interpretive process. Although the authors continue to employ certain stylistic cues to guide their readers along on an educational journey, the trajectories of these lessons no longer follow a direct path from satirical narrative to moral conclusion. To navigate this often ambiguous literary territory, the reader must relinquish dependence on the literal interpretations of the text and ultimately acquire a polemical view of reality. The authors' use of the didactic elements can be summed up by Northrop Frye's adage about satire: "moral form is essential to satire, but it is the reader not the satirist who is responsible for supplying it."[20]

It would be a mistake to assert that these authors adapt a decidedly subversive stance indicting the Soviet state. Recent critics who hold this view include Victor Shentalinsky who identifies Bulgakov as one of the first anti- Soviet intellectuals.[21] Similarly, Janet Tucker discusses Yuri Olesha's *Envy* as a subliminally rebellious work criticizing the Soviet establishment.[22] Such straightforward use of satire would constitute the same kind of utopian naivete found in proletarian propaganda.[23] As I will contend in my readings, the satirical formula tricks the reader to seek out a moralistic message, but within the context of the novels ultimately

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[20] Northrop Frye, "Criticism, Visible and Invisible," *College English* 26, No.1 (Oct., 1964), 5.

[21] Victor Shentalinsky, *Arrested Voices, Ressurecting the Disappeared Writers of the Soviet Regime* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

[22] Janet Tucker, *Revolution Betrayed: Jurij Olesha's Envy* (Columbus: Slavic Publishers, 1996).

[23] As illustrated by Shentalinsky's and Tucker's research, a Cold War–era association between artistic talent and political subversion continues to inform the work of some modern day scholars.

leads to an innovative understanding of problems in a post-revolutionary society. These modernist novels tremendously complicate issues of ideology, identity, communication and language, superficially touched upon in the feuilletons.

The History of the NEP-era Satirical Feuilleton

After the Russian revolution the Bolsheviks embarked on a campaign to enlighten the Soviet "masses" using literature as a propagandistic tool.[24] Lenin and other prominent politicians enlisted writers to create a new proletariat literature, but gave no clear guidelines for its form and content. During the years of the New Economic Policy (1921-28) the relatively slack censorship allowed for a plurality of interpretations of this "Soviet literature," which ranged from complex avant garde experimentation to barely literate peasant memoirs. Russia continued to maintain diplomatic relations with major European countries and writers living abroad such as Andrei Belyi, Aleksei Tolstoy and Ilya Ehrenburg maintained strong ties to Soviet literary life and continued to publish in the Soviet Union. The pre-revolutionary intellectual tradition found support in a widely circulated "thick journal" titled *Red Virgin Soil*, which devoted its pages to belles-letters and scholarly discussions of literary theory.[25]

Although literary experimentation was still relatively permissible during the years of NEP, writers' creative freedoms were restricted by limited printing resources which were largely controlled by the State. Certain literary forms were better financed than others. Several important

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[24] Stephen Lovell. *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*. (New York, St. Martin's Press: 2000), 4.

[25] Robert Maguire. *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920's*. (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 21-22.

politicians advocated the satirical feuilleton as the best way to reach a mass reader. [26] Calling for writers to utilize popular characters of the late tsarist era to draw in readers, Nikolai Bukharin encouraged a link between pre-revolutionary popular literature and Soviet satire.[27] The financial and political support allotted to this genre allowed for the publication of nearly 250 different satirical journals throughout the Soviet Union between the years 1921-28.[28] The majority of these periodicals were located in Moscow, attracting flocks of aspring writers from smaller cities.

Employed by the omnipresent satirical journals, many writers adapted a similar style, regardless of their literary abilities, education or political sympathies. Virtually forgotten, run -of the-mill satirists such as Lebedev-Kumach, Ardov, Zorin, Ryklin, Kol'tsov published alongside Bulgakov, Kataev, Olesha and Il'f and Petrov. The writer's ability to clearly convey a political message took precedence over literary talent. The NEP-era satirical feuilletons were formulaic, educational creations decrying such sins as alcoholism, illiteracy, greed and inappropriate political conduct. They were written in a crude and humorous language, mixing bureaucratic jargon with colloquial speech. Often based on worker correspondent letters and eye-witness reports, the satirical feuilleton combined fact and fiction. True anecdotes were embellished and

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[26] Among these figures were the literary critics Lunacharsky and Bukharin. Sergei Il'ich Stykalin i Irina Kremenskaia, *Sovetskaia satiricheskaia pechat'*. (Moscow, 1963),10.

[27] Regine Robin, "Popular Literature of the 1920s" in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1991), 259.

[28] Stykalin i Kremenskaia, 458-466.

exaggerated. For added entertainment value, these short satirical pieces incorporated pre-revolutionary popular genres such as ghost stories and adventure tales.[29]

Soviet cultural committees dictated the ideology of the satirical feuilletons, but provided no stylistic guidelines as how to reach a new reading public.[30] In the early 1920s writers were foreced to invent their own versions of proletarian readers, as information about real readers was scarce.[31] Popular literature of the tsarist era, read by the lower classes, was increasingly more familiar to many educated readers in the late 19th century. Thus, popular literature provided insight into the common readers' tastes to writers who had no practical contact with peasant or worker populations.[32]

From this perspective, the early satirical feuilletons of Bulgakov, Olesha, Zoshchenko and Platonov were in part drawn from their own mixed pre-revolutionary reading experiences. Research conducted by Russian cultural historians indicates that the distinction between popular and elite readerships began to fade long before the revolution.[33] Popular genres initially published only in the cheapest newspapers quickly branched out into more expensive serial publications aimed at an educated audience. According to the cultural historian Jeffrey Brooks,

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[29] See *Sovetskii Iumoristicheskii Rasskaz 20-30-kh Godov* ed. V. Ardov. (Moskva: Izd-vo "Pravda,"1987).

[30] TSK KPSS. Otdel propagandy i agitatsii, *Sovetskaia Pechat' v Dokumentakh* (Moskva: Gos. izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1961).

[31] Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution*, 16.

[32] Robin, 259-260.

[33] Jeffrey Brooks. *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917.* (Northwestern University Press. Evanston, Ill., 2003).

in the late tsarist period the educated reader's literary diet was a mixture of classics and light fiction.[34] With time, upper class readers became increasingly more familiar with popular literature previously only read by the lower classes.

Thus the changes in Russian reading culture which began before the revolution meant that simple, "low" literature was not a radically unfamiliar concept to an educated writer in the 1920s. It follows that NEP-era feuilletons were an amalgam of State approved political satire and familiar, pre-revolutionary literary forms. Although some aspects of the literary past were used as models for the creation of a new Soviet satire, the influence of such classic writers as Gogol, Saltykov- Shchedrin, Dostoevsky and Chekhov in most NEP-era satire was minimal, if not non-existent.[35] The feuilleton, often based on a report of a barely literate worker-correspondent (rabkor), could be justly categorized as a utilitarian genre possessing low literary merit.

NEP satire as Bolshevik "Enlightenment"

In the early 1920s Bolsheviks sought to enlighten readers by persuasion, rather than compulsion. The Soviet satirical feuilleton reflects this tendency in its delivery of a political message by mocking behaviors out of line with Socialist ideals. Thus, the satirical feuilleton utilizes the technique of the argument, a rhetorical mode that switched to preaching by the end of the 1920s.

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[34] Brooks, Jeffrey. "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era" in William Mills Todd III, ed., Literature *and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914.* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1976), 97-150.

[35] The works of Satyrikon writers, like Teffi and Chekhov's early humoresques have served as inspiration for some of the writers.

A. Lunacharsky praises satirical literature as a tool of Soviet enlightenment, favorably contrasting the satirical feuilleton with lyrical literature and the epic, stating the feuilleton's politically advantageous capacity to directly identify social ills:

> The aspiration to portray the class the struggle by the invidual or masses, who create satirical objects is not subject to any doubt; it is easier in this case, than let us say in lyric, more or less sentimental or emotionally elevated, or in an epoch, which tries to be objective on the surface, to recognize immediate social relevance.[36]

Although Lunacharsky estimation of the satirical feuilleton as an unambiguous literary form was somewhat overstated, NEP-era satire did to some degree map out contemporary social reality for the benefit of the general reading public.

Ultimately, the satirical feuilleton was crossed off the list of ideologically correct Soviet literature but during the NEP years this literary form served a similarly edifying function as Socialist Realism in the 1930s and onward. In fact, during the years of literary plurality, the satirical feuilleton was a running candidate to become the reigning ideological literary form.

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[36] Классовая устремленность отдельного писателя или масс, которые творят те или другие сатирические объекты, не подлежит никакому сомнению; здесь легче, чем скажем в лирике, более или менее сентиментальной или эмоционально повышенной, или в эпосе, который старается быть внешне объективным, распознать непосредственную социальную ткань. A.Lunacharsky, "O smekhe" in *Sovetskii fel'eton*. Boiko, K.G. eds. (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo, polit. lit-ry ,1959), 440.

Katerina Clark, in her seminal work on Socialist Realism, identifies the role played by chance in the rise of this literary form.

> One should not assume that this outcome was inevitable or that Socialist Realism was the only type of literature that could have been mandated to the writer. The history of Soviet literature from 1917 to 1932 raises a whole series of questions of the type Trotsky himself raised in the history of the Revolution, a series of What if's?[37]

Clark suggests that Socialist Realism became the dominant literary genre during Stalinism due to a confluence of political and economical circumstances. There were always literary disagreements among party members, Clark writes, and with a slightly different turn of events another literary movement could potentially have dominated. During the NEP years, satire was the prevailing literary form supported by many prominent politicians including Lunacharsky and Bukharin. Considerably less rigid and didactic than the Socialist Realist literature, the feuilleton was similarly created to describe and affirm the Soviet social schema.

In fact, the satirical feuilleton was much better suited to Soviet readers than the Socialist realist novel. The feuilleton grew out of daily Soviet reality, whereas Socialist Realist utopian depictions were far removed from contemporary real life. The satirical feuilleton borrowed from pre-revolutionary popular literature and provided entertainment value as well as comic relief.

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[37] Katerina Clark. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 32.

The feuilleton rarely created larger than life heroes. On the contrary, it usually featured primarily negative types in a gallery of minor, comical characters.

Although the NEP satirical feuilleton was not a primary source of political literacy, it nonetheless incorporated an "us vs. them" ethos, common in the press of the 1920s. Political language intended to rhetorically structure social consciousness, as described by Jeffrey Brooks, appeared in newspaper reports:

> The schema of class war, with society divided into "us" and "them" according to class categories, marked the high tide of Marxism as a public explanation for social life. Following Marx, journalists associated political behavior with class origins […][38]

While the journalists of the 1920s utilized the vocabulary of warfare to describe the division of classes, satirists demarcated friends and enemies of the new regime more subtly, by humorously identifying petty villains to be "put on trial" before the reading public. Among the new evil-doer archetypes were such figures as the bourgeois, the bureaucrat, the lazy worker, the careerist and the drunk. These were "flat characters," displaying tell-tale, caricatured features in feuilletons and on agit-prop posters.

Toward the end of the NEP-era one finds longer, preaching satirical works that move beyond lighthearted mockery, inciting full-blown crusades against enemies of Socialism. For

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[38] Jeffrey Brooks. *Thank you, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 22.

instance, in his 1927 satirical short story "Golovonogii chelovek," Fedor Gladkov begins to use hyperbolic language to identify a "shameless careerist" personality that stands in the way of socialist progress. The story's main antagonist, Kovalev, a wolf in sheep's clothing, makes his way to the top by sabotaging his fellow workers. The story's narrator and protagonist, a dedicated director named Mukhov, immediately sees Kovalev's true colors, but has a difficult time convincing his fellow comrades that Kovalev is an enemy. The malevolent trickster even succeeds in turning Mukhov's ideologically upright co-workers against him. In the end, Kovalev is finally exposed as a fraud to the entire factory. The narrator concludes the tale by providing one final, disdainful description of Kovalev and his kind.

> As forcefully as ever, the rotting remains of old matter and people, emerging from the past, stubbornly, desperately fight for their right to life. They poison the atmosphere with their putrid breath and infect, sometimes even fatally, new beginnings of life, carrying turmoil into our contemplative work.[39]

Gladkov's "satire" proves mercilessly didactic and essentially unfunny. The main element of humor in the story is in its title, a demeaning nickname for Kovalev that compares him to a parasitic mollusk. "Golovonogyi chelovek" serves as an illustration of the satirical feuilleton's

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[39] Как никогда, гнилые пережитки старья и люди, идущие из прошлого, напряженно, упорно, отчаянно борются за свое право на жизнь. Они отравляют атмосферу своим смрадным дыханием и заражают, подчас даже смертельно, новые побеги жизни, вносят сумятицу в нашу созидательную работу. Fedor Gladkov. "Golovonogii Chelovek" in *Romany, povesti i rasskazy*, V.1 (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo, 1950), 328.

potential evolution into an ideologically unambiguous form that might have taken the place of Socialist Realism.

Ideology and Structure of the Feuilleton

The feuilleton contained certain formal elements, such as formulaic plots, characters and language. It also exhibited conceptual specificities. Unlike a newspaper article the feuilleton does not depend on documentary evidence but unlike a work of fiction it claims truthfulness. Situated between fact and fiction, the feuilleton utilized anecdotes and hearsay information to teach and persuade. Worker correspondents (rabkor), recruited from the newly literate strata of society often acted as co-authors, providing a dose of the common man's perspective --- a point of view that was often limited and logically flawed.

The movement to incorporate workers and peasants into journalism was initiated by the Soviet State and the newspaper *Pravda* in 1918.[40] Many prominent politicians of the era saw the rabkors as the new generation of proletarian writers. These hopes never materialized; the worker correspondents were unable to fulfill their overwhelming literary and ideological missions.[41]

The rabkors were hypothetically well-suited to describe the new Soviet reality. Having no literary training and often very little education they were naturally limited to writing about "what they knew." The worker correspondent's task was to report his observations of everyday life. These narratives were then reworked in varying degrees by more educated authors. Although the

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[40] Michael Gorham, "Tongue-Tied Writers: The Rabsel'kor Movement and the Voice of the "New Intelligentsia" in Early Soviet Russia**"** *Russian Review* Vol. 55, No. 3 (Jul., 1996), 412-429.

[41] Ibid.

rabkors and sel'kors sometimes received journalistic training, their observations usually lacked objectivity and often strayed from facts. The illiterate eyewitness reports were elevated to documentary status because according to Soviet ideology, the proletarian perspective represented "the truth." [42] Clearly, the worker correspondents' inadequate ability to interpret and communicate information severely undermined journalistic objectives. The worker correspondents were indiscriminating reporters: untrained to separate fact from fiction would exaggerate and elaborate in the tradition of an oral tale.

The fact that feuilletons were often written on pre-determined themes also presented an obstacle to their documentary credibility. When the rabkors' story did not conform to the assigned topic, it was the writer's job to fit a rabkor's reports into a designated thematic framework. In this way, the notion of 'journalistic fact' was doubly distorted: first by the rabkor's naive reporting and second by the reworking of the anecdotal information to illustrate a particular principle.

Mass Culture in the 1920s

The Soviet satirical feuilleton belongs to the sphere of "mass culture," a term that proves rather problematic upon closer analysis. The phrase *massovaia kul'tura* carries contradictory meanings as it was used to describe commercialized culture in capitalist Western Societies.[43] On the other

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[42] The image of the "proletarian writer" was quickly co-opted by the State to further its political goals in the late 1920s. The individual writers had little authority of their own. For more information see Michael Gorham's article "Tongue Tied Writers" and Jeffrey Brooks' *Thank You, Comrade Stalin: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000).

hand, as Richard Stites writes, "massovaia kul'tura was a culture constructed, promoted and even financed by the state."[44] Furthermore, a definition of "mass culture" must specify a time period, as the relatively pluralistic popular culture in the 1920s significantly differed from the homogenous Stalinist mass culture of the 1930s or post-Soviet Westernized mass culture. Within the context of this dissertation I will use the term "mass culture" to signify literary forms intended to target the common reader of the 1920s. My definition also resonates with the view expressed by the editors of a 1995 anthology entitled *Mass culture in Soviet Russia*, who describe Soviet mass culture as arising out of pre-revolutionary popular culture.[45] Indeed, the boundary between commercialized popular culture and state promoted official culture appears blurry during the early 1920s, as no concrete and stable program was yet defined. In the NEP period Bolshevik authorities exhibited interest in the tastes of the common reader and therefore, despite the fact that market forces played a minimal role, popular preference shaped cultural production.

In the 1920s mass culture aimed to reach the not yet literate segments of the Soviet population through the political poster, cinema, radio and theater. Vladimir Mayakovsky, in particular, utilized a variety of media to spread his artistic message. He staged plays, read his poetry in public squares, created art posters and regularly contributed to a radio program called

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[43] Lovell identifies this use of the term "massovaia kul'tura." Lovell, 19.

[44] Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.

[45] *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953 eds.* James van Geldern and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995).

"Literature to the Masses."[46] The Futurist poetry of Mayakovsky, democratically distributed through various public channels points to one of the inherent difficulties of classifying "mass culture." The fact that Mayakovsky's poetry was widely available "to the masses" does not automatically classify it as "mass literature." Although Mayakovsky did compose some simple agitational verses, much of his poetry and theatrical works would be classified as highbrow modernism by a contemporary scholar.

The small satirical newspapers of this period such as *Gudok*, *Krokodil*, *Mukhomor* and *Krasnyi voron* much more closely approximate the term "mass culture" with their light literary offerings, public forums of uninformed opinions and worker correspondent associates. A far cry from Futurists' sophisticated radicalization of literature, satirical newspapers remained rooted in the familiar sphere of market driven entertainment. Printed in these publications, the early feuilletons of Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov and Zoshchenko strike a balance between top-down dictated educational objectives and popular preference.

Soviet Archetypes and Popular Literature

In the construction of familiar, one-dimensional archetypes, the satirical feuilleton follows in the footsteps of the widely popular 1920's detective and adventure stories. In these formulaic creations, the good detective and the bad criminal would ritualistically play out their respective

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[46] Frank Ellis "The Media as Social Engineer" in *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, 192-222.

roles in an established plot; the good inevitably triumphing over evil. The same pattern could be detected in satirical works intent on exposing the enemies of revolutionary progress.

The usefulness of popular genres for the education of Soviet readers was noted by Nikolai Bukharin, who called on Soviet writers to take advantage of the public's infatuation with popular literature to promote Socialist values. As James Von Geldern writes in the introduction to *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*:

> Mass culture reached the mass audience only by compromising with its tastes. As Nikolai Bukharin told a national Komsomol gathering, Soviet writers needed their own "Red Pinkertons": stories that exploited audience-grabbing techniques and carried an ideological charge. Old genres such as serial adventure novels, detective stories, movie melodramas, and street ballads could be infused with revolutionary ideals.[47]

Many writers followed Bukharin's advice and rewrote classic pulp genres in a "Socialist manner". Examples of this phenomenon include Pavel Bliakhin's *The Little Red Devils* (1922), Marietta Shaganian's *Mess Mend* (1923), Aleksei Tolstoy's *Aelita* (1922), Ilya Ehrenburg's *Adventures of Julio Jurenito* (1922), Vladimir Kataev's "The Island Erendorf"(1924), and Boris Lavernev's *The Destruction of the Republic of Itl'* (1925).[48]

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[47] *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, eds. James von Geldern and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xv.

Why Does a Writer Write?

For the authors in this study (excluding Platonov, who had a proletarian background) NEP- era satire signified a bridge between their pre-revolutionary intellectual heritage and a new breed of Soviet reader. Bulgakov, Olesha, Zoshchenko and Platonov's satirical period represents a time of acceptance and popularity in the Soviet literary world. Thus, in their later careers, the satirical feuilleton became a lifeline anchoring the writers to a familiar literary model in a sea of political and literary confusion**.** In terms of publishing potential this connection was somewhat illusory since by the 1930s the State's pedagogical strategy had shifted from entertaining the reader to more direct forms of political education.[49]

The satirical feuilleton was no longer an acceptable literary form during Stalin's reign. However, the use of this genre may represent the authors' attempt at repairing a severed connection between writer and imagined reader. The authors' referral back to their satirical feuilleton in their major works denotes a negotiation between the muses and the masses. The question of "Why does a writer write?" especially in the Soviet period, when he had little hope of being published has previously been answered rather idealistically. Admittedly, these authors did in part write for intellectual contemporaries as demonstrated by the fact that Olesha, Bulgakov, Il'f and Petrov and Kataev all read each other and were aware of each other's work. As writers in any era and place, they also wished to be remembered by posterity. Without certain knowledge

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[48] For more about Socialist rewritings of popular genres see L.F. Ershov. *Sovetskaia Satiricheskaia Proza 20x Godov* (Moscow/Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSR, 1960), 205-225.

[49] Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank you Comrade Stalin: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

about the social, psychological and intellectual needs and abilities of their future readers, authors could only make educated guesses as to how one could remain relevant and readable in the brave new Soviet world.

Bulgakov, Olesha, Platonov and Zoshchenko were not the only authors to draw on Soviet satire in their works. I have chosen these particular figures because they share a creative trajectory -- beginning their careers with the satirical feuilleton they graduated to long, serious prose. In scholarly assessments these authors share a common narrative which I would like to challenge. Most often these four literary figures are described as martyred geniuses who rose above the mediocrity of Soviet literature. Although Il'f and Petrov, Valentin Kataev and Evgeniy Zamyatin were not included in this study, these figures occupy a prominent place in the sphere of Soviet satire.[50]

Il'f and Petrov's novels *The Twelve Chairs* (1928) and *The Golden Calf* (1931), considered to be classics by Russian scholars, certainly incorporated many aspects of the NEP-era feuilleton. Written in the tradition of a picaresque adventure story, the two works describe the comical exploits of the rogue Ostap Bender, who navigates the Soviet bureaucracy in search of treasures hidden before the revolution. As elucidated in a study by Yury Shcheglov, the two novels have socio-cultural significance as illustrations of private and public Soviet life in the 1920s and 30's.[51] The topical humor of the novels dates back to the authors' early feuilletons.

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[50] I have limited my study to works that have been canonized as Russian classics in the Western academic sphere, which excludes Kataev and Il'f and Petrov. Evgeny Zamyatin was excluded for chronological reasons.

[51] Yury Shcheglov, *Romany I.Il'fa i E.Petrova: Sputnik chitatelia*. *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach Sonderbar 26/1* (Vienna: Gesselschaft zur Forderung Slawistischer Studien, 1990).

Valentin Kataev's *The Embezzlers* (1927), a satirical novel about corrupt Soviet officials, similarly draws on the genre of the adventure story and reveals the author's involvement with *Gudok*. However, the satirical aims in this novel are rather transparent and are not imbedded into a complex poetics. Evgenyi Zamyatin's 1924 novel *We* demonstrates a modernist sensibility and shares some common themes with the author' satirical short stories (*The Islanders* (1918), *X* (1926)). In a study of common literary origins, Zamyatin stands apart chronologically and creatively. Born in 1884, he belongs to an older generation of writers whose literary sensibilities were not greatly affected by the creation of a "mass literature."

In order to properly reflect the integrity and uniqueness of these novels, I treat the metamorphosis from mass culture to master of each author as a case study. Although I maintain that the four writers drew from a common well of NEP-era cultural and literary reserve, I employ different methodologies to highlight their individuality. In two of the chapters, I utilize archival materials of pre-revolutionary journals and NEP-era satirical journalism to establish the satirical feuilleton as a form emerging from authors' own encounters with pre-revolutionary popular culture. Bulgakov and Olesha borrow more heavily from pre-revolutionary notions of popular culture than do Platonov and Zoshchenko. Platonov's interpretation of popular literature appears more philosophically burdened and ideologically motivated than that of his contemporaries. Moreover, Platononv spoke *for* the common reader, rather than *to* him.

The first chapter entitled "Feuilletons Don't Burn: Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and the Imagined Soviet Reader" redefines the structure and purpose of the famous novel. It is my contention that the author includes an imagined mass reader among his implied audiences. This is demonstrated most obviously by the author's reuse of specific *Gudok*

feuilletons and more subtly evident in the manner of addressing the reader and the appearance of a "Soviet reader" character: Ivan Bezdomny. The hack poet Ivan undergoes a cultural transformation beginning with a supernatural encounter with Woland and commencing with the Master's story. In *The Master and Margarita*, rather than promoting Soviet values, Bulgakov recycles his early feuilletons to introduce an uneducated reader to a pre-revolutionary intellectual heritage rooted in Western European culture.

Ultimately, Bulgakov's modernist text is encased in the form of the feuilleton and the longevity of his art depends on the feuilleton's ability to reach the Soviet reader. This symbiotic relationship between high and low art is replicated within the plot of *The Master and Margarita*; the artistic endurance of the Master's novel within a Soviet context depends on Ivan's understanding and acceptance of the Pontius Pilate story. In establishing Bulgakov's paradoxical position as an intellectual addressing an uninitiated audience, I establish that the author used elements of pre-revolutionary popular literature in both his feuilletons and his prose to lure the uncouth with entertainment. In this way, the novel functions on two levels: as a work of theology and philosophy intended for a sophisticated reader and as a fantastical tale with an educational purpose.

Chapter two, "Soviet Types and Fragmented Selves in Yuri Olesha's *Envy*," explores Olesha's characterization in two literary and psychological keys. Arguing against previous scholars' assertions that in *Envy* characters can be divided into creative artists and robotic Soviet types, I show that in fact the author presents two modes of describing human behavior: feuilletonic characterization of Soviet archetypes alternates with modernist, internal depictions of selves as indefinable and fragmented. In Olesha's early verse feuilletons, people are divided into

political categories, appearing only as two-dimensional social actors. The archetypes of the fat NEP-man, the new Soviet man of action, the indecisive intellectual could ostensibly apply to the personalities described in *Envy*. This limited perspective on the human being, however, does not belong to the authorial narrator, but functions as a psychological weapon used by individual characters against each other and does not encompass the author's narrative scope.

Olesha's exploration of the self as a complex psychological entity, composed of memories, dreams, fantasies and desires applies as much to the Soviet official- Andrei Babichev as to the beautiful loser, Nikolai Kavalerov. In the second part of the book, when Nikolai Kavalerov loses the power of first person narration, it becomes clear that his individuality is not exempt from the reduction of the internal self to an external Soviet stereotype. In my reading I discuss Olesha's polemical stance on the subject of the new Soviet man. His presentation of characters as alternating between psychological complexity and social simplicity shows that man has not changed internally, but the vocabulary used to discuss the human being has been transformed. In this way, the debate presented in the novel does not occur between pre-revolutionary intellectuals and Soviet characters, but between the caricatured perspective of humanity found in Soviet satire and the imaginative exploration of the modernist lyric.

The third chapter, under the title "Awaking from the Nightmare of History: Andrei Platonov's Linguistic Transcendence in *The Foundation Pit*," will focus on the mystery of Platonov's language. In his early short works such as *The City Gradov*, Platonov utilized a mixture of bureaucratic jargon and colloquial speech for comical effect, satirizing the ineffectiveness of governmental institutions. In *The Foundation Pit*, however, lines of NEP-era

satirical prose appear amidst serious, metaphysical ruminations to suggest that dead Soviet language can be transformed into meaningful linguistic material.

In Platonov's earlier satire humorous "Sovietspeak" embodied the chasm between proletariat's intuitive understanding of Socialist ideals and the inauthentic pretense of Socialism embodied by Soviet bureaucratic institutions. Characters using Soviet bureaucratese represented despicable caricatures or confused simpletons. In *The Foundation Pit*, this loaded satirical language relinquishes its humorous role as well as its unequivocally negative connotation. Within the fictional world of the novel, bureaucratic jargon transforms into metaphysical poetics, emphasizing the connection between the building of Socialism and the individual's internal quest for meaning.

The last chapter "The Parodied Proletarian Writer in Mikhail Zoshchenko's Prose Trilogy" is an anomaly in my study, as the author achieved his lasting fame by writing NEP-era satire, rather than a longer work that borrows and transforms elements of this genre. The three prose works written in Zoshchenko's late career: *Youth Restored*, *The Sky-Blue Book* and *Before Sunrise* have failed to achieve masterpiece status. I have chosen to include a study of these works because Zoshchenko does make the transition into serious, modernist prose and attempts to create ideologically sound novels by drawing on his previous experience as a feuilletonist.

In his three longer works, Zoshchenko sets up a pseudo-documentary structure whereby historical, scientific and psychological principles are "proven" with anecdotes and eye-witness accounts. This method of inquiry resembles the narrative structure of the feuilleton which relies on a worker correspondent's testimony. The intermingling of fact and fiction, characteristic of the proletarian writer appears as an essential part of the authorial voice in the three prose works.

This presents a sharp contrast to the satirical treatment of the unreliable narrator in Zoshchenko's short stories. The transformation of satirical distance into sincere imitation is especially evident in *The Sky Blue Book* where the author presents his early feuilletons as "proof" of his conclusions about human nature.

CHAPTER 2

Feuilletons Don't Burn: Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and the Imagined "Soviet Reader"

The phrase "manuscripts don't burn" uttered by Woland in Bulgakov's seminal novel *The Master and Margarita* (1940) conveys the idea that authentic art is indestructible and eternal. This quotation has been immortalized as the keystone in Bulgakov's legacy of upholding spiritual values and remaining true to one's artistic vision above all else. A nearly identical statement expressing quite another attitude about the indestructibility of artistic creations appears in a segment of Bulgakov's semi-autobiographical *Notes on the Cuff* (1922-23). At times lyrical, at other times tinged with irony, *Notes* is a collection of vignettes documenting Bulgakov's early years of literary activity while he was living in the Caucuses and his subsequent struggle in Moscow's literary world. In the section entitled "Escape. Escape!" (Bezhat', Bezhat'!), the narrator describes his shame at having written a hack revolutionary play out of financial desperation:

> In terms of lack of talent – this was something completely outstanding, staggering. Something stupid and insolent peeked out from every line of this collective creation. I could not believe my eyes! What was I hoping for, a madman, if this is how I write?! Shame watched me from the green, damp walls and the frightening black windows. I began to tear up the manuscript. But I stopped myself. Because suddenly, with incredible, miraculous clarity, I realized that they are right, those who say: what is written cannot be destroyed! One can tear it up, burn it…hide it from people. But from oneself – never![1]

Although it seems that, for Bulgakov, the idea that "manuscripts don't burn" is a fact, the implications of this phrase vary depending on the context. In *The Master and Margarita*, Woland's pronouncement about the Master's novel exultantly conveys the sanctity of the written page, but for the semi-autobiographical narrator of *Notes* the very same words turn sinister as the narrator bitterly regrets the haunting psychological longevity of his profitable drivel.

Much like the imperishable hack play described in *Notes on the Cuff*, Bulgakov's early satirical feuilletons written for *Gudok* were a source of shame for the author. The experience at

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[1] В смысле бездарности - это было нечто совершенно особенное, потрясающее! Что-то глупое и наглое глядело из каждой строчки этого коллективного творчества. Не верил глазам! На что же я надеюсь, безумный, если я так пишу?! С зеленых сырых стен и из черных страшных окон на меня глядел стыд. Я начал драть рукопись. Но остановился. Потому что вдруг, с необычайной чудесной ясностью, сообразил, что правы говорившие: написанное нельзя уничтожить! Порвать, сжечь…от людей скрыть. Но от самого себя – никогда! M. A. Bulgakov, "Zapiski na Manzhetakh [1922-1923]," in *Ranniaia proza*, vol. 3 (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982-1985), 227. Unless otherwise indicated all translations within the text of the dissertation are mine.

the railway newspaper stood in contrast to Bulgakov's feuilletons written at around the same time for the Berlin based newspaper *Nakanune*. This publication was written for a more educated audience of émigrés and readers living in the Soviet Union and Bulgakov regarded this work more favorably than his *Gudok* feuilletons. In his correspondence and diaries Bulgakov repeatedly references his days at the railway workers' newspaper as "torture" and "work without distinction." As Bulgakov writes in a brief "Autobiography" (1924): "I underwent a long torture in Moscow; in order to support myself I served as a reporter and feuilletonist for the newspapers, and I came to hate these jobs, which have no merit."[2]

Yet despite the author's apparent disdain for his journalistic stint, many of these early feuilletons reappear in Bulgakov's acclaimed novel *The Master and Margarita*. The connections between the "undistinguished" *Gudok* feuilletons and his literary masterpiece invite a re-examination of the cultural meanings behind Bulgakov's most famous, non-flammable manuscript. While *The Master and Margarita* testifies to the enduring quality of truly masterful art, the novel acts as proof that Bulgakov's early experiences in the Soviet literary world continued to inform his later creative efforts. The feuilletons written for *Gudok* may have been "works without distinction," but they were not without value as they oriented the writer toward a new reader and new literary standards. The feuilleton, despite its literary insignificance, stubbornly follows Bulgakov to the ivory heights of literary mastery. This indicates that even as Bulgakov strove toward artistic autonomy and integrity, he also desired recognition by a wide readership. The *Gudok* feuilletons served as a point of reference as to how one must write for the new Soviet reader. Although popularity was not the author's primary goal, the persistent

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[2] Ellendea Proffer, *Bulgakov: Life and Work* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), 62.

presence of the feuilleton challenges the notion of uncompromising cultural and literary purity presented as a central theme in *The Master and Margarita*. While the contents of the novel promote the idea of an eternal "high art," the form of the text confirms that by the late 1920s, when the author began writing his masterpiece, the aims of Bulgakov's own literary output were more complex than previous commentators would have us believe.

Most critics and biographers tend to divide Bulgakov's literary career into two distinct and separate parts: the popular feuilletons written for money and the serious artistic works worthy of scholarly attention. As Marietta Chudakova states in reference to the author's double literary life during the writing of his autobiographical novel *The White Guard* (1923): "Bulgakov, could probably, in all honesty say about himself: in the day I write rubbish, and at night --- a novel for posterity.[3] Lesley Milne similarly separates the author's feuilletons from his major prose:

> Although certain of Bulgakov's feuilletons for *Gudok* do display features in common with certain of the Moscow scenes in *The Master and Margarita* it could never be stated that the latter could not have originated without the former. Bulgakov's journalistic practice in the first half of the 1920s was necessary to him only in terms of a material goal.[4]

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[3] Marietta Chudakova, *Tvorchestvo Zoshchenko* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 106. "Булгаков мог бы, пожалуй, вполне добросовестно сказать о себе: днем я пишу собачью ерунду, а ночью – повесть для потомства."

[4] Milne Lesley, *Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 72.

I intend to challenge this dualistic view of Bulgakov's prose by exploring the continuities between the *Gudok* feuilletons and *The Master and Margarita*. Most notably, the inclusion of the implied feuilleton reader among the potential audiences of *The Master and Margarita* indicates that no rigid boundary exists between Bulgakov's feuilletons and his great literary achievements. As I contend in my analysis, in *The Master and Margarita* Bulgakov co-opted the form and themes of the satirical feuilleton for a new enlightening purpose – to introduce the uncouth "Soviet Reader" to a cosmopolitan, pre-revolutionary cultural realm. Persuasive, rather than didactic, the novel invites the reader to participate in the resurrection of a historical past rooted in the Western European intellectual tradition and bearing the distinctive mark of the author's own pre-revolutionary upbringing. In *Bulgakov: The Early Years*, Edythe Haber discusses Bulgakov's notion of spiritual enlightenment in *The Master and Margarita*. My understanding of Bulgakov's "enlightenment" differs from Haber's as I believe that Bulgakov is attempting to resurrect not only the belief in God, but also the cultural reality of pre-revolutionary cosmopolitanism.[5]

Hence, Bulgakov's relationship with his imagined "Soviet Reader" resembles one of the key bonds within *The Master and Margarita*: the teacher and disciple connection between the erudite Master and the young poet Ivan Bezdomny. Like the Master's story, which gradually imprints itself upon Ivan's consciousness and expands the scope of his awareness, Bulgakov's novel subtly guides an ignorant "Soviet Reader" to a wider historical and cultural reality beyond the conventions of Soviet life. Paradoxically, Bulgakov delivers this perspective through various narrative devices that were used for propagandistic purposes during the NEP period. The

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[5] Edythe Haber, *Bulgakov: The Early Years* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Press, 1998).

plethora of philosophical, theological and historical references in *The Master and Margarita* are made accessible to a newly literate audience through the use of satirical language, entertaining genres and the inclusion of a "Soviet Reader" character within the novel.

Critics such as Carol Avins, Edythe Haber, Andrew Barratt and others have discussed Bulgakov's expressed views *about* a "Soviet Reader," but scholars have yet to analyze what Bulgakov communicates *to* a "Soviet Reader."[6] Considering an imagined "Soviet Reader" as an addressee in *The Master and Margarita* allows us to re-examine the cultural meanings of the work as well as the authorial position of its creator.

Bulgakov's "Soviet Reader"

When speaking of an imagined reader one enters into perilous territory, since a literary work's implied reader often exists as a product of the scholar's imagination rather than the author's intentions. Statements speaking for all readers of a particular work, such as the one made by Sona Hoisington in her analysis of *The Master and Margarita*, "… the reader derives satisfaction when Berlioz is decapitated,"[7] may come from a scholar's own subjective reactions. Therefore, it is important to specifically define an implied reader within a specific context. As Wolfgang Iser points out, the implied reader varies from age to age and from culture to culture. Iser discusses

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[6] See Carol Avins, "Reaching a Reader: The Master and His Audience in the Master and Margarita," *Slavic Review* 45, No.2 (Summer 1986): 272-285; Andrew Barratt, *Between Two Worlds: A Critical Introduction to* The Master and Margarita (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1987).

[7] Sona Hoisington, "Fairy-Tale Elements in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*," *Slavic and East European Journal* 25, no.2 (Summer 1981): 44-55.

the presence of an "unwritten text" which speaks to certain types of audiences.[8] The reader can be imagined or deduced, but the search for the reader requires an understanding of a temporal and geographic context.

The imagined reader during the Soviet period represents a particularly elusive entity, as information about real readers was scarce, while debates and speculations about the Soviet reader's tastes constituted the focus of the Soviet literary world in the early 1920s. After the Russian revolution, journals devoted to the topic of the Soviet reader, such as *Knigonosha*, *Krasnyi bibliotekar'*, *Krasnaia nov'*, and *Na postu*, argued about the best way to educate the masses through literature.[9] Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership insisted on educating the masses with complex political theory. Other overseers of culture, such as Nikolai Bukharin and Anatoly Lunacharsky recognized the lower class reader's need for simple language and entertainment. The radical group Proletkult and various factions of avant-garde artists insisted on creating an entirely new proletarian art, but disagreed on its form.[10] By the late 1920s, however, the Soviet reader was no longer a dynamic subject of study, but an idealized, ossified object created by the State. From this point forward the "Soviet reader" appears as a shifting paradigm in Soviet history, acquiring different characteristics in confluence with various cultural and political agendas.

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[8] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 42.

[9] Stephen Lovell, *Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post- Soviet Eras* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 31.

[10] James von Geldern, Introduction to *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays and Folklore, 1917-1953*, edited by James von Geldern and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xi-xvii.

In defining Bulgakov's "Soviet reader" I will not explore the official, State imposed myth of the "new Soviet man."[11] When I refer to the "Soviet reader" I am speaking of a subjective figure particular to the author's experiences and imagination that either implicitly or explicitly appears in Bulgakov's fiction. In her biography of the author's early years, Edythe Haber implies that Bulgakov's first impressions of a "Soviet Reader" formed when he began to write for *Gudok,* following the newspaper's guidelines for addressing such an audience.[12] However, it is likely that Bulgakov's "Soviet reader" was related to the pre-revolutionary consumer of popular literature, already familiar to Bulgakov from his own reading experiences.

Although Bulgakov was not an entirely typical reader, having been raised in a family of a theology professor, the author's pre-revolutionary literary diet was representative of wider trends in Russia's changing reading culture, a mixture of "high" and "low" sources that included popular literature.[13] For instance, one such publication read by Bulgakov, the St. Petersburg literary newspaper *Niva*, featured classics such as Chekhov and Tolstoy alongside short stories about magicians, exotic animals, ghosts and romances.[14]

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[11] For more on the myths of the Soviet mass reader see Stephen's Lovell, *Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 25-44; Gregory Carleton, *The Politics of Reception: Critical Constructions of Mikhail Zoshchenko* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 111-120.

[12] Haber, *Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years*, 140-150.

[13] For more on Bulgakov's reading habits, see Marietta Chudakova, *Zhizneopisanie Mikhaila Bulgakova* (Moscow: Kniga, 1998), 167-214; and Miron Petrovksii, *Master i gorod: Kievskie konteksty Mikhaila Bulgakova* (Kiev: Dukh i Litera, 2001), 211-252.

[14] For examples of light fiction on these themes in *Niva* please see S. Barinka, "Fokusnik [The Magician]," No. 34 (1909): 593-596; V. I. Semyonov, "Karabel'nyi zverinets [Menagerie on a

The infiltration of popular literature was evident after the revolution in the NEP-era feuilleton, where mystery, adventure and the fantastic were used to teach Soviet morality. Many NEP-era satirists, including Bulgakov, utilized old popular genres in their satirical journalism. Ghosts, talking corpses, and anthropomorphized animals can be found in the early feuilletons of Ardov, Zorich, Zoshchenko, Kataev and Il'f and Petrov.[15] Moreover, the supernatural forces in the feuilletons are de-mystified to prove the supremacy of Marxist materialism, much in the same way that the supernatural tales from the end of the tsarist era dissuaded peasants from their superstitious beliefs.[16] Just as in the publications of the imperial period, a rational explanation, such as hypnotism or an alcoholic delirium, accounted for the supernatural phenomenon. In the NEP-era the "unmasking" of the fantastical usually involved a mix-up in paperwork. The influence of pre-revolutionary popular literature on NEP-era satire has not yet been sufficiently documented due to the fact that commercial popular literature was officially discouraged in the Soviet Union.[17] Nevertheless, it is likely that Bulgakov's feuilletons, as well as his ideas about the Soviet reader, were in part guided by his knowledge of pre-revolutionary popular literature.

Ship]," No. 44 (1909): 761-766; and G. T. Severtsev-Polilov, "Videnie v ermitazhnom dvortse [A Vision in the Hermitage Palace]," No. 51 (1909): 900-903.

[15] Some examples of 1920's feuilletons with supernatural themes are Il'f and Petrov, "Prizrak liubitel'" (1929); and "Dovesok k bukve 'shch'" (1930); and Valentin Kataev "Nozhi" (1926) in *Iumoristicheskii rasskaz 1920x -1930x godov* (Moscow: Izd-vo "Pravda," 1987).

[16] See Jeffrey Brooks, "Chapter VII: Science and Superstition," in *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature (1861-1917)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). "Tales in which people who claimed supernatural powers were unmasked, or in which the superstitious were shown to be fools, were common in Russian publications, and seeing such figures brought low was apparently a source of satisfaction and amusement for readers," 250.

[17] Nadezhda Krupskaia officially banned such commercial popular literature as Nat Pinkerton and Vera Verbitskaia's romance novels. However, these books continued to circulate in secret.

In addition to the readers extrapolated from his knowledge of pre-revolutionary reading materials, Bulgakov had real representatives of the "Soviet Reader" demographic in the rabkors (worker correspondents) whose letters and reports served as "inspiration" for many of Bulgakov's feuilletons. The dynamics of the relationship between Bulgakov and the worker correspondents mirrors the author's problematic relationship with his "Soviet Readers" in general. While on one hand these rabkors functioned as co-authors and cultural guides to the world of the "Soviet reader," they were also the objects of Bulgakov's subtle mockery. The epigraphs to the rabkor-inspired feuilletons directly borrowed particularly ludicrous lines from worker-correspondent letters. One of the more amusing rabkor epigraphs complaining about the conditions of a movie theater sounds like a satirical passage from Bulgakov's prose:

> In our Saratov house of labor and enlightenment (club of railworkers) there are outrageous occurences during film screenings. As soon as it gets dark, hooligans on the balcony employ various indecent words, spit on the heads of those sitting below. The motion pictures are torn, and moreover, the projectionist for some reason sometimes shows them upside down.[18]

Geldern, Introduction to *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays and Folklore, 1917-1953*, xi-xvii.

[18] Mikhail Bulgakov, *Rannaia proza Vol.2* (Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1985), 227.
В нашем Саратовском доме труда и просвещения (клуб железнодорожников) происходит безобразие при постановке кино. С наступлением темноты хулиганы на балконе выражаются разными словами, плюют на головы в партер. Картины рваные, а кроме того, механик почему-то иногда пускает их кверху ногами.

For more examples of epigraphs and Gogolian quotations please see the following pages in the same volume: 237, 240, 253, 288, 297 and 313.

The worker-correspondent's complaint of spitting hooligans and upside movies represents the petty concerns and level of culture typical of Bulgakov's imagined Soviet readers.

The author similarly satirizes the uncouth reader in several works of fiction. Most notably, we find a portrait of the quintessential ugly "Soviet Reader" in Poligraf Poligrafovich Sharikov, the dog turned human in the short novel *The Heart of a Dog* (1925). Bulgakov shows us that even a dog can learn to read in order to survive as Sharikov learns to decipher street signs. But Sharikov's transformation into a human betrays the limited effects of cultural enlightenment, as Poligraf's intellectual curiosity extends no further than visits to the circus. In fact, in Bulgakov's writing, the circus appears as a repeated symbol of the "Soviet Reader's" unsophisticated tastes. In a 1922 feuilleton entitled "Week of Enlightenment," the author depicts a provincial "Soviet Reader" forced to attend an opera performance as part of his cultural enlightenment. The unwilling operagoer complains of his punishment unable to comprehend a preference for the opera rather than the circus.[19]

From his feuilletons to his prose, Bulgakov demonstrates a complex relationship with his imagined "Soviet Reader." On one hand, the intellectual author shuns this type of audience, apparently resentful of having to pander to a non-intellectual demographic; on the other hand, acute cognizance of this reader's presence persists even in works written after the *Gudok* period. Thus, the "Soviet Reader" appears not only as an object of ridicule, but also serves as a point of reference at a time when Soviet literary models were not yet firmly established. This paradoxical attitude toward an imagined "Soviet Reader" clearly manifests itself in Bulgakov's masterpiece,

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[19] Ibid., 356-360.

The Master and Margarita.

The presence of an implied "Soviet Reader" in the great novel has not been explored as a possibility by literary scholars. Until the last few decades, *The Master and Margarita* has been perceived as a work "earmarked for the high literary tradition."[20] Since 1966, when a censored version of the novel appeared in the journal *Moskva*, critics in both the Soviet Union and the West have agonized over the philosophical, theological, and historical meanings contained in the novel.[21] Certainly, the plethora of these erudite, scholarly analyses points to a wealth of intellectual substance that would elude a common reader.[22]

While literary scholars have demonstrated the novel's appeal to the intelligentsia, cultural historians such as John Bushnell and Stephen Lovell have documented the popular reception of

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[20] Stephen Lovell, "Bulgakov as Soviet Culture," *SEER* 76, no. 1 (January 1998), 14.

[21] For a reception history of *The Master and Margarita* before the fall of the Soviet Union see Andrew Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*: *A Critical Introduction to* The Master and Margarita, 11-38.

[22] For insightful discussions of theological, philosophical and historical meanings in the novel please refer to the following sources: David Bethea, "History as Hippodrome: The Apocalyptic Horse and Rider in *The Master and Margarita," Russian Review* 41, no. 4 (October 1982): 373-399; Edward Ericson, *The Apoclalyptic Vision of Mikhail Bulgakov's* The Master and Margarita (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991); Edythe C. Haber, "The Lamp with the Green Shade: Mikhail Bulgakov and his Father," *The Russian Review* 44, no.4 (1985): 333-350; George Krugovoi, *The Gnostic Novel of Mikhail Bulgakov: Sources and Exegisis* (Lanham, NY: The University Press of America, 1991); Gary Rosenshield, "*The Master and Margarita* and the Poetics of Aporia: A Polemical Article," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 187-211; Laura D. Weeks "In Defense of the Homeless: On the Uses of History and the Role of Bezdomnyi in *The Master and Margarita*," *Russian Review* 48, no. 1 (January 1989): 45-65.

the novel.[23] Since the fall of the Soviet Union, *The Master and Margarita's* "cult status" has even been co-opted for commercial ventures, as characters from the novel have been used in names of restaurants and bars.[24] The widespread and enduring mass response to the work noted by cultural scholars provides the literary critic with a fresh perspective on a text most often perceived as the property of the Soviet and Western intelligentsia.

Contrary to the widespread scholarly opinion that *The Master and Margarita* signifies Bulgakov's triumphant escape from *Gudok's* lowered cultural standards, the feuilleton as well as its intended audience appear in the novel as illustrated by Bulgakov's extensive reuse of the *Gudok* feuilletons in the "Moscow chapters." Although several critics have noticed general thematic parallels between the feuilletons and the novel, none have conducted close textual analysis or examined what these similarities reveal about the implicit addressees of the novel.[25] Reading Bulgakov's *Gudok* feuilletons and *The Master and Margarita* side by side, one begins to notice a pervasive correspondence between the former and the latter. Using the "double novel" approach which views *The Master and Margarita* as divided into two linguistically distinct narratives, these similarities appear only in the Moscow chapters, not in the Jerusalem sections.[26]

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[23] John Bushnell, "A Popular Reading of Bulgakov: Explication des Graffiti," *Slavic Review* 47, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 502-511; Stephen Lovell, "Bulgakov as Soviet Culture."

[24] Stephen Lovell, "Bulgakov as Soviet Culture," 13.

[25] Andrew Barratt (*Between Two Worlds)* draws parallels between *Nakanune* feuilletons and episodes of *The Master and Margarita*. Edythe Haber's (*Bulgakov: The Early Years*) comparisons are more thorough and include *Gudok* feuilletons as well. Some of the feuilletons in her study overlap with mine, but our interpretations differ.

[26] For more on the "double novel" approach, please see Andrew Barratt's *Between Two Worlds*, 104-116.

For One Night Only

For instance, in both content and manner of addressing the reader, the feuilleton "The Talking Dog" bears similarity to the "Black Magic Revealed" chapter in *The Master and Margarita*. In the feuilleton, John Pierce, a cowboy/fire-eater and fraud comes to a small provincial town hoping to make a profit. Like Woland, John Pierce knows the quickest way to draw a crowd. His advertising poster beckons with the promise of entertainment and sensationalism:

> Must See! Hurry!
>
> Passerby, stop and look!
>
> For one time only and then he leaves for Paris with the government's permission. The famous cowboy and fire-eater John Pierce with his world-famous attractions: such as performs a dance with a boiling samovar on his head, walks barefoot on broken glass and lies in it, face down. In addition to this, at the request of the esteemed public a live man will be eaten and other séances of ventriloquism will be performed. In the finale we will show you a CLAIRIVOYANT TALKING DOG or THE MIRACLE OF THE 20th CENTURY
>
> Respectfully,
>
> John Pierce- the white magician.[27]

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[27] M.A. Bulgakov, "Govoriashaia sobaka," *Ranniaia Proza* V.2, edited by Ellendea Proffer (Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1982), 72.
Спешите видеть! Остановись прохожий! Только один раз и затем уезжают в Париж с дозволения начальства. Знаменитый ковбой и факир Джон Пирс со своими мировыми аттракционами, как-то: исполнит танец с кипящим самоваром на голове, босой пройдет по битому стеклу и ляжет в него лицом. Кроме того, по желанию уважаемой публики будет сьеден живой человек и другие сеансы чревовещания. В

Woland, also a foreign magician, offers an analogous, albeit more laconic advertisement of his upcoming show:

Today and Every Day at the Variety Theater

An Added Attraction:

PROFESSOR WOLAND

Performs Black Magic with an Expose in Full[28]

While John Pierce's identity of a foreign magician likens him to Woland, Pierce also acts as the master of ceremonies at his own performance. His physical description resembles George Bengalsky – Behemoth's beheaded victim: "John Pierce turned out to be a frail man in a sequined leotard. He came out on stage and sent and blew a kiss to the public."[29] The comical incongruity of John Pierce's unimpressive physique and flashy garb has a counterpart in George Bengalsky's unseemly combination of black tie dress and slovenly appearance:

заключение будет показана ЯСНОВИДЯЩАЯ ГОВОРЯЩАЯ СОБАКА, или ЧУДО XX ВЕКА С почтением Джон Пирс- белый маг.

[28] Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Connor (New York: Vintage International, 1996), 87.
"Сегодня и ежедневно в театре Варьете сверх программы
Профессор Воланд
Сеансы Черной Магии с полным её разоблачением"
Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita* (Frankfurt: Possev-Verlag, 1977), 132.

[29] Bulgakov, "Govoriashaia sobaka," *Rannaia proza*, 72. "Джон Пирс оказался щуплым человеком в телесном трико с блёстками. Он вышел на сцену и послал публике воздушный поцелуй."

> A minute later the lights dimmed in the auditorium, and the foot-lights came on, casting a reddish glow on the bottom of the curtain. A stout fellow, clean-shaven and cheerful as a baby, wearing rumpled tails and soiled linen, appeared through the brightly lit opening in the curtain and stood before the audience. This was the master of ceremonies, George Bengalsky, well known to all of Moscow.[30]

In addition to the surface similarities in wording of the magic show advertisement and the visual details of the performers, the feuilleton and the scene of the novel provide the reader with a similar perspective: a constant shift from participant to observer. When the narrative focuses on the stage the reader becomes a part of the audience, delighting in the cheap thrills of a circus performance. Then, when the narrative view turns from the center back to the spectators themselves, the reader catches an unflattering, self-reflective glimpse of an audience anxiously awaiting a bloodthirsty spectacle. For instance, in "The Talking Dog," the public demands a show of advertised cannibalism: "'Devour a live person'" – howled the audience."[31] Similarly,

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[30] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 100.
Через минуту в зрительном зале погасли шары, вспыхнула и дала красноватый отблеск на низ занавеса красная рампа и в освещенной щели занавеса предстал перед публикой полный, веселый, как дитя человек с бритом лицом в помятом фраке и несвежим белье. Это был хорошо знакомый всей Москве конферансье Жорж Бенгальский. Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 153.

[31] Bulgakov, "Govoriashaia sobaka," *Rannaia proza*, 72. "Ешь живого человека." - взвыл театр."

in *The Master and Margarita* an audience member demands bloodshed: "'Tear off his head!' came a stern voice from the balcony."[32]

No one is "devoured alive" in the feuilleton for the simple reason that the magician does not find any volunteers for this honor. John Pierce concludes the magic show by demonstrating the skills of his amazing "talking" dog. The astonished director of the club buys the dog from the magician, only to realize that John Pierce tricked him. At the feuilleton's conclusion the club supervisor's gullibility causes him to lose his job:

> "Well, well" said the briefcase pensively, "I have brought you a piece of paper comrade, stating that you have been dismissed as director of the club." "For what?!" gasped the astonished director. "This is for what, instead of promoting cultural enlightenment, you have set up a side show in your club." [33]

The feuilleton primarily targets the club director, satirizing his provincial foolishness. It is also a cautionary tale discouraging readers from partaking in "rubbish" that takes time away from cultural education.

Bulgakov uses the materials from this feuilleton in the chapter of *The Master and Margarita* in quite a different manner. The superficial inverted parallel is that the dog is replaced

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[32] *The Master and Margarita*, 104.

[33] Bulgakov, "Govoriashaia sobaka," *Rannaia proza*, 75. --Такс задумчиво сказал портфель,--а я вам тут бумажку привез, товарищ, что вы увольняетесь из заведующих клубом. ---За что?! ---ахнул ошеломленный председатель.---А вот за то, что вы вместо того, чтобы заниматься культработой, балаган устраиваете в клубе.

with a cat and white magic with black. In the novel, unlike in the feuilleton the cat really can talk while Woland, much like Pierce, dupes his audience into taking counterfeit currency and wearing disappearing clothing. Woland, on the contrary, is not a scam artist. The bloodthirsty trick, suggested by an audience member, is performed when George Bengalsky "loses his head" to Behemoth's sharp claws for doubting the authenticity of Woland's powers. Unlike the club director in the feuilleton, Bengalsky suffers the consequences of his skepticism.

The portrayal of the Soviet public remains constant in both the "Black Magic Revealed" chapter and in "The Talking Dog;" the implied reader's perspective, which shifts from watching the stage to observing the behavior of the audience members subtly scolds the reader for partaking in such crude nonsense. In this way, the reader is included among the Soviet audiences, emerging as both participant and self-conscious observer of his or her own desires and reactions.

Woland's question "has humanity changed?" ("a much more important question is: have the Muscovites changed on the inside"[34]) posited rhetorically on the stage of the Variete black magic show is simultaneously posed by the author to his readers, who too, have been tempted by Satan's lavish "gifts." After witnessing the greedy behavior of Moscow's citizens, Woland answers the question in the negative, alerting Bulgakov's readers to the universality of certain human traits. Woland's historically informed gaze defies the Soviet notion of a "new humanity." By way of Woland's observation, Bulgakov teaches his readers to adapt a broader view of themselves and their present cultural milieu, one that reaches beyond the limits of an immediate Soviet context.

[34] Bulgakov, The Master and Margarita, 101."сколько гораздо более важный вопрос: изменились ли эти горожане внутренне." Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 155.

In the Psychiatric Ward

Ivan's descent into madness and visit to the psychiatric ward has a precursor in an early feuilleton entitled "How he lost his mind." Bulgakov describes a schoolmaster who loses his mind and becomes "boisterous" as a result of his frustrations with the bureaucratic establishment and their failure to fix the abominable conditions of the school under his care:

> The door leading to the separate room opened and a doctor entered, accompanied by a medical assistand and two guards. They encountered a disheveled bed adorned by a sign: "Schoolmaster of the Chaadaev school on Syzranka. Rowdy."[35]

This introduction of the school master bears close similarity to the scene of Ivan at the psychiatric ward in the chapter entitled "Schizophrenia, as Previously Noted." The reader meets both patients through the eyes of a doctor entering the room to discover a reclining, restrained man.

> It was one-thirty in the morning when a man with a small pointed beard and white coat entered the reception room of the famous psychiatric clinic that had recently been built outside of Moscow on the banks of the river. Three male nurses were keeping a vigilant eye on Ivan Nikolayevich who was sitting on the couch […]

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[35] Bulgakov, "Kak on soshel s uma,"*Rannaia proza*, 52. Дверь в отдельную камеру отворилась и вошел доктор в сопровождении фельдшера и двух сторожей. Навстречу им с развороченной постели, над которой красовалась табличка: «Заведуйщий Чаадаевский школой на Сызранке. Буйный.»

> The towels which had been used to tie Nikolai Ivanovich up were lying a heap on the couch. Ivan Nikolayevich's arms and legs were free.[36]

In the next scene of the feuilleton, the schoolmaster's agitation reaches its peak and he punches the doctor in the ear. Two months later, he apologizes to the psychiatrist and tells the sad tale of his psychological undoing, which became apparent with hallucinations of his dead grandmother urging the schoolmaster to ask for financial support for his school.

> In the night my grandmother says to me: "Why are you laying there like a log? Write to N. He is a kind man." "Leave me, I say, you witch. You croaked, now shut up!" I threw a candlestick at her, and hit the mirror […] My goodness! I walk out and see Peter the Great waving a fist at me. I turned white with fury, grabbed a pocket knife and chased after him. And then of course they grabbed me and brought me here.[37]

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[36] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 55.
Когда в приемную знаменитой психиатрической клиники, недавно отстроенной под Москвой на берегу реки, вышел человек с острой бородкой и облаченный в белый халат,- была половина второго ночи. Трое санитаров не спускали глаз с Ивана Николаевича, сидящего на диване. (…) Полотенца, которыми был связан Иван Николаевич, лежали грудой на том же диване. Руки и ноги Ивана Николаевича были свободны. Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 86.

[37] Bulgakov, "Kak on soshel s uma," *Rannaia proza*, 53. Ночью бабушка: Что, говорит, лежишь как колода? Напиши Эн. Он-добрый господин. Уйди говорю, ведьма. Померла и молчи! Швырнул в неё подсвечником, да в зеркало и попади. […] Батюшки! Выхожу и вижу, стоит Петр Великий и на меня кулаком, выхватил ножик, да за ним. Ну, тут, конечно, меня схватили и к вам.

The menacing figure of Peter the Great threatening a half-mad, powerless underling evokes a similar scene from Aleksandr Pushkin's narrative poem "The Bronze Horseman." Alexander Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman" (1833) features a helpless victim to a historical authority in Evgeniy, the young clerk driven mad by the loss of his fiancé in Petersburg flood. In despair, Evgeniy challenges the statue of Peter the Great to answer for his ill-advised decision of building a city so precariously close to the banks of the Niva river. Poor Evgeniy hallucinates the statue's wrath, as "the Bronze Horseman" chases Evgeniy through the streets of Petersburg. Likewise, a reference to Pushkin appears as Ivan's pursuit of Woland and his retinue, reaches a frenzied crescendo.

> After shaking his fist at someone in the distance in a gesture of feeble outrage, Ivan proceeded to put on what had been left behind. Everyone's windows were open, and shining in each one was a lamp with an orange shade; from all the windows, doors, gateways, rooftops, attics, cellars, and courtyards came the hoarse strains of the polonaise from the opera *Eugene Onegin*.[38]

In addition to sharing a patron poet in their narratives of madness, Ivan and the school master's behaviors exhibit a number of other commonalities. Both men suffer from hallucinations; both are in pursuit phantasmagorical enemies. The unfortunate schoolmaster and the poet both write

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[38] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 43. Погрозив в бессильной злобе кому-то вдаль кулаком, Иван облачился в то что было оставлено […] Все окна были открыты. В каждом из этих окон, из всех дверей, из всех подворотен, с крыш и чердаков, из подвалов и дворов --- вырывался хриплый рев полонеза из оперы «Евгений Онегин.» Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 70.

letters to authorities, appealing to an official power to right the injustices they have witnessed. Despite the plot similarities of these episodes, the satirical targets in the two works prove quite different. In the feuilleton, the schoolmaster is justly confined to the psychiatric ward after being driven to madness by the insufficient funding for his school. The feuilleton clearly addresses the problem of bureaucracy's ineffectual handling of the educational institutions in the new Soviet Union.

In the novel, on the other hand, the "moral" of the episode describing Ivan's "insanity" is ambiguous. The reader knows more than the psychiatrist, aware that Ivan had not hallucinated the devil. Given the fact that Ivan is not mad, it is the Soviet psychiatric establishment that becomes vulnerable to satirical scrutiny. Bulgakov also underscores the automatic association made between religion and schizophrenia within the Soviet Union. After all, the paper icon pinned to Ivan's chest incites alarm and suspicion about his condition: "Well, the icon..." Ivan turned red, "The icon was what scared them most of all[...]"[39] The satirical significance of madness changes from criticizing the inadequacies of the fledgling Soviet educational system to questioning the diagnosis itself. In *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov asks his readers to consider the definition of madness, a significantly more complex cognitive task than a simple acknowledgement of budgeting flaws in the bureaucratic systems.

Your Documents, Please

Yet another example of purely "feuilletonic humor" in *The Master and Margarita* manifests itself in the incongruous combination of bureaucracy and supernatural phenomena. Bulgakov's

[39] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 58. "Ну да, иконка…--- Иван покраснел. ---- Иконка-то больше всего их испугала[...]" Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 90.

early feuilleton “The Adventures of a Corpse” tells the story of a sick man advised by his doctor to obtain an X-ray of his lungs. The man dies before accomplishing this feat. However, even in death, the deceased insists on proper medical documentation. When the corpse appears in the bureaucratic office, the shocked clerk implores him to return to the grave: “‘Why did you come here? You should, may God be with you, straight to the cemetery!’ --- ‘I cannot leave without an X-ray’”[40]

In a similar episode, which takes place in Part II of *The Master and Margarita*, Nikolai Ivanovich demands proof of his attendance at the Satan’s Ball. Much like the corpse who cannot go the grave in peace without proper paperwork, Margarita’s bewitched neighbor cannot return home until he obtains proper documentation ascertaining the reality of his supernatural escapade. Afraid that his wife will not believe his adventures, Nikolai Ivanovich asks Behemoth to furnish him with an official certificate from Satan’s Ball.

> “Please give me a certificate,” began Nikolai Ivanovich, looking around wildly, but speaking with great insistence, “stating where I spent last night.” “For what purpose?” asked the cat sternly. “To give to the police and to my wife,” was Nikolai Ivanovich’s fim response. “We usually don’t give certificates,” said the cat with a frown, “but all right, for you we’ll make a special exception.” Before Nikoali Ivanovich could realize what was happening, the nude Hella was at the typewriter, taking dictation from the cat, “I hereby certify that the bearer of this note, Nikolai Ivanovich, spent the night in question at Satan’s ball, having been

[40] M.A. Bulgakov, “Prikliuchenia pokoinika” in *Rannaia Proza*, 98. “Так чего ты ко мне припер? Ты иди, царство тебе небесное, прямо на кладбище!- без снимка нельзя.”

> lured there in a transportational capacity… Hella, put in paranthesis! And write 'hog. Signed – Behemoth."[41]

In both instances, Bulgakov comments on the absurd, slavish reliance on bureaucratic processes in the Soviet system. While this was a common satirical theme in NEP-era feuilletons, in *The Master and Margarita* the power of the document acquires an added meaning. The statement signed by Behemoth evokes the idea of a "contract with the devil." In fact, Nikolai Ivanovich did submit himself to the dark forces when he declared his love to the transformed Natasha. Ironically, his marital transgression, which scares Nikolai more than the supernatural, can only be made right with yet another document. The second contract allows him to return to his previous existence.

Magic Currencies

The theme of magic money, which recurs throughout *The Master and Margarita*, most notably at the black magic performance and later as evidence incriminating Nikanor Ivanovich, has a parallel in a feuilleton called *A Bewitched Place*. This feuilleton condemns stealing in the Soviet food industry. An accused deli worker named Taldykin stands trial for theft. His lawyer attempts to prove Taldykin's innocence by questioning the veracity of the money's existence.

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[41] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 328.

> My comrade judges! --- howled the panel member. Before we can discuss whether the defendant has spend 840 rubles 15 kopecks in gold, let us ask ourselves --- Did these 840 rubles and 15 kopecks even exist in the first place.[42]

The mystery of the disappearing money prosaically reveals itself at the end of the feuilleton, as it turns out that the defendant was in fact guilty. Taldykin loses his job and is replaced by a certain Bintov. Two months later, money once again disappears inexplicably. After each successive hire money continues to disappear from the register. Clearly, there is nothing magical or "witchy" about either the money or the deli. Bulgakov ironically uses supernatural terms to highlight the widespread problem of thievery and corruption.

In *The Master and Margarita*, the author similarly explores themes of corruption and greed with a Faustian transformation of Soviet rubles into non-monetary objects and foreign currency. After the black magic show, paper bills distributed to the cheering audiences morph into stinging bees and bottle caps. Nikanor Ivanovich, the unlucky victim of Koroviev's supernatural counterfeit insists on his innocence regarding his possession of foreign bills:

> When they told Nikanor Ivanovich to stop playing games and explain how the dollars got into the ventilation shaft, he got down on his knees and rocked back and forth with his mouth open wide, as if he wanted to swallow the parquet panels.

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[42] "Zakoldovannoe mesto," 192. Товарищи судьи!–завывал член коллегии. – Прежде чем говорить о том, растратил ли мой подзащитный 840 р.15 коп. золотом, зададим себе вопрос --- существовали ли эти 840 р. 15 коп. золотом вообще на свете?

> "Do you want me" he wailed, "to eat the floor to prove that I didn't take it?" But that Koroviev, he is a devil.[43]

The metaphor from the feuilleton turns literal in the novel as Nikanor Ivanovich's dollars really magically change from rubles into American currency in his ventilation shaft. This fact demands a more sophisticated level of judgment from the reader since Nikanor Ivanovich, though guilty of accepting bribes, was in fact tricked into accepting foreign currency. Instead of a faceless succession of thieves introduced in the feuilleton, in Nikanor Ivanovich, Bulgakov creates a more human character that admits to his failings, repents, and suffers as a consequence of his actions. The lesson that greed engenders misery is taught too harshly. The guilty party's terror indicates emotional anguish disproportionate to the committed act of accepting a bribe. The devil's trickery in this case, as in the other instances of punishment, exceeds reasonable limits. Nikanor Ivanovich's visible suffering garners compassion and creates moral ambiguity in contrast to the feuilleton's didactic message on a similar topic.

Crimea at a Moment's Notice

The scene in *The Master and Margarita* depicting Woland's sudden appearance in Likhodeev's room and the subsequent exile to Crimea has origins in a feuilleton about a man who dreams that he has won the lottery. In "Series Six", a man named Ezhikov dreams that he is visited by a

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[43] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 134. На просьбу не валять дурака, а рассказывать, как попали доллары в вентиляцию, Никанор Иванович стал на колени и качнулся, раскрывая рот, как бы желая проглатить паркетную шашку. –Желаете, - промычал он, - землю буду есть что не брал?Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 203.

mysterious, devil-like figure, who turns out to be the commissioner of the lottery. In the course of the dream, all of Ezhikov's wishes come true, but ultimately good luck turns into misfortune. The details of the encounter between Ezhikov and the lottery commissioner closely resemble Likhodeev's first meeting with Woland. The mysterious guest awakens a surprised Ezhikov, deriving great amusement from Ezhikov's state of befuddlement.

> Ezhikov was awakened by a knock on the door. After an invitation to "Come in," a stranger entered with an enormous letter in hand […] "What can I do for you?" mumbled a surprised Ezhikov. The eccentric visitor burst into peals of merry laughter.[44]

Stepan Likhodeev, like his feuilletonic predecessor, finds an eccentric visitor at his bedside. He greets the guest with a bulging stare of disbelief and awkwardly attempts to find out the identity of his guest.

> Styopa sat down on the bed and tried as hard as he could to focus his bloodshot eyes on the stranger […] There was a pause, after which Stopa made a huge effort and said "What do you want?" […] The stranger gave a friendly smile, took out a large gold watch with a diamond triangle on the cover […][45]

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[44] M.A. Bulgakov, "Seria shest' No. 0660243" in *Rannaia Proza*, 417. Проснулся Ежиков от стука в дверь. На приглашение: «Войдите», вошел неизвестный человек с огромным листом в руках (…) Чем же я могу вам служить? пролепетал изумленный Ежиков. Эксцентричный посетитель залился веселым смехом (…)

A reappearing detail that deserves special notice is Ezhikov's instantaneous trip to Crimea, regarded as a miraculous gift in the feuilleton but turns into as sinister punishment in *The Master and Margarita*. Ezhikov, the hero of Bulgakov's early feuilleton

> And Ilya Semyonovich magically obtained everything. *Ezhikov visited Crimea in one moment*, (italics mine) carried a gold watch in his pocked, sat in a private box at Bolshoi theater, drove around Strastnyi square in a stinky taxi [...].[46]

It is curious that Likhodeev's devilish undoing consists of a forced exile to Crimea, as opposed to a far less pleasant locale such as Siberia. Likhodeev's forced vacation to a resort emphasizes the illusory nature of luxurious pleasures when obtained by evil means. Reframing beautiful Crimea as a setting for Likhodeev's purgatorial punishment echoes Bulgakov's description of the lavish Griboedov restaurant as a replica of hell.

Ezhikov's encounter with diabolical temptation ends when he discovers that it was all just a dream. The feuilleton, in line with anti-capitalist psychology, preaches that money cannot

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[45] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 64.Степа сел на кровать и, сколько мог, вытаращил налитые кровью глаза на неизвестного […] Произошла пауза, после которой, сделав над собой страшнейшее усилие, Степа выговорил: -Что вам угодно? […] Незнакомец дружелюбно усмехнулся, вынув большие золотые часы с алммазным треугольником[…] Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 99-100.

[46] Ibid., 418. И Илья Семенович волшебным образом доставал все. *Ежиков в течение одного мгновенья побывал в Крыму, (italics mine)* носил в кармане золотые часы, сидел в ложе Большого театра, ездил по Страстной площади в вонючем таксомоторе[…].

buy happiness. On the contrary, it can bring chaos into one's life. The master's winnings similarly bring misfortune when covetous neighbor denounces him to the secret police.

Scarier than the Supernatural

One of the most often quoted satirical moments in *The Master and Margarita*, omitted in the 1966-1967 printing of the novel in *Moskva*, is the narrator's description of disappearances from apartment 50 on Sadovaya:

> And it was two years ago that inexplicable things began happening at the apartment: people started disappearing without a trace […] The pious and, to be blunt, superstitious Anfisa came right out and told the distressed Anna Frantseva that it was witchcraft pure and simple, and that she knew exactly who it was that had spirited away both the lodger and the policeman, only she didn't want to say because it was almost nighttime.[47]

Critics have often highlighted this passage from *The Master and Margarita* as conclusive evidence that the novel satirically parallels supernatural evil and Stalinist Russia. However, the connection between the supernatural and the secret police appears in an early feuilleton written by Bulgakov for *Rupor* in 1922. In this feuilleton a group of anti-Bolshevik spiritualist hold a "seance" to find out when the Bolshevik rule will come to an end:

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[47] Ibid., 63. И вот два года назад начались в квартире необьяснимые происшествия: из этой квартиры люди начали бесследно исчезать[…] Набожная, а отркравеннее сказать – суеверная, Анфиса так напрямик и заявила очень расстроенной Анне Франецевне, что это колдовство и что она прекрасно знает кто утащил и жильца и милиоценера, только к ночи не хочет говорить. Ibid., 97

> Pavel Petrovich called out in trembling voice: "Spirit! Who are you? … From behind the door a grave voice answered: "Secret police" […] Pavel Petrovich's shaking hands opened the door. In a moment the lamps were ignited, and the spirit appeared before the snow-white spirit callers. He was made of leather. He was all leather, from his cap to his briefcase. Moreover, he was not alone. An entire procession of subservient spirits could be seen in the foyer.[48]

The tone of this feuilleton ridicules the pre-revolutionary spiritualists. Just as in the novel, the secret police appears terrifying, but given the fact that the author shows little sympathy toward the "spiritualists", these menacing figures are also carriers of justice.

Despite the aforementioned similarities in themes, language, character and tone, the author's approach toward his audience has changed. Unlike the feuilletons written for *Gudok*, where Bulgakov was forced to oversimplify his narrative to reach a "Soviet Reader," in *The Master and Margarita* the feuilletonic formula appears imbedded within a complex context, and in this way used to bring up the reader's cultural level. Bulgakov does not merely reuse phrases, imagery, and situations from his feuilletons, but transforms them to serve a new purpose within the novel. Whereas the *Gudok* feuilleton preached culture according to the Bolshevik agenda, in

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[48] M.A. Bulgakov, "Spiriticheskii seans," *Rannaia Proza*, 367. Дрожащим голосом выкрикнул Павел Петрович: -Дух! Кто ты?... Из-за двери гробовой голос ответил: -Черезвычайная коммисия […] Трясущиеся руки Павла Петровича открыли дверь. В миг вспыхнули лампы, и дух предстал перед снежно-белыми спиритами. Он был кожаный. Весь кожаный, начиная с фуражки и кончая портфелем. Мало того, он был не один. Целая вереница подвластных духов виднелась в передней.

his novel Buglakov appropriates the feuilleton to advance his own brand of culture that draws on his pre-revolutionary education.[49] *The Master and Margarita* offers the "Soviet Reader" something that the feuilletons never did; it initiates the reader into a pre-revolutionary world tethered to a long cultural lineage.

Teaching Culture to a "Soviet Reader"

The realm of "high culture" in *The Master and Margarita* evokes biographical details of Bulgakov's pre-revolutionary existence. In her article, "The Lamp with the Green Lampshade: Mikhail Bulgakov and His Father," Edythe Haber describes the influence of Afanasii Ivanovich Bulgakov's scholarly ideas about enlightenment on the content of *The Master and Margarita*. Evoking his father by developing his theological ideas and with symbols of "calm, scholarly labor" such as the lamp with the green lampshade, Bulgakov also channels happy memories of another life before the revolution.[50] These childhood recollections are inextricably connected to the wider culture of Kiev intellectuals to which his family belonged.

At the turn of the century, Western culture permeated Russian intellectual circles. Cosmopolitanism and a longing for "world culture" going back to classical antiquity characterized the early twentieth-century ethos of educated Russians. In Bulgakov's family, Western literature and culture co-existed with a pronounced interest in Orthodox Christianity.[51]

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[49] In *Bulgakov: The Early Years*, Edythe Haber argues that Bulgakov's notion of enlightenment changes from cultural to spiritual. My view is that Bulgakov continues to preach culture, but a pre-revolutionary culture distinct from the Soviet cultural ethos.

[50] Haber, "The Lamp with the Green Shade," 333-350.

Consistent with his background, in *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov connects theology with Western intellectual and cultural traditions. Quoting Goethe's *Faust* in the epigraph to his novel, the author demonstrates an orientation toward the West in his exploration of philosophical and theological questions.[52] In this way, the text of *The Master and Margarita* resurrects Bulgakov's particular pre-revolutionary cultural reality as juxtaposed to life in the new Soviet State.

In *The Master and Margarita*, such cosmopolitanism goes hand in hand with the sphere of the supernatural. Introducing pre-revolutionary, Western-influenced culture in the guise of the other-worldly may be a metaphorical device acknowledging the extreme historical and cultural isolationism of the Soviet state. In his monograph *Sex in Public: the Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*, Eric Naiman uses the analogy of the gothic novel to discuss NEP-era political fears of the "dead" pre-revolutionary past haunting the Soviet present. The horrifying image of a corpse coming to life was widespread in NEP-era Proletkult and Bolshevik writings warning about the dangerous bourgeois elements and foreign influences still lurking in the shadows of Soviet life.[53] Bulgakov's educational task in *The Master and Margarita* is to counter the abhorrence of history by offering lost cultural ideas and values as worthwhile rewards for allowing the "historical supernatural" into the present. Bulgakov playfully capitalizes on the fear of a pre-revolutionary past culture by representing its return with spooky occurrences and ghoulish visitors. Ultimately,

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[51] For more on theological elements in *The Master and Margarita* please see J.M.Q. Davies' "Bulgakov: Atheist or Militant Old Believer? *The Master and Margarita* Reconsidered," *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 8, no.1 (1992):125-33.

[52] For more about the connection between Bulgakov and Goethe please see Andrew Barratt, "Beyond Parody: The Goethe Connection," in *The Master and Margarita : A Critical Companion*, edited by Laura D. Weeks (Evanston: Northwestern, 1996), 113-121.

[53] Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 148-180.

the encounter with frightening, outsider forces proves enlightening and liberating for several characters.

The devil Woland comes to Moscow as a messenger from a not too distant history, bringing with him an air of cosmopolitanism. Portrayed as a foreigner with little tolerance for bad manners and uncouth behavior, Woland appears decidedly old-fashioned among the Soviet "new types." Consistent with his status as an enforcer of history and culture, the devil punishes various sinful characters not only for their moral failings such as stealing, lying, and cheating, but also for cultural transgressions. Nothing annoys the devil more than boorish behavior. Varenukha's bad phone manners, Nikanor Ivanovich's unfamiliarity with Pushkin, or Likhodeev's vulgarity cannot be relegated to any recognizable category of "biblical sins." Similarly, Berlioz, despite his education, commits the crime of betraying his cultural heritage to gain prestige in the new Soviet world.

Unlike the majority of the book's xenophobic Soviet characters, Margarita and the Master strive to preserve a connection to a wider historical and cultural reality by creating an intimate sub-culture of which the Master's novel is the center. Within the context of Bulgakov's art, we could compare Margarita and the Master to the Turbins, the family in the semi-autobiographical *The White Guard*, who struggle to preserve their old way of life in the wake of the revolution by creating a home where time seems to stand still. The private world of Margarita and the Master, and the Master's novel represent the kind of cultural nostalgia of the "destroyed world," "behind the cream colored curtains" we find in *The White Guard*. After suffering in the stifling Soviet environment, for the duration of the novel the two characters are circumstantially separated from the Soviet world; both the Master and Margarita acquire private

dwellings, sheltered from Soviet reality. The Master's lottery winnings allow him to temporarily leave his Soviet life and live a sheltered existence, immersed in the historical world of his novel. After he flees his apartment, the psychiatric ward becomes a locus of isolation from the outside world. Likewise, Margarita, one of the few heroines of Soviet literature with a servant, lives in anachronistic, fantastical luxury. Even though Margarita's unusual affluence is attained through marriage to a member of the Soviet establishment, her indifference to her wealth and generosity endow her with a regal quality. While the Master is intellectually connected to Western tradition through his scholarly pursuits, Margarita physically embodies the past in flesh and blood, as we learn that she descends directly from Queen Margot.

On a textual level, the Jerusalem narrative replicates the isolation of the two lovers in the Master's garden apartment. Clearly unaware of uncouth "Soviet Readers," it represents a cultural space firmly rooted in the pre-revolutionary past. The Master's historical novel stands as an example of pristine art in the high literary and intellectual tradition, quite distinct from the likes of *Gudok* and its mass readers, but Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* taken as a whole combines a Western-influenced cultural heritage with a Soviet NEP-era literary ethos. In this way, *The Master and Margarita* demonstrates an acute awareness of a varied audience. Whereas the Master's intended readers clearly belong to a select few, Bulgakov utilizes a number of devices to grant his naive "Soviet reader" access into the Master's cultural realm. By catering to the reader's taste for entertainment, using the educational formula of the satirical feuilleton and introducing Ivan Bezdomny as the reader's companion, the author lures the unsuspecting "Soviet reader" into complex intellectual territory.

"The Soviet Reader" in Jerusalem

Structurally, *The Master and Margarita* could be likened to the dimensions of the ill-fated apartment on Sadovaya, the dwelling that expands into astonishing depth upon Woland's arrival. *The Master and Margarita*, advertised as a "fantastical novel," similarly surprises with its unexpectedly vast philosophical interiority. However, the initiation into the pre-revolutionary cultural realm occurs gradually as the story of Pontius Pilate is told in small doses amidst a fast moving, captivating narrative.

Perhaps acting on the belief that the "Soviet reader" would rather go the circus than to the opera, Bulgakov utilizes tantalizing literary tricks to retain his audience's attention throughout the book. Using humor, mystery, romance and fantastical elements creates an undisputable page-turner. The first chapter begins as an entertaining tale, with several captivating mysteries: Berlioz's hallucination, the identity of the foreign stranger, Woland's mystical prediction. These curious events precede the reader's first introduction to the "Jerusalem" chapters and safeguard against a potential yawn at the appearance of Pontius Pilate and the historical narrative that follows.

Having captured the "Soviet Reader's" imagination, the author gently guides him with the use of repeated phrases to create simple transitions from the Moscow chapters into the territory of the Jerusalem chapters. The last lines of the first chapter read " 'It's all very simple: Early in the morning of the fourteenth day of the spring month of Nisan, wearing a white cloak with a blood-red lining, and shuffling with his cavalryman's gait…'"[54] Just as the beginning of

the Jerusalem story is quoted at the end of the first Moscow chapter, so are the last lines carried over to chapter three, where we return to Soviet reality: "Yes, it was about ten in the morning, my esteemed Ivan Nikolayevich," said the professor."[55] This utterance contains yet another indication of the Soviet reader's involvement. When Woland concludes his tale, he directly addresses Ivan, as though the story were told exclusively for his benefit, even though Berlioz is also present.

The Jerusalem narrative, although temporally and culturally removed from Soviet life, nonetheless exhibits many thematic parallels to the events in the Moscow chapters. The story of Pontius Pilate's meeting with Yeshua echoes dilemmas of moral conscience presented in Master's story. In this way, Jerusalem's historical landscape is simultaneously ancient and contemporary, stylistically foreign, but conceptually relevant to the supernatural tale of the Devil's visit to Moscow. Ivan's instant fascination with the first part of the Pontius Pilate story, related by Woland ("The poet passed his hand over his face like a man who had just revived"[56]) speaks to the timeless power of this Biblical narrative. Bulgakov's apocryphal version of Jesus' crucifixion presents these events in a compelling manner.

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[54] *Bulgakov, The Master and Margarita*, 12. "Всё просто: в белом плаще с кровавым подбоем, шаркающий кавалерийской походкой, ранним утром четырнадцатого числа весеннего месяца нисана… '" Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 26.

[55] Ibid., 33."Да, было около десяти часов утра, досточтимый Иван Николаевич, --- сказал профессор." Ibid., 43.

[56] Ibid. "Поэт провел рукою по лицу, как человек, только что очнувшийся." Ibid.

Ivan Bezdomny: "The Soviet Reader's" Companion

The "Soviet reader" not only appears as an implicit addressee in the novel, but is explicitly present as one of the work's main characters. Ivan Bezdomny, though himself a poet, nonetheless represents an ignorant "Soviet reader" in need of education. Ivan's crude language, readiness to use his fists, general ignorance and a predilection for automatically repeating Soviet propaganda evoke the quintessential ignorant "Soviet reader," Poligraf Poligrafovich Sharikov. However, unlike Bulgakov's other unflattering depictions of this character type, Ivan possesses an imagination, compassion, and the ability to change. In fact, by the end of the novel Ivan is transformed from an uninitiated "Soviet reader" to a budding scholar. The opportunity to enter a more elevated cultural sphere presents itself not only to Ivan, but to any reader who picks up the novel.

Some critics have even dubbed Ivan the true "author" of the novel. In her psychoanalytic reading, Judith Mills interprets the plot of *The Master and Margarita* as Ivan's hallucination.[57] Similarly, Neil Cornwell concludes that Ivan may be the only character whose omniscience is greater than Woland's.[58] Bulgakov invites this affiliation between Ivan and the novel's narrator by playfully evoking his own past as a hack writer. The name "Ivan Bezdomny" was one of his first signed pseudonyms. Scholars such as Riitta Pittman have used this biographical fact to build

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[57] Judith M. Mills, "Of Dreams, Devils, Irrationality and *The Master and Margarita*," in *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Daniel Rancour-Laferriere (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1989), 303-328.

[58] Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodern* (New York: Harvester, 1990).

a case showing the Master and Ivan as two parts of a split personality.[59] Indeed, Bulgakov naming his character after his own pen name complicates notions of authorship. Whereas many early critics of *The Master and Margarita* identified the Master as a direct biographical portrait of the author himself, more recent scholarship has explored a multitude of authorial voices in the novel which includes Ivan's.

However, Ivan primarily performs the role of a listener and recipient of information, rather than a story teller. Ivan's promise to Master "not to write anymore" makes him an unlikely author, as narrating *The Master and Margarita* would mean breaking his vow. To be sure, Ivan keeps his promise by relinquishing his pen name and becoming a scholar. In this passive capacity of a student, Ivan Bezdomny becomes a relatable guide for the "Soviet reader" to follow.

This type of partnership between character and reader, whereby the reader partakes in a magical, yet educational journey through the character's eyes recalls the reader-character relationship in Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland* or the much more recent philosophical survey in the guise of a fantastical tale entitled *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder.[60] The description of Ivan's "adventures" following Berlioz's death, resemble Alice's descent down the rabbit hole. As Ivan madly pursues Woland and his retinue the "Soviet Reader" follows him into a spiraling distortion of familiar reality. Ivan arrives at the psychiatric ward disoriented and unstable. Unsolvable mysteries challenge Ivan's established notions about the world. It is in this

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[59] Riitta Pittman. *The Author's Divided Self in Bulgakov's* The Master and Margarita, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

[60] In *Sophie's World*, a little girl named Sophie experiences a series of mysterious and fantastical events while learning about the history of philosophy. Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World* [1991], translated by Paulette Moller (New York: Berkley Books, 1996).

state of extreme vulnerability that Ivan meets the Master and along with the "Soviet Reader," glimpses an unfamiliar value system and perception of the world. The enlightening wisdom passed from the Master to Ivan consists not of moral or spiritual teachings, but first and foremost instructs in culture and manners. In the first minutes of their conversation the Master criticizes Ivan for his crude language:

> "Disgraceful," the guest scolded and added, "And besides, why do you say things like 'smash some guy in the puss?' After all, nobody knows exactly what a man has, a face or a puss. Most likely, it's still a face. So, when it comes to fists…No, you should stop doing that sort of thing once and for all." [61]

When the Master learns of Ivan's encounter with the devil, he is shocked at Ivan's lack of basic cultural literacy. "It's impossible not to recognize him, my friend! And besides, you're…forgive me for saying so, you're, if I'm not mistaken, an ignorant man, are you not?"[62] The Master recognizes Satan from images encountered in books and from the opera *Faust*, analogously Ivan fails to make the connection due to his educational lack. In the Master's criticism of Ivan we can recognize Bulgakov's cultural ideals, which include proper manners and a Western European literary education.

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[61] Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 111.---Безобразие, --- осудил гость Ивана и добавил: ---А кроме того, что это вы так выражаетесь: по морде засветил…Ведь неизвестно, что именно имеется у человека, морда или лицо. И пожалуй, ведь все-таки лицо. Так что, знаете ли, кулаками…Нет, уж это вы оставьте навсегда. Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, 169.

[62] Ibid.,113 "Его нельзя не узнать, мой друг! Впрочем, вы…вы меня опять таки извините, ведь я не ошибаюсь, вы человек невежественный?" Ibid, 172.

After receiving his cultural sermon from the Master Ivan quickly realizes his mistake and not only vows to stop writing bad poetry, but also develops an interest in history and philosophy. Through Ivan, the reader is introduced to the Master's pre-revolutionary cultural realm. This first face to face encounter between teacher and disciple marks the beginning of Ivan's and consequently the "Soviet Reader's" immersion into a historical past.

An Invitation to Satan's Ball

In the second part of the novel, the divide between Master and Margarita's cultural realm and the "Soviet reader" virtually disappears. Following his conversion, Ivan ceases to be the reader's guide and is replaced by Margarita. While Ivan's befuddled perspective limited the reader's knowledge, in the second part of the novel, all cultural and perceptual doors are opened. Through Margarita, the reader gains full access into Woland's historical/magical world. As boundaries fade between fantasy and reality, between a cosmopolitan historical past and a Soviet present, the linguistic borders demarcating high literary style and mass accessibility also destabilize.

The tone of the passages addressed to a "Soviet reader" changes from satirical colloquial speech to solemn and at times sentimental expression. The first chapter of Part II begins with an intimate invitation:

> Follow me, reader! Who ever told you that there is not such thing in the world as real, true, everlasting love? May the liar have his despicable tongue cut out! Follow me, my reader, and only me, and I'll show you that kind of love![63]

This direct appeal to an undifferentiated readership indicates that in the second part of the book all readers become equals as the narrative is no longer strictly divided into "high" and "low" texts. While Behemoth's and Koroviev's antics continue to supply entertainment, there are no distinct "feuilletonic" chapters. Humor and the supernatural intermingle with the more sophisticated historical and philosophical content. The mediation of the feuilleton, which allowed for communication between a naive reader and the educated narrator, is no longer necessary after the reader's initiation into Western influenced pre-revolutionary culture via Ivan's enlightening journey.

The ornate, dramatic language of the passage quoted above resembles the style of the Jerusalem chapters. At the same time designations such as "eternal and faithful love" signal the simple sensibilities of a romance novel. To be sure, the second part of the book demonstrates a generic teetering between high literature and light fiction. For instance, Margarita's introduction lacks any psychological depth. Her character, described as an archetypal romantic heroine is summed up with surface adjectives: "intelligent, beautiful and childless." Furthermore, by first informing the reader of Margarita's wealth and social position, the narrator appeals to the common reader's assumed materialistic interests:

> Margarita Nikolayevna had plenty of money. Margarita Nikolayevna could buy anything that took her fancy. Her husband's circle of friends included some

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[63] Ibid.,185. "За мной, читатель! Кто сказал тебе, что нет на свете настоящей, верной, вечной любви! Да отрежут лгуну его гнусный язык! За мной, мой читатель, и только за мной, и я покажу тебе такую любовь!"Ibid., 274.

> interesting people. Margarita Nikolayevna never touched a primus stove. Margarita Nikolayevna was ignorant of the horrors of life in a communal apartment.[64]

Further in the chapter, Bulgakov confirms that his implied readers closely resemble the greedy Soviet citizens at Woland's Black Magic Show by tempting them with the delicious details of his heroine's wardrobe much in the same way Woland tempts the Moscow women with Parisian fashions. The description of stockings, perfumes, blouses and high heeled shoes strewn about the apartment appears nearly identical to the items distributed to the eager Moscow audiences by Woland and his helpers.[65] The parallel between Woland's fashion show and Margarita's wardrobe is made explicit when Margarita "decides to perform a trick of her own" by bestowing on her maid several of these coveted treasures.

The reader, taken along for the ride on Margarita's broomstick enters the fantastical reality of Woland's historical realm. The depiction of Satan's Ball accomplishes some of the same educational aims as the Master's novel. Satan's Ball, where history turns into a grotesque carnival, combines entertainment with education, much in the same way that a supernatural narrative surrounds the tale of Pontius Pilate. In the case of Satan's Ball, the notion of "resurrecting the past" appears playfully as a realized metaphor; dead historical figures literally rise from their coffins to re-enact their passions and crimes in a historical masquerade.

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[64]Ibid.,185. Маргарита Николаевна не нуждалась в деньгах. Маргарита Николаевна могла купить все, что понравится. Среди знакомых её мужа попадались интересные люди. Маргарита Николаевна никогда не прикасалась к примусу. Маргарита Николаевна не знала ужасов житья в совместной квартире. Ibid., 276.

[65] Ibid., 291.

Satan's Ball serves as a meeting place where characters, story-lines, and consequently readers, converge. The witching hour allows for synthesis among the various planes, previously separated in the novel by boundaries of language and separate plots. Undead historical personages and Soviet characters are gathered together not only for a devilish celebration, but also to be judged before a supernatural court. Berlioz disappears into oblivion, according to his own nihilist beliefs about the afterlife. Aloisii is shot as payback for betraying the Master while other tormented souls continue to endure punishments already assigned to them. For some, Satan's Ball offers the chance to dramatically change the course of their destiny. Natasha trades in her old life as a maid for a witch's wicked freedom and a royal title in the world of the supernatural. Conversely Varenukha gratefully returns to his humdrum Soviet existence after a dissatisfying stint as a vampire. A life altering choice falls to Margarita, who must decide between granting mercy to the child murderess Frieda or pursue her own happiness. Margarita chooses compassion over self-interest and this selfless deed ultimately wins back the Master.

This temporary merging of realities presents a crucial opportunity to the "Soviet reader" as well. Having glimpsed a wider historical and cultural reality, first in the Master's novel and later at the Satan's ball, the Soviet reader chooses whether he or she can return to a state of ignorance. Readers can forget the Master's novel and its historical context and remain "readers of the feuilleton" or they can elect to retain their expanded consciousness to inform their future "readings" of life in the Soviet Union. Bulgakov grants his "Soviet readers" the power of free will by providing the option of dismissing the uncanny happenings as mass hypnosis and thereby rejecting the author's educational efforts.

The epilogue of the novel shows the "Soviet reader" the way out from the fantastical/historical labyrinth in which he has found himself. The narrator provides an explanation of the strange events:

> Needless to say, truly mature and cultured people did not tell these stories about an evil power's visit to the capital. In fact, they even made fun of them and tried to talk sense into those who told them […] Cultured people shared the point of view of the investigating team: it was the work of a gang of hypnotists and ventriloquists magnificently skilled in their art.[66]

Ivan as a representative of the "Soviet reader," on the surface chooses "to forget" and side with those "cultured" opinions that Woland's visit to Moscow was a cleverly staged prank. "Everything is clear to Ivan Nikolayevich, he knows and understands everything. He knows that in his youth he was the victim of hypnotist-criminals and that he had to go in for treatment and was cured."[67] However, the next sentence indicates that Ivan's education has not been in vain: "But he knows that there are things he cannot cope with."[68]

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[66] Ibid., 326. Наиболее развитые и культурные люди в этих рассказах о нечистой силе, навестившей столицу, разумеется, никакого участия не принимали и даже смеялись над ними и пытались рассказчиков образумить[…]Культурные люди стали на точку зрения следствия: работала шайка гипнотизёров и чревовещателей, великолепно владеющая своим искусством.Ibid., 484.

[67] Ibid.333. "Ивану Николаевичу все известно, он все знает и понимает. Он знает, что в молодости своей он стал жертвой преступных гипнотизеров, лечился после этого и вылечился." Ibid., 494.

Conclusion

The result of Ivan's education speaks to the ability of a text such as *The Master and Margarita* to change a reader's perceptions and beliefs. Has Ivan been transformed and enlightened or has he chosen forgetful complacency? In her 1986 article, "Reaching a Reader: The Master's Audience in *The Master and Margarita*," Carol Avins treats Ivan as a failed disciple citing that his position in the Soviet academic world indicates that he "must have adapted the standard interpretation" abandoning the Master's teachings. Blaming Ivan's inadequacy as a reader, Avins concludes that "manuscripts do perish […] of the failure of an audience to apprehend them."[69] This statement attributes a majestic fragility to the term "manuscript," implying that a text must be preserved by the reception of an ideal reader, otherwise it crumbles into dust.

However, is Bulgakov's message that a literary text is a relic, meant to be preserved without alteration? The example of his own novel points to the contrary as *The Master and Margarita* itself represents a transposition, whereby a valuable historical text is introduced via the literary code of a new culture - the Soviet feuilleton. Following the logic of Avins' argument, "Soviet readers," like Ivan, destroy the manuscript with their flawed interpretations. However, as I have already demonstrated, the reader of the feuilleton is a welcome and necessary guest, whose implicit input allows Bulgakov to make the Pontius Pilate story compelling to a wide contemporary audience. Similarly, Ivan continues the Master's legacy precisely by working as a

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[68] Ibid. "Но знает он также, что кое с чем он совладать не может." A more accurate translation of this sentence is "But he also knows that there are certain things beyond his control."

[69] Carol Avins, **"**Reaching a Reader: The Master's Audience in *The Master and Margarita*," *Slavic Review* 45, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 284.

historian within a Soviet system. Although on one hand he exposes the Master's text to the danger of modification, the text's survival in a new culture depends on a translator who is familiar with Soviet mentality and conventions. In this way, Ivan as a Soviet historian allows the Master's text to live on (in some form) for future generations, as the feuilleton preserves Bulgakov's pre-revolutionary cultural legacy for the uninitiated "Soviet readers."

It seems that Bulgakov's own low assessment of his early writings for *Gudok* proved unjust. The status of *The Master and Margarita* as a "manuscript that doesn't burn" owes much to its orientation toward readers of the feuilleton. The novel's great philosophical and cultural treasures are brought to the surface by the work's entertaining plot and humor. Despite the author's proclaimed shame at his *Gudok* days, the indestructibility of the feuilleton contributed to the success of Bulgakov's masterpiece by ushering in pre-revolutionary culture and its values into Soviet literature for a new readership.

The importance of the feuilleton in *The Master and Margarita* clearly contradicts the notion that the novel was written to be read exclusively and in secret by a select group of intellectual peers. The Soviet feuilleton, created for the utilitarian purpose of educating a newly literate reader seems ill-fitting within a novel that adamantly decries the lowering of artistic expression to the level of political propaganda. There are several ways of addressing this apparent paradox. First, fame (or at least recognition) was a consideration for Bulgakov who hoped against all odds to publish *The Master and Margarita*.[70] This explanation, however, does

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[70] Evidence exists that the author did have some hope of publishing his controversial novel. The play "Batum" about Stalin's youth, written in 1939, was possibly a concession in an effort to publish *The Master and Margarita*. Lesley Milne notes (in *Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography*, 219- 224.) that Bulgakov thought of Stalin "as the first reader," of his masterpiece. In

not suffice; for in the end, the author did not compromise his creation in order to publish it, rather, the feuilleton was not only a tool to communicate with an external reader, but to some degree a reflection of Bulgakov's own changed literary consciousness. The author's literary upbringing consisted not only of Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and Gogol, but also of "lower" reading sources. Targeting a mass audience, Bulgakov drew on pre-revolutionary popular literature and contemporary satire to formulate an appropriate mode of communication with an unsophisticated, Soviet audience. The conversation between the "Soviet Reader" and the pre-revolutionary intellectual, may not after all be directed outward, but represents the writer's attempt to reconcile his nostalgic cultural ideals and his participation in an ever-changing cultural reality. In *The Master and Margarita* we see a reflection of Russia's transforming reading culture, which swept up in its wave not only the newly literate masses, but the intelligentsia as well.

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her *Zhizneopisanie Bulgakova* (Moskva: Kniga, 1988), Marietta Chudakova writes that Bulgakov had read drafts of the novel to Il'f and Petrov and the two authors told him that the work could be published if he were to "take out the ancient chapters,"462.

CHAPTER 3

Soviet Types and Fragmented Selves in Yuri Olesha's *Envy*

Yuri Olesha, Mikhail Bulgakov's colleague at *Gudok*, looked upon this journalistic activity much more favorably than his friend. Olesha's ardent enthusiasm, and therefore the contrast between the two authors' attitudes, is vividly illustrated in an inscription to Bulgakov written in his book of feuilletonic verses (June, 30, 1924):

> Mishenka, I will never write vague lyrical verses. No one needs them. A poet should write feuilletons, so that poetry can serve a practical purpose for those who earn wages of 7 rubles. Do not be angry with me Mishunchik, you are a good humorist (Mark Twain was also a humorist) In one year I will present you with another "Zubilo" Love. Your Olesha.[1]

[1] Мишенька, я никогда не буду писать отвлеченных лирических стихов. Это никому не нужно. Поэт должен писать фельетоны, чтобы от стихов была практическая польза для людей, которые получают 7 рублей жалованья. Не сердитесь Мишунчик, Вы хороший

By pointing out that Mark Twain was also a humorist Olesha defends the merits of the satirical feuilleton to Mikhail Bulgakov who detested working at the railway newspaper. Yuri Olesha, according to his own reports, deemed his time spent in *Gudok* the happiest of his life, writing over 500 feuilletons in verse under the pseudonym "Zubilo." Most of these short pieces dealt with transportation related topics, such as the timely operation of trains, paying train fare and public drunkenness.[2] In addition to his light, *chastushka*-like verses, Olesha also penned a number of politically charged poems about the revolution. The author was particularly adept at writing satirical verses and his quick, accessible wit soon gained him popularity among peasant and worker readers.

Yet, despite his seeming love and talent for "agitational literature" little trace of feuilletonic activity remains in Olesha's most celebrated work, *Envy* (1927). Did Olesha completely abandon his role of "beloved mass writer" or did he continue to utilize some aspect of the satirical feuilleton in his masterpiece? As I have shown in the previous chapter, the professed ideology of a writer and the artistic execution of his or her works do not necessarily correspond. The comparison between Olesha and Bulgakov furthers this point, as despite Bulgakov's proclaimed hatred of the feuilleton, *The Master and Margarita* exhibits more continuity with mass literary forms than Olesha's *Envy*. Resonating subtly in Olesha's

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юморист (Марк Твен – тоже юморист) Через год я подарю Вам ещё одно «Зубило» Целую. Ваш Олеша. Marietta Chudakova, *Masterstvo Oleshy* (Moskva: "Nauka", 1972), 7.

[2] For examples of Olesha's early feuilletons please see *Klub znamenitikh kapitanov i drugie liubimie chitateliami avtory 80-letnego 'Gudka'* edited by A.V. Startsev (Moscow: Gudok, 1997), 73-78.

masterpiece, the satirist's tone nonetheless innovatively asserts itself in the midst of his modernist prose as a device communicating a discursive shift in the post-revolutionary reality.

At the First Congress of Writers in 1934, in an impassioned speech defending his position as an artist in the Soviet Union Olesha expressed a writer's curiosity about the psychology of the "new Soviet man" :

> Who are you? What colors do you see? Do you ever have dreams? What sorts of things do you long for? What do you think of yourself? How do you love? How do you feel about the world? What do you accept and what do you reject? Which is stronger in you, reason or emotion? Can you cry? Do you know what tenderness is? […][3]

The text of *Envy*, written seven years prior to this speech, poses the same questions in a literary examination of human emotions in the era of Socialism. As Ivan Babichev, the novel's buffoon/prophet, states "The era of socialism will create a new series of conditions for the human soul to replace the old emotions."[4] This statement represents only one side of the argument, as Olesha's novel in form and content debates whether humanity has really changed internally after the Revolution. The problem is additionally set up in aesthetic terms as the author signifies "old"

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[3] "Speech to the First Congress of Soviet Writers" in Yuri Olesha, *Envy and Other Works* trans. and ed.Andrew MacAndrew (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 218.

[4]Yuri Olesha, *Envy* translated by Marian Schwartz (New York: New York Review of Books, 2004), 94. "Эра социализма создаст взамен прежних чувствований новую серию состояний человеческой души." Yuri Olesha, *Zavist'*, *Izbrannie Sochineniia* (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo, 1956), 86.

and "new" emotions using corresponding literary sensibilities. Juxtaposing the flat characterization found in the Soviet feuilleton to a modernist lyric delving into the human soul, Olesha offers his readers two disparate visions of his characters.

The NEP satirical feuilleton takes a narrow view of man, depicting human beings as caricatures defined solely by their social position and political allegiance. Created to educate and instruct a newly literate Soviet reader, this genre intentionally aims at generalizations to create laughable Soviet archetypes. In its lack of psychological depth, the feuilleton gives the impression that human beings have morphed into Socialist caricatures. The feuilletonic view alternates with a lyrical approach to character, revealing bottomless depths of the fragmented self. In creating this modernist vision of the individual Olesha borrows from a myriad of artistic movements such as Symbolism and Expressionism, as well as from psychoanalysis whereby characters are explained in terms of their dreams and childhood experiences. In this way, the "feuilletonic," surface view of characters as social types combines with the artist's perception of the invisible realms of being.

Each personage in *Envy* is intermittently illuminated by these two kinds of "character lighting," sometimes appearing as a cardboard cut out and at other times as a multi-dimensional and indefinable self. In this chapter, I will argue against the critics who claim that in *Envy*, Olesha shows his readers two kinds of human beings: the pre-revolutionary creative artists and the limited Soviet men. Rather, Olesha cleverly reveals two modes of *seeing* and *describing* the individual. Ultimately, *Envy* demonstrates that the revolution had not really changed the human being internally, but only furnished a new political vocabulary that narrowed the individual to his or her social function. The Soviet satirist's job requires overlooking the particular idiosyncrasies

of individuals in order to classify them under various social subheadings. Olesha's "satirical vision" narrowly defines his characters with sociopolitical labels. Some of the archetypes can be recognized from *The Three Fat Men*, a work that combines tropes of popular literature and Soviet satire.

The Three Fat Men: **between the Satirical Feuilleton and *Envy***

Like his fellow writers, Olesha combined an intriguing, imaginative plot with political ideology in his 1924 book *The Three Fat Men*, a children's tale about gluttonous monarchs and the circus performers who lead an uprising to overthrow them.[5] Written in 1924, but published in 1928, *The Three Fat Men* combines the genre of a children's adventure tale with a revolutionary message. The uprising of "the people" against the monarchal rulers --- the three fat men functions as the central conflict in the story. The leading character, a rebel named Prospero exclaims:

> All those who once worked for you and earned pennies, while you got fat, all the unfortunate, destitute, hungry, emaciated, orphans, cripples, paupers --- they are beginning a war against you, against the fattened rich, who have replaced their hearts with stone.[6]

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[5] Please see Chapter 1: Introduction for more examples of 1920's Soviet authors mixing popular literature and ideological sensibilities.

[6] Все кто раньше работал на вас и получал гроши, в то время как вы жирели, все несчастные, обездоленные, голодные, исхудалые, сироты, калеки, нищие --- все идут войной против вас, против жирных богатых, заменивших сердце камнем. Yuri Olesha. "Tri tolstiaka" in *Izbrannie sochineniia* (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo, 1956), 157.

Despite the fact that Olesha's tale takes place at an unspecified historical period in a fictional land, the Soviet critics and reading public received the work as an allegory of the Russian revolution. As illustrated by the preceding quote, this interpretation was supported by the author's manner of manner of splitting up all of the characters into two camps: the oppressors and the oppressed. In his physical descriptions of good and evil archetypes Olesha follows the conventions of the agitational poster. The depicition of the "bourgeious" as a "fat man" was a standard graphic image on posters of the 1920s. Consider for instance, the following well-kinown poster by the revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Mayakovsky, 1920

The text of the poster states: 1.Every missed work day. 2. Is good news for the enemy. 3. But a hero of labor. 4. Is a hard blow to the bourgeois. The poster urging workers to work harder in order to beat the bourgeois shows a trim proletariat engaged in dynamic movement, alongside an immobile, grotesquely large head. The images on Mayakovsky's poster could very well have served as illustrations for Olesha's *The Three Fat Men*.

In its manner of binary character construction, *The Three Fat Men* also resembles Olesha's own political verses written for *Gudok*. In a poem entitled "We are the Young Guard" ("Мы молодая гвардия") the author similarly emphasizes a political division between the capitalists and the workers:

> The world is split, like a skull in half
> All masks removed.
> All delusions forgotten
> Everything has become clear. Clear to us and to them
> That this battle is decisive, ultimate.
>
> [Мир рассечен, как череп пополам.
> Все маски сняты.
> Все забыты бредни.
> Все стало ясно. Ясно им и нам
> Что это бой решительный, последний.]
>
> Two camps… New York and Berlin.
> It makes no difference --- Paris or Sofia
> Another camp is indivisible and singular:
> The battle forces of capitalism!
>
> [Два лагеря… Нью-Йорк или Берлин.
> Уж все равно --- Париж или София,
> То лагерь нераздельный и один:
> Капитализма силы боевые!]
>
> Two camps…
> Our camp is the second
> The world of the oppressed
> Figure of the proletariat…

Here we have flint --- the Kreml,
Here are our Soviet ranks
Like a sword and shield--- for the imprisoned, for our brother!

[Два лагеря…
И лагерь наш второй:
Мир угнетенных,
Стан пролетариата…

Здесь кремень- Кремль,
Здесь наш советский строй,
Как щит и штык --- за узника, за брата!][7]

As in many of Olesha's agitational works there are no individual actors, but rather two groups of faceless participants engaged in an ideological struggle.[8]

Unlike in his early poems, in the *Three Fat Men* Olesha creatively deviates from straightforward political moralizing by intertwining crude categorizations with imaginative passages and subplots. For instance, one of the more delicious descriptions in the *Three Fat Men* chronicles a balloon-seller's unfortunate adventures in the kitchen of the fat men's palace. After unexpectedly taking off in flight propelled by an excess of balloons, the vendor lands in an elaborate cake intended for the fat men's gluttonous feast. Desperate to save their delectable creation, the pastry chefs incorporate the balloon seller into the dessert.

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[7] Zubilo. *Saliut: stikhi 1923-1926* (Moscow: Gudok, 1927), 49.

[8] Olesha's agitational verses, written under the pseudonym Zubilo, are quite typical of other Soviet propagandistic poetry such as Demian Bednyi's early works. For a comparison please see Demian Bednyi. *Sobrannie Sochinenii* (*1909-1922)* (Moscow and Petersburg: Krokodil, 1923).

> They covered him completely. His head, round mug, looking like a teapot adorned by painted daisies, stuck out. The rest was covered by a white cream with a lovely pink shade. The balloon seller looked like many things, but he had lost any resemblance to himself just as he had lost his own shoe.
>
> Poet would have mistook him for a swan in snow-white plumage, a gardener- for a marble statue, a laundress- for a mountain of soap suds, and a mishevious child – for a snowman.[9]

The ornate descriptions of the balloon man's encounter with the cake have no political significance or relevance to the overall plot. The entire episode exists as a purely lyrical digression, presenting the author an opportunity to amuse himself and his readers with metaphorical images.

This lyrical reverie actually corrodes the didactic constitution of the story. Despite the message of *The Three Fat Men* that greed and gluttony are markers of reprehensible morality, the rich details of the cake's appearance assign "gluttony" a seductive quality. After reading Olesha's description, most readers (especially children) would gladly trade places with a "fat man" for the chance to try the mouthwatering, confectionary creation.

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[9] Его залепили сплошь. Голова, круглая рожа, похожая на чайник, расписанный маргаритками, торчала наружу. Остальное было покрыто белым кремом, имевшим прелестный розоватый оттенок. Продавец мог показаться чем угодно, но сходство с самим собой он потерял как потерял свой собственный башмак. Поэт мог принять его за лебедя в белоснежном оперении, садовник –за мраморную статую, прачка – за гору мыльной пены, а шалун- за снежную бабу. Yuri Olesha,"Tri tolstiaka,"153.

In *The Three Fat Men* the reader experiences two different aspects of Olesha's craft: constructing his story as an opposition between the recognizable archetypes of the fat capitalist and the skinny rebel, Olesha remains "Zubilo," first and foremost intent on exposing social ills. In passages diverting from moralization into the territory of aesthetic pleasure, Olesha reveals his gift for detached lyricism that paints over "black and white" political slogans with a whimsical color palette.

Envy Criticism: Politics vs. Aesthetics

In *Envy*, Olesha carries over some of the archetypes one finds in his agitational poetry and in *The Three Fat Men*, but significantly complicates them by embedding these characters within complex, lyrical prose. Consequently, scholars have found both political and aesthetic significance in Olesha's masterpiece *Envy*.

There are two dominant strands in *Envy* criticism: sociopolitical interpretations of the novel as a portrayal of social types and inquiries into the poetics of the work. *Envy* seems to invite a social reading, as characters in the work explicitly define themselves and each other as specific social types. Both Soviet and Western critics have used the characterizations in *Envy* to derive their own interpretations of the "social order" in *Envy*. Thus the work appears as a Rorschach inkblot test for the critic, whereby each commentator arranges the characters into heroes and villains according to his or her particular agenda.

Early Soviet critics saw *Envy* as juxtaposition between old and new social types. They praised Olesha's novel for its negative depictions of the bourgeois, but scolded him for endowing Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev with positive attributes. Those at odds with the Soviet regime saw

Envy as a statement exalting the artist and condemning the oppressive, Soviet state. For instance, Arkady Belinkov, an exiled Soviet writer of the 1970s saw the central message of *Envy* as the conflict between "the artist and the masses":

> The lot of Kavalerov, the intellectual, free man, was not glory, success, or deeds to accomplish. He sees that all this fell to the share of mediocrities and nonentities, and even more often to outright criminals.[10]

Arkady Belinkov's reading of the novel stems from his own frustrating experiences as a silenced writer living in the Soviet Union. His projection of personal experience creates a blind spot in his interpretation of the novel and prevents him from noting the more complicated nuances of the work.

Several Western critics have similarly constructed narrative configurations illustrating the antagonistic relationship between a lyrical, romantic figure and the utilitarian "new man." Ronald D.Le Blanc notes:

> The primary conflict of *Envy*, is thus between the Soviet man of action, epitomized by Makarov, whose values and mental outlook are favorably attuned to the industrialist, productivist, collectivist Weltanshaung of the new regime, in Russia, and the twentieth century version of the Russian "superfluous man",

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[10] Arkady Belinkov; Elizabeth Cody; V.Liapunov,"The Soviet Intelligentsia and the Socialist Revolution: OnYury Olesha's "Envy": Part II, *Russian Review*, Vol.31, No.1 (Jan.,1972), 27.

> represented by Kavalerov, whose old world romanticism is essentially alien to the rationalism, realism, and scientific pragmatism of the communist order.[11]

Other critics have opposed socio-political interpretations by pointing out that any potential social message of the work gets lost in the imaginative, lyrical complexity of the narration. As Andrew Barratt states:

> Kavalerov is a most idiosyncratic narrator and one whose own mental universe stands as a formidable barrier to those who would like to understand the larger social universe he inhabits.[12]

In their respective studies Elizabeth Klosty Beajour, Kazimiera Ingadahl and Victor Peppard have focused on Olesha's creative process, the artist's relationship with reality and the formal aspects of *Envy*.[13] Kazimiera Ingadahl points out Olesha's artistic kinship with the Symbolists in his penetrating gaze into "the inmost mystery of things."[14] Victor Peppard examines Olesha's

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[11] Ronald D. LeBlanc, "The Soccer Match in Envy," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol.32, No.1. (Spring, 1988), 56.

[12] Andrew Barratt, "Envy Part I: Kavalerov as Myth-Maker" in *Critical Companion to Olesha's Envy*, edited by Rimgaila Salys (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 50.

[13] Elizabeth Klosty Beajour, *The Invisible Land* : *A Study of the Artistic Imagination of Yuri Olesha* (New York: Columbia University Press,1970); Kazimiera Ingadahl, *The Artist and the Creative Act: A Study of Jurij Olesha's Novel Zavist'* (PhD Diss. Stockholm:University of Stockholm, 1984); Victor Peppard, *The Poetics of Yury Olesha* (Gainseville: University of Florida Press, 1989).

poetics through the lens of Bakhtin's "carnival," noting the carnivalistique atmosphere of the novel and the trickster personas of Ivan Babichev.[15]

Both political and aesthetic readings have their merits, as they have provided invaluable insights into this difficult and fascinating novel. However, as each successive scholar points out, either approach in isolation ignores a significant part of the novel's self-contradicting duality.

Reconciling Politics and Aesthetics

Recently, Janet Tucker has attempted to reconcile the aesthetic and political readings of *Envy* by showing how Olesha used his aesthetics to convey his disapproval of the Soviet system's rigidity:

> Olesha did not write in a vaccum. He hid pointed criticisms of the contemporary system in his aesthetics—in such seemingly non-political issues as language, the plastic arts, Greek myth. He transformed his art into an all-inclusive weapon aimed against a "universal" system, Soviet Marxism, most particularly as prostituted by the regime.[16]

Tucker's study cleverly combines poetic and socio-political hermeneutics as she demonstrates that *Envy* invites a political interpretation while simultaneously subverting any mimetic reading with complex imagery that cannot be readily categorized under a political or social label.

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[14] Ingadahl, 10.

[15] Peppard, 76-77.

[16] Janet G. Tucker, *Revolution Betrayed: Jurij Olesha's Envy*, (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1996), 10.

Ultimately, Tucker's conclusion that Olesha used his artist's vision to oppose the Soviet regime echoes other social readings of the novel. While her insights are original, I find Tucker's conclusions problematic. First of all, the statement that Olesha resorted to "complicated subterfuge" because he was unable to "directly oppose the regime" is at best a dubious speculation.[17] The discovery of covert motivations hinges entirely on the scholar's opinion, as they are too subtle to be proved or disproved.

Judging by Olesha's personal writings from this time and his later memoirs, it seems unlikely that Olesha's political stance circa 1927 would have been "anti-Soviet." In the year 1927, Olesha published a compilation of his political poetry via the *Gudok* publishing house and continued to write agitational feuilletons for the journals *Smekhach*', *Krokodil* and *Gudok* through the 1930s. Olesha's political beliefs seemed lukewarm, bordering on apathetic rather than radical. Assuming an apologetic stance, Olesha repeatedly referred to his "bourgeois tendencies" as a disease to be conquered.[18] In a speech given in 1932 at a conference entitled "The Artist and the Epoch" Olesha responded to criticism of his play *A List of Blessings* (1930), expressing an urgent desire to rebuild himself from a weak member of the intelligentsia into a "strong, red-blooded" proletarian writer:

> I would like to reforge myself. Of course, it is repulsive, extremely repulsive for me to be an intellectual. You will not believe, perhaps, to what degree it repulses

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[17] Ibid., 22.

[18] For more on Olesha's views about literature in the Soviet Union see "Secret Notebooks of Fellow-Traveler Sand" in Yuri Olesha, *Envy and Other Works* trans. and ed. Andrew McAndrew (Garden City: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1967), 167-184.

> me. This is --- a weakness, which I would like to reject. I want to reject everything that resides within me, but especially this weakness. I want fresh, arterial blood, and I will find it. My hair turned gray early because I was weak. I passionately desire, to the point of howling, to the point of tears the strength which an artist of the emerging class should possess, the kind of artist I would like to become.[19]

Olesha's self-deprecating discussion of his weaknesses and his dreams of physical and political health closely resemble Zoshchenko's statements in his semiautobiographical *Before Sunrise* (1954) (Please see chapter 4). Of course, one could question the author's sincerity, accusing Olesha of cowardice in the face of political duress in the manner of Arkady Belinkov; "Olesha, of course did not intend to offend his readers; he was a pathetic and cowardly person."[20] But whether Olesha wholeheartedly believed in the Soviet system or not is irrelevant if the author was unwilling to express his objections in writing. The information available to the scholar indicates that Olesha was not passionately involved in political life, but nonetheless wished to maintain the appearance of a Soviet supporter.

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[19] Я хочу перестроиться. Конечно, мне очень противно, черезвычайно противно быть интеллигентом. Вы не поверите, быть может, до чего противно. Это – слабость, от которой я хочу отказаться. Я хочу отказаться от всего, что во мне есть, а прежде всего от этой слабости. Я хочу свежей артериальной крови, и я её найду. У меня поседели волосы рано, потому что я был слабым. И я мечтаю страстно, до воя, до слез мечтаю о силе, которая должна быть в художнике восходящего класса, каковым я хочу быть.Yuri Olesha. *P'esy; stat'i o teatre i dramaturgii* (Moscow: Isskustvo, 1968), 268.

[20] Arkady Belinkov et al., 32.

Secondly, and more importantly, I disagree with Tucker's reading of the text as a battlefield between the intellectuals and those who "prostitute" the myth of the revolution.

> It is a clash between those characters (the intellectuals) who are aware of the significance of the revolutionary myth on one hand, and those (Andrej, Volodja) who take that myth out of its cultural context and prostitute it for their own ends.[21]

Tucker goes on to analyze the characters in *Envy* as divided into two groups, not only socially, but also aesthetically whereby Andrei Babichev and Volodia Makarov are described as inanimate objects while Nikolai Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev are linked with childhood, possibility and imagination. This reading ignores those parts of the book where Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev appear as static figures and Andrei Babichev and Volodia Makarov are painted in lyrical, ambiguous hues.

In fact, from Makarov and Andrei Babichev's perspective, it is Nikolai Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev who are two dimensional, dehumanized types defined by drunkenness. The Medusa's gaze of the feuilleton rests on each character, petrifying them into immobile social molds. Likewise, modernist illumination artistically resurrects characters into complex, emotional beings. The oscillation between these aesthetic and psychological perspectives accounts for the ambiguity of the novel and the deceptive impression that *Envy* hides a decodable political message about the author's own social judgments.

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[21] Tucker, 23-24.

The intermittent use of these literary models also reflects Olesha's problematic position in Soviet literature. The creation of a "practical literature" for the masses stands in the way of developing one's artistic potentials unhindered by political demands. In the years following the success of *Envy*, Olesha compromised between a devotion to the muses and an allegiance to the dream of Socialism. Toward the end of the NEP- era Olesha's occasional ardent political speeches punctuated his retreat from public life; when his creative work wandered too far from Socialist concerns, Olesha would inevitably apologize for his artistic flights of fancy and attempt to salvage his creation by providing additional commentary to cement a politically correct interpretation.

A parable of the artist's conflict appears in his 1930 play *The List of Blessings*. It tells the story of a talented, Soviet actress named Yelena (Lyolya) Goncharova, who feels unfulfilled as an artist in the Soviet Union. In her diary, she composes a two-sided list, enumerating the crimes of the Soviet State in one column and the blessings of living under Socialism in the other. Lyolya travels to Paris to perform a play and after meeting an anti-Soviet Russian emigrant momentarily considers remaining in Europe, but eventually comes to the conclusion that the blessings outweigh the crimes and decides to return to the Soviet Union. In an emotional moment of realization Lyola suddenly feels disgust for her former associates in the Parisian bourgeois émigré community and identifies with the protesting French workers.

> Workers, only now do I understand your wisdom and generosity, your faces lifted toward the starry sky of science. I looked down at you and was afraid of you, as a foolish bird is afraid of the man who gives it food. Forgive me, land of the Soviets,

> I am coming to you. I don't want to go to the ball. I want to go home. I want to stand in line and weep.[22]

At the end of the play, Lyolya repents for her moment of weakness and shortly after her conversion proves her loyalty to the revolution. In a highly contrived, melodramatic scene set at a Parisian worker's protest Lyola is shot while shielding one of the rebels. In her dying speech she requests to have her body covered with a Soviet flag.

In his commentary on the play, Olesha states that it was written as "an argument" debating the artist's right to create freely as opposed to performing one's social responsibility to the Soviet state. Clearly, in *The List of Blessings* "the argument" is resolved in favor of Socialism. In the act of writing the play *The List of Blessings* Olesha, like his heroine, chooses political allegiance over artistic complexity, as the play's ending proves overtly didactic.

In *Envy*, Olesha faces a similar dilemma between creating art for art's sake versus creating art with a message, but does not make a clear choice. The socio-political overtones of the novel are overshadowed by nonpartisan lyric, whereby the conventions of practical literature become slave to modernist innovation. Yet one cannot assert that *Envy* contains no political tone, as social tensions comprise the very nucleus of the novel's plot.

Social Types and Fragmented Selves

Within the fictional world of the novel, the characters classify themselves and each other into various social categories. However, the intricacy and heterogeneity of the text itself renders the

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[22] Yuri Olesha, "A List of Blessings," *The Complete Plays*, translated and edited by Michael Green and Jerome Katsell (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983), 104-105.

characters shape shifters. Each of the male characters appears in different incarnations: at times as a rigidly defined, two-dimensional type and at other times as a complex, lyrical self. However it is author's vision of these characters that is divided, not the characters themselves. In *Envy*, there are really no "old" and "new" personas, only "old" and "new" ways of seeing.

In constructing his characters in *Envy*, Olesha simultaneously operates in several linguistic and philosophical modes, which in turn comprise different kinds of perspectives. The author whose artistic goals are primarily lyrical and exploratory breathes the life of imagination into his characters, endowing them with a dimension of private experience. Dreams and childhood experiences provide profound, but incomplete insights into the bottomless wells of their psyches. The artist's inquiries into characters' psychologies are inconclusive, leaving them just as mysterious and undiscovered at the end of the novel as they were in the beginning.

In contrast to modernist explorations of the fragmented self, the perspective of the feuilletonist is "the Medusa's gaze," petrifying characters into immobile social molds. The notion of inner being remains outside the parameters of this genre, as "the eyes" of the feuilleton can only perceive what is external and apparent. The satirist, wishing to portray types rather than people, resorts to surface descriptions and one word labels.

To show how the political (feuilletonic) and artistic (lyrical) perspectives intersect in the creation of Olesha's characters, I will divide this chapter into three parts. In the first, I will follow the artist's depiction of his characters as associated with possibility, inner reality, private vision and fluidity. The second part will focus on textual moments concerned with surface phenomenon whereby the characters appear as "flat" caricatures. The last section of the chapter will address the mastery of Olesha's seamless travel between these two visions. I will only

discuss the four male characters in detail. The female characters of *Envy* will be addressed tangentially, as they rarely appear in the capacity of subjects; the grotesque Anichka only appears to the reader as a tool of Kavalerov's humiliation, similarly Valia exists as an idealized object of fantasy.

Olesha's "Modernist" Visions of Self

Numerous critics have used the term "modernist" to describe different aspects of Olesha's unusual prose. Kazimiera Ingadahl discusses the influence of Symbolists, Elizabeth Klosty Beajour likens Olesha to French and German Expressionists. Olesha's prose in *Envy*, rich in unexpected metaphors and images offers the reader a magical transfiguration of familiar reality. As shown by the literature review in the beginning of the chapter, a vast body of scholarship contextualizing Olesha's prose within various artistic movements already exists. I will not reiterate discussions of "Olesha's artistic perception" or his creative portrayals of "the invisible reality of the imagination." I will only discuss these aspects of his prose as they pertain directly to the characters of *Envy*. In the following few sections I will briefly contextualize Olesha's explorations of "the modernist self" within the framework of relevant, concurrent movements.

Olesha and Freud

The term "Freudian" has been hesitantly applied to *Envy* by William Harkins, whose article discusses the theme of sterility in the novel.[23] Harkins deals with various universal symbols of sterility and sexuality without relying directly on a particular psychoanalytic school, mentioning Freud's name only in passing. The case for a connection between Olesha and Freud's psychoanalytic writings could be made more confidently. The characters' identities are constructed from constellations of childhood memories, dreams and past traumas. Relationships between Andrei Babichev and Kavalerov, Andrei and Volodia, Kavalerov and Anichka and Ivan and Valia bear Oedipal markings. Characters' fears and desires merge into a single motivational plane. I will not discuss the influence of Freud's writings on Olesha's work in detail, as this topic could be the subject of a separate article. Rather, I am placing Sigmund Freud in the background of the discussion on Olesha's exploration of characters as fragmented selves.

Freud's influence in the Soviet Union was short lived, lasting only through the first half of the 1920s. However, Freud's ideas left a lasting mark on Soviet thinkers and artists.[24] Yuri Olesha's interest in Freud can be directly seen in his unfinished play entitled *Chernyi chelovek*, where the leading villain was a caricature of Freud, Spengler and Bergson. In *Envy*, dreams of wish fulfillment and fearful nightmares, childhood memories, images of surrogate father and mothers and hints of incest indicate the presence of Freud's ideas in Olesha's text.

Andrei Babichev and Volodia Makarov as "Selves"

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[23] William Harkins, "The Theme of Sterility in *Envy*" in *Olesha's Envy: A Critical Companion*, edited by Rimgaila Salys (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 61-82.

[24] Please see Martin A. Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and in the Soviet Union*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

The sphere of the imagination in Olesha's *Envy* has traditionally been strictly associated with the "artist" characters in the novel: Nikolai Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev. Nikolai Kavalerov, as the narrator of the first part of *Envy* enjoys the exclusive privilege of filtering the world through the lens of his idiosyncratic vision. However, while Kavalerov's perspective dominates the majority of the text, Olesha finds ways to allow other characters to speak for themselves and reveal the landscapes of their inner worlds.

Kavalerov and Ivan's lengthy monologues account for the majority of the text. It is needless to prove that these two characters have complex inner lives as their thoughts and emotions comprise the majority of the novel. Andrei Babichev and Makarov are most often portrayed from the outside, as perceived by Kavalerov and Ivan. Kavalerov and Ivan's depictions of Makarov and Andrei, most often in the form of name calling, create the impression that the two characters are vacuous non-entities.

Nevertheless, Andrei Babichev and Volodia Makarov are not dramatically different from Nikolai Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev. Both sets of characters share a romantic outlook in their idealization of another era. The intellectuals dream of a long gone past, while the "Soviet men" fantasize about a distant future. To demonstrate that the narrator's judgments do not account for the entire picture of these characters, I will point out instance where Andrei Babichev and Makarov escape Kavalerov and Ivan's biases against them and reveal their inner psychology in first person confessions.

The view expressed by many critics that Andrei Babichev and Volodia Makarov are images of new Soviet men without imagination or feelings, standing in opposition to the artist cannot be wholly justified. Though Kavalerov does intermittently call Andrei Babichev a

"sausage maker," "an idol" etc., when Andrei finally has a chance to represent himself, he appears in another light. Andrew Barratt has argued that the second part of the novel corrects Kavalerov's distorted, fantastical perception of Babichev, who in reality is a good Soviet official.[25] I would extend this insight even further to say that at times Andrei Babichev is portrayed as considerably more interesting and imaginative than Kavalerov would have us believe.

In the second part of the book Andrei Babichev's monologue as he watches Volodia sleeping reveals a previously unseen side of his personality.

> And at this Andrei Babichev began a conversation with himself. For a very short time he abandoned his work and, looking at the sleeping man, thought 'Could Ivan be right? Maybe I am just an ordinary philistine and the family principle lives on in me?'[26]

Several proofs of Babichev's humanity appear in this passage: his tenderness toward the sleeping Volodia, his doubt and most importantly his self-reflective engagement with Ivan. Andrei Babichev's inner dialogue with his brother reveals that Andrei understands Ivan. That is, Ivan's language and psychology are not beyond Andrei's emotional reach. He takes Ivan's opinion

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[25]Andrew Barratt, 50.

[26] Yuri Olesha, *Envy*, 106. "И тут начался разговор Андрея Бабичева с самим собой. На самое короткое время бросал он работу и, глядя на спящего, думал:«А может быть, Иван прав? Может быть я просто обыкновенный обыватель и семейное живет во мне?"Yuri Olesha, *Zavist'*, 95.

seriously, but argues with it and ultimately finds his own answer to the problem, citing his love for Volodia as proof that emotions have not disappeared. Like his brother, Andrei is also capable of fantasy. A disturbing vision comes to Andrei the night he takes in Kavalerov: "That night he dreamed that a young man hung himself on a telescope."[27] The strange dream (in a very Freudian manner) points to the intricacy of Andrei's psyche, suggesting that he suffers feelings of guilt about replacing Volodia with a stranger.

Volodia Marakrov, typically treated by critics as a Soviet automaton, also deserves reconsideration. In an epistolary confession to Babichev, Volodia boasts of his newfound, machinelike indifference but inadvertently reveals just how far he is from his goal of emotional numbness: "I'm a man-machine. You won't recognize me. I've turned into a machine."[28] In the following paragraph Volodia amends his claim, clarifying that he only *wants* to become a machine, changing his tone from imperative to conditional.

> If I haven't turned into one yet, I want to. […] I want to be a machine. I want to consult with you. I want to be proud of my work, proud because I work. In order to be indifferent toward everything that's not work! What I envy is the machine. There's something! Why am I worse than the machine? [29]

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[27] Ibid.,110. "В ту же ночь ему приснилось, что молодой человек повесился на телескопе." Ibid., 98.

[28] Ibid., 63."Я человек-машина. Не узнаешь ты меня. Я превратился в машину." Ibid.,65.

[29] Ibid. 63-64. Если ещё не превратился, то хочу превратиться. […] Я хочу быть машиной. […] С тобой хочу посоветоваться. Хочу стать гордым от работы, гордым потому что

This passage emphasizes Volodia's immaturity and vulnerability, as he is in the process of becoming that which only exists in his dreams and imagination. In his present state Volodia, on the contrary, betrays a youthful extremism.

> You'd better not forget me, Andrei Petrovich. I am going to show up out of the blue and I'll find out that this Kavalerov is your best friend, I'm forgotten, and he's taken my place with you […] Maybe you and he are sitting, with Ivan Petrovich and Valya, too, and laughing at me. Have your Kavalerov and Valya gotten married? Tell the truth. Then I'll kill you, Andrei Petrovich. Word of honor. For betraying our conversations, our plans.[30]

In this passage, Volodia exhibits eagerness for Andrei's approval and fear of rejection. In his ardent protest against human emotions Volodia paradoxically embodies jealousy, passion, anger and desperation.

Childhood as Dissolution of Social Roles

работаю. Чтоб быть равнодушным, понимаешь ли, ко всему, что не работа! Зависть взяла к машине-вот оно что! Чем я хуже её? Ibid., 66.

[30] Ibid., 65. Ты не забывай меня, Андрей Петрович. А вдруг я приеду и окажется такое: твой Кавалеров --- первый тебе друг, обо мне забыто, он тебе заменил меня. […] Может, сидишь ты с ним, да с Иваном Петровичем, да с Валькой—и смеетесь надо мной? А Кавалеров твой на Вальке женился? Скажи правду. Тогда я убью тебя, Андрей Петрович. Честное слово. За измену нашим разговорам, планам. Понял? Ibid., 67.

Childhood in *Envy* functions as the realm of dreams and possibility. By channeling a child's vision, Olesha sets the work in a fundamentally modernist key. As Roger Shattuck explains in his study of French Modernism, a child's vision was a dominant characteristic of the avant-garde sensibility, embodied first and foremost by the "naive" paintings of Henri Rousseau: "Artists became increasingly willing to accept the child's wonder and spontaneity and destructiveness as not inferior to adulthood."[31] In Russia, this French aesthetic inspired neo-primitivism, a movement borrowing from such unrefined art forms as folk motifs and children's drawings. Exemplary works in this genre by Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov utilize unusually bright colors, odd bodily proportions and spatial configurations.[32] Olesha's image-rich prose echoes the evocations of childhood evident in Russian avant-garde paintings. The author's modernist depiction of the child-self necessitates distortion, exaggeration and colorful reconfiguration of adult realism. This playful reshaping of the world inevitably involves a restructuring of the perceived social hierarchy as well.

When adapting the role of the child, the characters of *Envy* step outside of their adult personalities and consequently their social classifications, thus moving closer to the center of "indefinability." In the text of the novel, the child's worldview becomes modernist prose as characters who return to childhood are described poetically. The child's malleable world of metaphor stands in opposition to the rigid Socialist reality, where all has been decided on and finalized.

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[31] Roger Shattuck, "Four Men: Four Traits," *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France-1885 to World War I* (Toronto: Random House, 1968), 31-32.

[32] For more on Russian neo-primitivism see Parton Anthony, *Mikhail Larionov and the Russian avant-garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

For Nikolai Kavalerov, the sphere of childhood symbolizes freedom from the humiliating role he must play as an adult. Paradoxically, he finds emotional liberation only when he surrenders to infantile oblivion on Babichev's comfortable couch. Dream and memory intertwine as Kavalerov "dissolves" into a state of lyrical possibility, transcending the limitations of temporal, cultural and most importantly social realities.

> I was asleep like a baby. On the sofa I fly off into childhood. Bliss descends upon me. Like a child, I again know that brief interval of time between the initial drooping of eyelids, the first dropping off, and the beginning of real sleep.[33]

In the above quote the whimsical bed transports Kavalerov into a liminal state when he falls asleep. However, the bed also acts as the space for childlike imaginings even during Kavalerov's waking hours. Contemplating the ornate details of Anichka's bed Kavalerov identifies childhood impressions as a way of seeing the world.

> Kavalerov thought, "If I were a child, Anichka's little son, just think how many poetic, magical notions my childish mind would create in thrall to the spectacle of

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[33] Olesha, *Envy*, 28. Я засыпаю, как ребенок. На диване я совершаю полет в детство. Меня посещает блаженство. Я, как ребенок, снова распоряжаюсь маленьким промежутком времени, отделяющим первое изменение тяжести век, первое осоловение от начала настоящего сна.Olesha, *Zavist'*, 40.

> this extraordinary thing! Now I'am an adult, and now I can only pick out its general outlines, a few details here and there, but then I could have…[34]

In this passage Kavalerov acknowledges the fact that as an adult he is gradually moving away from the understanding of the "magical" and the "poetical," able to only grasp the general contours of things. The term "general contours" describes a superficial worldview, robbed of depth. This manner of seeing only the outline of an object or a person aptly applies to the limited vision of Socialist rhetoric. A literary gaze, such as that of the satirical feuilleton, informed only by political dogma only perceives the external shell of the world. Indeed, at moments of self-consciousness under the real or imagined gaze of the new Soviet man, Nikolai Kavalerov's childlike, poetic perception into the mysterious comes to be replaced with the limited awareness of social outlines.

Like Kavalerov, Volodia Makarov also enters a childlike state on Andrei's couch. For Volodia, this condition similarly destroys his ossified, social encasing. As Makarov recalls in his letter to Andrei Babichev, he surrenders to Babichev's care after injuring his leg in a soccer match.

> I'm lying on the sofa; my head [sic, should be "leg"] feels heavy as a traintrack. I'm watching you --- you're at your desk, under the green lampshade, writing. I'm

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[34] Ibid., 111-112. Кавалеров думал: «Будь я ребенок, Анечкин маленький сын,--- сколько поэтических, волшебных построений создал бы мой детский ум, отданный во власть зрелищу такой необычайной вещи! Теперь я взрослый, и теперь лишь общие контуры и лишь кой-какие детали улавливаю я, а тогда умел бы…Ibid., 99.

> watching you --- and suddenly you look at me and I shut my eyes right away, like with Mama![35]

In this passage Volodia casts himself in the role of a child when he mentions his mother, a figure conspicuously absent from the rest of the novel. Volodia's regression into childhood appears less explicit than Kavalerov's, but his physical helplessness coupled with Andrei's paternal concern transforms Volodia from "man-machine" into a fully human young boy. In this light, Volodia's status as a "new Soviet man" comes into question. While the image of Volodia as a vulnerable child is only a momentary glimpse, this instance informs the reader's view of this character for the rest of the book.

In the second part of the novel Volodia once again appears as a child in a fairytale narration:

> Long long ago, one dark night, swallowed by a ravine, up to their knees in stars, frightening the stars out of the shrubbery, two people were running: a commissar and a boy. The boy had saved the commissar. The commissar was huge, the boy a mite. Anyone who saw them would have thought that the giant, who kept falling to the ground, was fleeing, and they could have taken the boy for the giant's hand.[36]

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[35] Ibid., 64. Я лежал на диване; нога тяжелая как рельса. Сам на тебя смотрю, --- ты за столом, за колпаком зеленым, пишешь. Смотрю на тебя,--- вдруг и ты на меня; сразу же закрываю глаза, --- как с мамой! Ibid., 66.

The poetic image of Volodia, the altruistic little boy running "up to his knees in stars" paints a touching, magical portrait of a child that cannot be reconciled with the image of Volodia the "man-machine." The two descriptions of Volodia's childhood incarnations, cast a shadow of doubt on his social manifestos and plans for the future. In light of his youth, Volodia's ardent exclamations sound naive and idealistic. Thus, evocations of childhood put a significant chink in Volodia's "Socialist" armor.

Even Andrei Babichev, who seems to be the consummate adult, is described as a boy on the first pages of the novel. Although we never see Andrei sleeping, his child self also emerges in a physically comforting activity of childhood- bathing.

> He washes up like a little boy: tootling, splashing, snorting, yipping. He grabs the water in fistfuls, and before he can get it to his armpits, he spills it on the mat. The water on the straw scatters in full, pure drops. Foam falls into the basin and bubbles up like a pancake. [37]

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[36] Ibid., 107. Давным-давно, в темную ночь, проваливаясь в овраги, по колено в звездах, спугивая звезды с кустарников, бежали двое: комиссар и мальчик. Мальчик спас комиссара. Комиссар был огромен, мальчик-крошка. Увидевшие подумали б: бежит один --- великан, припадающий к земле, и мальчика приняли б за ладонь великана. Ibid., 96.

[37] Ibid., 6. Он моется, как мальчик, дудит приплясывает, фыркает, испускает вопли. Воду он захватывает пригорошнями и не донеся до подмышек, расшлепывает по циновке. Вода на соломе рассыпается полными, чистыми каплями. Пена, падая в таз, закипает как блин. Ibid., 26.

In the above description we see Andrei Babichev incorporating elements of play into a morning ritual. The sausage making giant takes a break from business and from rationality to momentarily lose his adult gravity in private play. Perhaps the details of this performance could be additions of Kavalerov's own making, since Kavalerov's voice is the only perspective available to the reader in the first part of the book. Nonetheless, this depiction of the character dismantles the image of Andrei Babichev as a humorless Soviet official. Animated either by Kavalerov's or by the author's gaze, Babichev's first introduction casts him in a lyrical light. Before the reader even learns what position Andrei Babichev occupies in the Soviet world, he sees this character quite literally naked, unadorned by social labels.

As opposed to other characters who are made less serious by their associations with childhood, Ivan Babichev's "child-self" endows him with credibility. In contrast to Andrei, who only very briefly plays at being child, Ivan Babichev perpetually remains a child, as he does not occupy any particular social niche. In fact, Ivan Babichev's life story has no dividing line between childhood and adulthood; the reader does not know Babichev's age or the details of how he came to father Valia. Ivan recalls his childhood as a golden age, a time of glory and success. As a little boy Ivan enjoyed a sense of authority, when his fantasy world reigned supreme over adult skepticism. For instance, after Ivan's father punishes him for lying about a dream making machine, Ivan proves himself with another innovation: an enormous soap bubble. As an orange globe floats on the horizon, confirming Ivan's success, his doubting father falls ill: the father's physical weakness is a sign of Ivan's psychological victory. Many years later Ivan confesses that the orange ball was in reality the first flying blimp, piloted by Ernest Vitollo, but the young Vanya is nonetheless triumphant: " 'I received great satisfaction that day,'" recalled Ivan

Petrovich. 'My father was frightened. For a long time after that I tried to meet his eyes, but he averted them."[38] Childhood memories of Ivan's ill-gotten power over his classmates and parents, allow this character to temporarily escape his adulthood categorization of a buffoon lacking credibility. As with the other characters, the portrayal of Ivan as a boy shows him in the surprising role of a capable and clever individual.

Labels and Stereotypes

In a narrative passage in the first part of the novel Kavalerov urges the reader to notice the labels that surround him:

> […] man is surrounded by tiny inscriptions: on forks, spoons, saucers, his pince-nex frames, his buttons, and his pencils? No one notices them. They're waging a battle for survival. They move in and out of view, even the huge sign letters! They rise up ---class against class: the letters on the street plaques do battle with letters on the posters.[39]

The proliferation of labels on household items and streets signs indicates the inescapability of classification in the phenomenal realm. The label functions as the antithesis to metaphor: it

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[38] Ibid., 81. Я получил в тот день полное удовлетворение,- вспоминал Иван Петрович. --- Отец был напуган. Долго затем искал его взгляда, но он прятал глаза. Ibid., 76.

[39] Ibid., 9-10. […]человека окружают маленькие надписи, разбредшийся муравейник маленьких надписей: на вилках, ложках, тарелках, оправе пенсне, пуговицах, карандашах? Никто не замечает их. Они ведут борьбу за существование. Переходят из вида в вид, вплоть до громадных вывесочных букв! Они восстают ---- класс против класса: буквы табличек с названиями улиц воюют с буквами афиш. Ibid., 28.

categorizes and defines, leaving no space for imaginative elaborations. Labels stand in the way of the artist's creativity, cutting off poetic potentials with scissorlike precision of concise definitions.

The discussion of labels demonstrates the two types of visions Olesha tries to reconcile in his prose. Despite Kavalerov's imaginative observations about the world, he notices the ubiquitous signs which limit objects to single word names. Amazingly, Kavalerov is able to surmount the restriction of labels by innovatively describing them in evolutionary terms as "battling species."

The passage about invisible labels and signs could also be construed to signify the prevalence of 1920s public rhetoric categorizing everything in sight with Soviet terminology. Such a reading of this passage is supported by the fact that it recalls a connection between street signs and political labels in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog* (1924).[40]

In *The Heart of a Dog,* Sharik notices the labels and signs adorning the streets and buildings and learns to read them as a method of survival.

> He learned "A" from "Central Fish Market" on the corner of Mokhovaia street, then he learned "B" --- it was easier to approach the word "Fish" from the tail, because in the beginning of the word stood a policeman.[41]

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[40] Aleksandr Zholkovsky has effectively demonstrated the considerable influence of Bulgakov's text on Olesha's *Envy*: Aleksandr Zholkovsky, "Text in Dailogue" in *Text counter Text: Rereadings in Russian Literary History* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994), 181.

[41] "А" он выучил в "главрыбе" на углу моховой, потом и "б" - подбегать ему было удобнее с хвоста слова "рыба", потому что при начале слова стоял милиционер. Mikhail

After learning how to read gastronomical signs, Sharik advances to understanding some political terminology.

> […] the dog immediately looked up at a large, black sign with golden letters, hanging beside a wide door glassed in by pink, wavy glass. He put together the first three letters immediatel to read: p-er-o, "pro" but this was followd by some potbellied two sided crap, which he could not decipher. "Could it be the word proletarian?" Though Sharik in surprise. [42]

When Sharik becomes fully human after his operation he gains literacy in the most current political jargon, just as he learned to read store signs. Thus, in *The Heart of a Dog* signs and slogans become synonymous in Sharikov's education. Bulgakov ironically equates political literacy with a dog's necessity to identify the meat market, demonstrating the empty utilitarianism of Soviet rhetoric, which has become a tool of survival.

Relating this back to *Envy*, the migration of the ubiquitous labels from the house to the streets serves as a metaphor for the Socialist epistemological reconfiguration whereby every

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Bulgakov, *Sobachie serdtse* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1969.), 23. The English translation does not communicate the full meaning of this passage. The author refers to the appearance of Russian letters, alluding to the visual similarity between the Russian letter "Р" (рыба) and the shape of a fish. The letter Г is the first in the word "городовой" which is synonymous with policeman and the first letter of "главрыба" (Central Fish Market).

[42] […]пес тотчас поднял глаза на большую, черную с золотыми буквами карточку, висящую сбоку широкой, застекленной волнистым и розовым стеклом двери. Три первых буквы он сложил сразу: пэ-ер-о "про." Но дальше шла пузатая двубокая дрянь, неизвестно что означающая. "Неужто пролетарий"? Подумал Шарик с удивлением[...] Ibid., 24.

action, object and person acquires a political label. Kavalerov partakes in this rhetoric, as his imaginative descriptions of Andrei Babichev are at times replaced by the laconic taxonomy of social positions. Kavalerov, a satirist by profession, displays his talent for humorously reducing individuals to caricatures through unflattering, verbal representations of his enemies and even occasional self-deprecation.

Among Kavalerov's varied attempts to effectively describe Andrei Babichev, he finally decides to define Babichev according to his position in the Soviet hierarchy by repeating another authority figure's praise of Andrei.

Once in a speech a people's commissar spoke of him with high praise: " 'Andrei Babichev is one the state's most remarkable men.'" He, Andrei Petrovich Babichev, is the director of the Food Industry Trust. He's a great sausage and pastry man and chef."[43]

Babichev's outer social contour places him on top of the social pyramid and evokes an immediate sense of inferiority in Kavalerov: "And I, Nikolai Kavalerov, am his jester."[44] Subsequently, Kavalerov attempts to "catch" Andrei Babichev in a moment of weakness when his high ranking social label could be counteracted with a disparaging definition. Seeking damning evidence that would knock him down from his pedestal, Kavalerov once again resorts to social labels: "You are --- a lord, Andrei Petrovich! Hah! You're a faker!"[45]

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[43] Olesha, *Envy*, 10.Один нарком в речи отозвался о нем с высокой похвалой:
Андрей Бабичев --- один из замечательных людей государства.
Он, Андрей Петрович Бабичев, занимает пост директора треста пищевой промышленности. Он великий колбасник, кондитер и повар. Olesha, *Zavist'*, 28.

[44] Ibid. "А я, Николай Кавалеров, при нем шут." Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 17. "Вы --- барин, Андрей Петрович! Вы притворяетесь!" Ibid., 32.

The term "lord" is a pejorative, but empty accusation demonstrating Kavalerov's reliance on social rhetoric to insult his benefactor. Similarly, in his letter to Andrei Babichev, Kavalerov trades his poetic talents for simple Soviet language as he barrages Andrei with a flood of insulting names and labels."But it turned out you're just an official, ignorant and stupid, like all the officials who came before and will come after you […] You are a Lord […]"[46] He establishes an opposition between himself and Andrei: "I'm fighting you: the most ordinary of aristocrats, an egoist, a voluptuary, a numskull confident that everything's going to work out for the best."[47] In this summing up of Andrei, we see none of the ambiguous qualities attributed to him in earlier modernist descriptions of his nearly mythical masculinity. As Kavalerov launches a verbal attack on Andrei, the food industry giant loses his status as an enigmatic personality with an odd sexual appeal. He simply becomes another type in a gallery of satirical masks: a government dignitary and a "nobleman" solely preoccupied with satisfying his physical needs.

Similarly, Kavalerov's description of Andrei's protégé Volodia quickly plummets from lyrical heights to petty insults once he perceives Volodia's antagonistic stance toward him. In a daytime reverie invoked by the sound of bells, Kavalerov imagines an idealistic young man coming to the big city in search of fame and happiness. When Volodia knocks on the door Kavalerov initially believes he has come face to face with the Tom Virleelee of his daydream.

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[46] Ibid., 51. "Но оказалось, вы просто сановник, невежественный и тупой, как все сановники, которые были до вас и будут после вас […] Вы- барин […]" Ibid. 53.

[47] Ibid., 56. "Я воюю против вас: против обыкновейннешего барина, эгоиста, сластолюбца, тупицы, уверенного в том, что все сойдет ему благополучно." Ibid., 59-61.

> In the doorway, holding a knapsack in his hand and smiling gaily (a Japanese smile), exactly as if he had seen through the door the dear friend cherished in his dreams, stood a shy young man who reminded me of Valya: Tom Virleelee.[48]

In the first moments of their face to face encounter Kavalerov identifies with and perhaps even fetishizes Volodia's youth and potential, seeing in him the romantic hero that he himself wishes to become. Like Andrei Babichev, Kavalerov sees his own daydreams incarnated in Volodia. However, this poetic feeling quickly fades as he notices the young soccer player's hostile attitude. Kavalerov's colorful, impressionistic portrait of "Volodia as Tom Virleelee" is replaced with a crude, stick-figure sketch: "Now that I'd met him, I'd seen his arrogance. Babichev was harboring someone exactly like himself. He'd end up the same pompous, blind man."[49] It is difficult to determine whether Kavalerov's romantic illusions are shattered because he glimpses the truth about Volodia or because Kavalerov cannot share in the beautiful dream of Volodia's future.

In these examples we see Kavalerov adapting the mentality of political rhetoric when he feels that he must defend himself in a public sphere. Forsaking his artist's insight, he puts on a pair of Soviet spectacles, limiting his vision to the social schemata of the world and robbing him of depth perception into the interior mystery of reality. Inexperienced at seeing the world in this manner, he uses social labels inaccurately and clumsily, calling Volodia, the son of a worker, a

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48 Ibid., 59. В дверях, держа котомку в руке, весело улыбающийся (японской улыбкой), точно увидевший сквозь дверь дорогого, взлелеянного в мечтах друга, застенчивый, чем-то похожий на Валю, стоял Том Вирлирли. Ibid., 63.

49 Ibid., 61."Теперь, встретившись с ним, я увидел высокомерие его. Бабичев растит и холит себе подобного. Вырастет такой же надутый слепой человек." Ibid., 64.

little nobleman ("barchuk"). He resorts to this labeling as a means to make sense of the outside social world and its rules. Not only does he apply this limited outlook to other characters, but he also turns it on himself. He imagines how Andrei Babichev must perceive him, "'You're a philistine, Kavalerov. You don't understand a thing.' He doesen't say this, but its implied"[50] Kavalerov's self-consciousness about his social status represents a self-perpetuating pattern, as this Soviet vision functions as a weapon against his tormentors and fuels his paranoia of imagined insult and injury.

Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev utilize satirical labels to degrade Andrei and Volodia thereby defending their romantic illusions about a glorious pre-revolutionary past and about themselves as unsung heroes. Similarly, Andrei and Volodia protectively guard their quixotic notions regarding the Soviet future, threatened by the two intellectual tricksters. In the creation of their idyllic narrative, Andrei and Volodia must cast Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev in the roles of laughable caricatures --- in order to preserve their own dignity and values, the new Soviet men must intentionally misunderstand their ideological opponents, verbally reducing them to negative archetypes.

In moments of anger Andrei dehumanizes his brother, calling him a parasite on Soviet society: "Who is he-Ivan? Who? A lazybones, a harmful, infectious man. He should be shot!"[51] Moreover, Andrei regards Ivan's inventions as proof of his brother's buffoonery. Andrei similarly ridicules Nikolai Kavalerov's unique vision. Upon hearing Kavalerov's poetic phrase

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[50] Ibid., 15. "'Ты --- обыватель, Кавалеров. Ты ничего не понимаешь.' Он этого не говорит, но это понятно без слов." Ibid., 31.

[51]Ibid., 25. "Кто он- Иван? Кто? Лентяй, вредный, заразительный человек. Его надо расстрелять!"Ibid., 38.

that Valia rushed past him like "a branch full of leaves and flowers," he assumes that it was uttered by "some alcoholic from Ivan's crew." To be fair, both Nikolai and Ivan drink heavily. However, attributing someone's poetic talents to an alcoholic delirium constitutes a violent act against the complexity of the self.

Each of the characters can be reduced to a negative social stereotype. But the Medusa's gaze is not the author's weapon; rather it is the characters' tool of destruction. The battle to define and petrify the other within the fictional world of the novel does not extend to the meta-narration in *Envy*, which portrays characters as broad spectrums of linguistic possibility ranging from modernist innovation to satirical cliche.

The Aesthetics of Stagnation

The relationship between objects and people plays a crucial role in *Envy.* The artist Kavalerov, ostensibly distanced from the material world by his preoccupation with the immaterial realm of the imagination complains that "things don't like him." Unlike Andrei Babichev who masterfully manipulates his surroundings, Kavalerov feels ill at ease with furniture, household objects, and during his frequent bouts of drunkenness even the laws of gravity become his enemies. Thus characters' relative comfort/discomfort in the material world has serves as yet another point of reference used by critics to distinguish between "artists" and "machines." Descriptions of materiality and corporeality associated with certain characters imply a similarity to objects and lack of emotive interiority.

Janet Tucker comments that Andrei Babichev's imposing demeanor and utilitarian thinking liken him to a statue.

> Andrej's embodiment of Pushkin's famous statues – the Commander and *The Stone Guest* and the Falconet statue of Peter the Great in "The Bronze Horseman," is reinforced when Kavalerov sarcastically summons Tiepolo to paint the feast of the sausage.[52]

Indeed, Kavelerov's still frame description of the sausage giant's meeting as a painting aesthetically sums up Kavalerov's overall perception of Andrei Babichev and his associates as lifeless, two-dimensional archetypes. But as I have already pointed out, Kavalerov's view is not omniscient or even consistent; Andrei Babichev dimensionality reveals itself through his first person confession, his dream and the letter written by Volodia. Images of Andrei as an object recur throughout the novel, revealing Kavalerov's occasional angry refusal to look below the surface when evaluating his benefactor. Similarly, Volodia Makarov, whom Kavalerov regards as an emotionless brute, makes his first appearance in *Envy* as a static, photographic image. This aesthetic evidence does not conclusively prove that Andrei and Volodia are indeed stagnant, as one must carefully distinguish between characters' and authors' perspectives.

Marietta Chudakova interprets Kavalerov's objectifying view of Valia and Volodia as the author's unequivocal attitude toward his characters: "Just like Andrei Babichev--- these are people-things, there is something stagnant in them. These people keep turning to stone, transform into dolls, into robots."[53] These observations are substantiated only to a certain extent, as Andrei

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[52] Tucker, 15.

Babichev and Volodia Makarov are in fact at times depicted in "inanimate forms." This mode of objectification, however, also concerns Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev, who are similarly rendered immobile in certain passages.

For instance, when Kavalerov dreams of eternal fame he recalls a wax figure he had seen in a museum in his schoolboy days: "I remember from years gone by: as a schoolboy, I was taken to the wax museum. In a glass cube a handsome man in a frock coat with a smoking wound in his chest was dying in someone's arms."[54] As a twenty seven year old adult, Kavalerov imagines himself as a wax statue:

> Still, maybe someday in the great panopticon there will be a wax figure of an odd, fat-nosed man with a pallid, good natured face, disheveled hair, little-boy tubby, wearing a jacket with just one buttone left at the belly, and on the cube a small plaque: NIKOLAI KAVALEROV.[55]

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[53] "Но так же, как Андрей Бабичев, --- это люди—вещи, в них есть что-то застойное. Эти люди то и дело окаменевают, превращаются в кукол, в роботов."Chudakova, *Masterstvo Iuriia Oleshy*, 64.

[54] Olesha, *Envy*, 30. Вспоминаю из давних лет: я, гимназист, приведен в музей восковых фигур. В стеклянном кубе красивый мужчина во фраке, с огнедышащей раной в груди, умирал на чьих-то руках.Olesha, *Zavist'*, Ibid., 42.

[55] Ibid., 31. А может быть, все же когда-нибудь в великом паноптикуме будет стоять восковая фигура странного человека, тостоносого, с бледным добродушным лицом, с растрепанными волосами, по мальчишески полного, в пиджаке, сохранившим только одну пуговицу на пузе; и будет на кубе дощечка:НИКОЛАЙ КАВАЛЕРОВ. Ibid., 42.

In this passage Kavalerov views himself from the outside, literally as an object. In contrast to his previous imaginative fantasies, he sums himself up with a surface, physical description. Kavalerov regards this wax dummy as a positive symbol of immortality and fame, but this representation omits his most valuable internal attributes: imagination and perceptiveness. Moreover, Kavalerov pictures his wax double not as a heroic persona, but as an odd, ridiculous figure. The wax figure rather resembles the self-conscious image Kavalerov projects when he imagines Andrei Babichev's pejorative gaze.

Ivan Babichev also appears metaphorically paralyzed in a poetic passage where he likens himself to an aging tree with skin that "hardens like glass." On the first pages of the second part of the novel, Ivan Babichev relates his life story, pointing at the "tree of life" vein formation on his hand.

> "The years passed, I changed, and the tree changed too. […]
>
> The branches seem to be breaking off, cavities have appeared… It's sclerosis, my friends! And the fact that the skin is getting glassy, and the tissue beneath it is squishy --- isn't this a fog settling on the tree of my life, the fog that will soon envelop all of me?"[56]

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[56] Ibid., 77-78. Шли годы, менялся я, и менялось дерево. […]Мне кажется ломаются ветки, появилась дупла…Это склероз друзья мои! И то, что кожа стекленеет, а под ней водянистой становится ткань, --- не есть ли это оседание тумана на дерево моей жизни, того тумана, который вскоре окутает всего меня? Ibid., 74.

Ivan imagines himself growing immobile, petrifying with the passage of time. This process of irreversible paralysis applies to the outgoing epoch as well. It follows that one could make the argument that Nikolai Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev who are doomed to a still-life existence as dummies in museums, and as ancient, unchanging trees are closely identified with immobility. All of the characters in the novel display equal capacity for stagnation; fluid interiority and frozen objectification are both attributed, rather than innate qualities. Thus, Olesha does not direct his readers' sympathies toward one group of characters.

Authorship, Characterization and Genre

The author's two somewhat conflicting goals of creating characters that are both "external, social types" and "complex, internal selves" result in generic inconsistency.

From this perspective, the artistic success of *Envy* is somewhat surprising considering that Olesha creates an uneven text with shifting perspectives. In a monograph elucidating the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson discuss the notion of genre as a way of "seeing the world." Quoting Bakhtin, the two critics discuss Gogol's failed attempt to transpose one genre into another in the second part of *Dead Souls*:

> […] Bakhtin later described a particular type of failure that results from a writer's misunderstanding of his chosen genre and his attempt to use it for purposes foreign to its ethos. Bakhtin's example is Gogol's ill-fated efforts to turn the

> satiric novel *Dead Souls* into the first volume of an epic *Divine Comedy*, an effort which led to the hopeless failure of volume two.[57]

In Olesha's case the co-existence of several world-views does not create the kind of problem it posed for Gogol. How was it, that Olesha's was able to combine satirical and lyrical genres? Olesha's dual vision in fact seems synonymous with brilliance as it is precisely this constant shift between internal and external visions that endow *Envy* with such elusive stylistic beauty.

The term "argument" frequently comes up in Olesha's commentaries on the meanings behind his novels and plays. The novel *Envy* could be similarly understood as an "argument" between several perspectives of the human being. Is Andrei Babichev a self-important cog in the Socialist machine or a great man with vision and intelligence? Is Nikolai Kavalerov a pathetic hanger on or an artist/prophet? The fragmented text of *Envy* allows one to choose which characters they would like to see satirically and which ones to celebrate with romantic biographies. Modern day critics find it distasteful, in some cases unfathomable to humanize, much less romanticize Andrei Babichev or Volodia Makarov. However, the necessary ingredients to view these characters sympathetically are all present. By abstaining from clearly indicating the genre of *Envy* or providing a permanent, reliable narrator the author withholds his allegiance from the characters.

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[57] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

Conclusion

Olesha's literary career began with a spirited involvement in agitational literature, a genre that confidently condemned pre-revolutionary "types" and exalted the proletariat. *The Three Fat Men* whimsically recreated the revolutionary struggle in a fantastical, adventurous setting. Following the wildly successful fairytale, the feuilletonic method of dividing characters into "good" and "bad" began to give way to a more multi-faceted vision of the individual, in *Envy*.

In his 1927 novel, Olesha utilizes his Soviet satirist's arsenal to construct and address a pressing philosophical argument about perceptions of self and others in the Soviet reality. The question of whether new Soviet men are internally different from pre-revolutionary intellectuals can be answered in a new way through the reading of *Envy* elucidated in this chapter. As I have demonstrated, Kavalerov and Ivan Babichev are not the only characters in the novel possessing an imagination and feelings. Their inner qualities are even overlooked by Volodia Makarov and Andrei Babichev who perceive the two characters as harmful social types. It therefore follows that the locus of Socialist metamorphoses is not "the heart of man," but the abstract realm of rhetoric. The advent of Socialism brought with it a new way of describing and classifying human beings.

Critics, who conclude that the "new, Soviet" men in the novel are indeed hollow, Socialist machines, overlook the telling phrase, uttered by Ivan Babichev toward the end of the novel. As he grips Valia's legs, hugging his daughter for probably the last time, Ivan tearfully exclaims: "I was wrong Valia… I thought the emotions had perished – love and devotion and

tenderness, but it's all still here, Valia…Only not for us, all that's left for us is envy and more envy…"[58]

All of the pre-revolutionary emotions remain, but their outward expression has changed with the acquisition of new vocabulary and new social structures in the family and at work. This conclusion is supported by an entry from Olesha's diary, written several years later, on May 5, 1930: "A thought occurs to me: not internal change in man has occurred. To find a new man. Where is he?"[59] In *Envy*, the new world and the new man are nascent notions, existing only in words. The feelings, the human interiority and complexity of the gone by epoch are still present, though one may attempt to discard them by resorting to a limited, political vocabulary that reduces the world to Soviet terminology.

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[58] Olesha, *Envy*, 131. "Я ошибся, Валя… Я думал, что все чувства погибли --- любовь, и преданность, и нежность… Но все осталось, Валя…Только не для нас, а нам осталась только зависть и зависть…."Olesha, *Zavist'*, 114.

[59] "Закрадывается мысль: никакого не произошло изменения в человеке. Найти нового человека! Где он?" Olesha, *Kniga Proshchania*, 39.

CHAPTER 4

Awaking from the Nightmare of History: Andrei Platonov's Linguistic Transcendence in *The Foundation Pit*

Революция раскатиться дальше вас!
Привет верующим и умирающим в перенапряжении!

The revolution will spread wider than all of you
Hurrah for the believers who die of overexertion!

-from Andrei Platonov's notebooks, 1931

Joseph Brodsky once named Andrei Platonov "one of the eminent writers of our age," identifying the author's idiosyncratic language as speaking not only about "a particular tragedy, but about the human race as a whole."[1] Indeed, Platonov's prose resonates across cultural and temporal barriers, gaining appreciative audiences in Russia and the West to the present day. As recently as October 22, 2007, the American magazine *The New Yorker* published Andrei Platonov's translated short story "Among Animals and Plants" in its fiction section. A resurgence of interest in the author is evident in his native country, with a highly anticipated 2008 film adaptation of Platonov's war story "The Return," renamed "The Father." Platonov's broad appeal can be attributed to his overarching concern with universal themes of love, life and death. An aspect of Platonov's craft that may be lost to Western audiences is his preoccupation

[1] Joseph Brodsky, Introduction to *The Foundation Pit* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), ix.

with the proletariat's role in building Socialism. Hence, the author's inquiry into the human condition inevitably includes an exploration of ideologies and realities in early Soviet Russia.Born to a railroad worker on the outskirts of Voronezh, Andrei Platonov is the only writer in this study who considered himself a member of the proletariat. As Lev Shubin describes it, Platonov's proletarian status was not merely connected to biographical fact, but was integral to his worldview and personal identity: "The very word "proletarian" in his vocabulary---was always emotionally charged, always a powerful epithet."[2]

This socio-cultural orientation places Platonov into a different kind of an (imagined) relationship with the supposed "mass reader" than Bulgakov, Olesha and Zoshchenko. While for the other writers, NEP-era journalism represented a deviation from their intellectual upbringing and a transition into a new culture, Platonov considered himself a part of the new readership. Thus, he engaged with the mass reader, not as an outsider attempting to make contact, but as a representative speaking on behalf of the proletariat. This identification comes through in his literary efforts, which are largely directed toward establishing the role of proletarian art in the building of a Socialist future.

Despite the author's proletarian background and desire to speak for and to "the common people," his most acclaimed literary achievement, the 1930 novel *The Foundation Pit* offers little to the tastes of "mass readers." This complicated text was banned in the Soviet Union until 1987,

[2] "Самое слово «пролетарский» в его словаре --- всегда эмоционально оценочно, всегда сильный эпитет." Lev Shubin, *Poiski smysla otdel'nogo i obshchego susshschestvovaniia: ob Andree Platonove*, (Moscow: Sovestkii pisatel', 1987), 48.

when it was printed in the journal *Novyi mir*.[3] As Viugin notes, Platonov's magnum opus, had it been published in the 1930s, could not have appealed to a wide readership:

> It is doubtful that such a book could be widely understood by the common people, whom A. Platonov, it seemed, aimed to serve with his art. It did not follow any criteria or models of 1920's tastes based on the responses of the mass reader […][4]

Viugin's assertion that Platonov's novel had no grounding in the genres of its time proves not entirely accurate. Like many authors who had worked as satirists in the early 1920s, in *The Foundation Pit*, Platonov draws from the well of NEP-era satire in his use of distorted bureaucratic language. Admittedly, he complicates the aim behind this linguistic expression, employing it as a tool of philosophical rumination as opposed to didactic instruction. Replacing the humorous function of satirical language with a contemplative one, Platonov does indeed stray from an entertainment seeking psychology of a mass audience, but nonetheless remains stylistically grounded in mass-oriented literature.

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[3] *The Foundation Pit* was published in Germany and England in 1969. For more on the history of the novel's publication see Nina Malygina, *Andrei Platonov: poetika 'vozvrashchenia'* (Moscow: TEIS, 2005), 283.

[4] Сомнительно, чтобы подобная книга могла найти широкое понимание среди простых людей, которым А. Платонов, казалось бы, стремился служить своим творчеством. Она не подходила ни к одному критерию и «образцу» вкуса 20х годов, восстанавливающему на основании отзывов массового читателя […] Victor Viugin, "Povest' "Kotlovan" v kontekste tvorchestva Adreia Platonova," in *Kotlovan: tekst, materialy tvorcheskoi istorii* (St.Petersburg: Nauka, 2000), 11.

Consistent with the larger aim of this dissertation project, this chapter will examine how early Soviet satire informed Platonov's modernist text. The literary metamorphosis of mass literary forms within *The Foundation Pit* seems to offer nothing to the common readers, as the entertainment value of satirical phrases is replaced with philosophical meanings. Neverthless, despite the novel's apparent complexity, Platonov includes the common man in his masterpiece, not only as an object of scrutiny (most of the characters are of proletarian origin), but as a creative co-author, whose idiosyncratic and improper usage of Soviet rhetoric transforms dead language into meaningful poetic material. The worker heroes of *The Foundation Pit* seem to stumble upon philosophical discoveries by accident, not fully aware of the profundity contained in their own words. Paradoxically, ignorance flowers into wisdom as official rhetoric transforms into art. This view of the proletariat as a gifted "holy fool," instinctively oriented toward utopian goals appears in Platonov's early writings.

In an essay under the title "About Love," (1920) the author writes about his reverence for the common man's simple hearted faith:

> We should not laugh at the common man, even when in his pagan manner he worships his Mother of God. The knowledge that a blessed Mother of God abides in heaven, dearer and more tender than his own mother, gives the peasant love and strength, so that he follows his plough for ages and lives and works like a martyr. [5]

[5] Над народом не надо смеяться, даже когда он по-язычески верит в свою богородицу. Сознание что на небе есть благая богородица --- роднее и ласковее матери, дает сердцу мужика любовь и силу, и он веками ходит за сохой и работает и живет как мученик.

Platonov's metaphysical idealism which equated physical labor and suffering with spiritual sensitivity was likely to blame for his erroneous assumption that his work would be understood by way of a common psychic bond shared by all Soviet workers. This belief in a shared social consciousness striving toward universal happiness and spiritual transcendence lies at the core of the author's understanding of Socialism.

The author's search for ontological meaning in the revolutionary movement took on myriad literary forms. Beginning his career writing journalistic articles about technology, Andrei Platonov embraced the satirical genre toward the late 1920s. In the works *The City Gradov* (1926) "Doubting Makar" (1929) and "The Governmental Citizen" (1929) the author makes use of the comically distorted "Sovietspeak," commonly employed by such writers as Zoshchenko, Il'f and Petrov and Bulgakov to ridicule the illiterate, bureaucratic vernacular of the post-revolutionary period. In Platonov's satires, Soviet rhetoric directly impedes the proletariat's efforts toward building Socialism by interfering with man's direct experience of physical and metaphysical realities.

Platonov critiques the linguistic institutions of Soviet ideology that have no relevance to the real practice of Socialism. As he shows in each of these works, abstract concepts are foreign to the proletariat, who will affect positive change with the simple tools of physical labor and good intentions. The author argues against the "top-down" model that insists on prioritizing political theory over concrete implementation in daily action. Rhetoric cannot substitute for

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Andrei Platonov, "O liubvi" in *Gosudarstvennyi zhitel'* (Minsk: Mastatskaia Literatura, 1990), 649.

spiritual transformation and the imposition of abstract thinking on the common people results in the proletariat's alienation from the State.

The common man's misunderstanding and misuse of bureaucratic language figured as a frequent theme in NEP-era satire. Satirical portrayals of proletarian befuddlement in the face of political rhetoric fall into two camps. Satirists either deride the uneducated proletariat who misuse the latest Soviet jargon, or criticize the authority figures who impose a meaningless political vocabulary on the masses. Andrei Platonov certainly belongs to those satirists who sympathize with the proletariat, demanding accessibility from the Bolshevik intelligentsia rather than laying blame on the "unenlightened masses." In his satirical prose, Platonov exposes the ineffectiveness of a "linguistic revolution" by comically emphasizing the stark discrepancy between bureaucratic terminology and the everyday experience of the Russian people.

In *The City Gradov*, "The Governmental Citizen," and "Doubting Makar" mangled "bureaucratese" is spoken by characters that stand in the way of Socialist progress. The conceptual sphere of words and documents dominates over concrete reality, threatens to take it over and in some cases succeeds, much to the detriment of the common man. In these satires, Platonov proposes an alternative to the State's forced education grounded in political theory, advocating that the proletariat should be permitted to create Socialism "in their own words" through hard work and a pure-hearted spirituality.[6] The worker-protagonists in Platonov's essays and fiction often have an intuitive understanding of Socialist goals. Brotherly love and physical labor come naturally to them and do not need be explained by means of complex theories.

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[6] Despite the fact that Platonov officially claimed to be an atheist more recently critics have pointed out prominent strains of Christian Orthodox thought in his writing. Please see Aleksandr Dyrdin, *Potaennyi myslitel': tvorcheskoe soznanie Andreia Platonova v svete Russkoi dukhovnosti i kul'tury* (Ulianovsk: UIGTU, 2000).

Whereas in the aforementioned short satirical texts convoluted Soviet language signified a negative aspect of Socialist reality to be laughed at and overcome, in *The Foundation Pit* (1930) "Sovietspeak" takes on a new function. Abstract bureaucratic language no longer remains relegated to the voices of negative characters, but appears embedded in the voice of the author-narrator himself. In *The Foundation Pit*, the hyperbolically politicized language previously employed to satirize abstract rhetoric undergoes a semantic shift and acquires a profoundly expressive quality.

The transfiguration of language from literal meaning to metaphor is the literary equivalent of the transformation of historical time into metaphysical utopia. Several characters in *The Foundation Pit* are endowed with an intuitive philosophical curiosity. The internal impulse to discover what is most essential in one's emotional life externally manifests in a linguistic form that combines poetics with Soviet jargon. Soulless bureaucratese, exposed as an empty signifier in Platonov's early satires, is filled with personal meaning in *The Foundation Pit*. Metaphysical rumination neutralizes the satirical charge. Thus, NEP-era satirical language loses its specific historical context and morphs into a 'timeless,' poetic speech. The impossibility of laughter after satirical quips confounds reader expectations, resulting in a linguistic transcendence of Soviet time and space toward a mythical realm of contemplation.

Bureaucratic language retains its previous satirical function only in a few selected passages: when it is abused by several manipulative characters aspiring to the ranks of the intelligentsia, who distort linguistic material to attain their own selfish aims. As evidenced by the behavior of Kozlov and the Activist, the hunger for power remains a damaging force in the

building of Socialism. Thus, the author's changed use of Soviet speech does not signify a new attitude toward the bureaucracy.

The Language of *The Foundation Pit*

For decades scholars have discussed Andrei Platonov's language as the most salient feature of his literary masterpiece *The Foundation Pit* (1930). While all agree that an analysis of linguistic forms grants the reader a key to penetrate the mysteries of this complex work, opinions have diverged regarding the effects intended by Platonov's strange linguistic brew. Scholars have hypothesized about these questions using a number of different methodologies.

Joseph Brodsky advocated a modernist approach to Platonov's prose by examining Platonov's language as self-conscious linguistic experimentation.[7] Lev Shubin saw in this linguistic expression an attempt at mimetic reproduction of peasant speech.[8] Mikhail Geller suggests a reading of Platonov as a humanist, passionately protesting the Stalinist notion of utopia.[9] Most recently, Thomas Seifrid has characterized Platonov's language as an expression of ambivalence toward the politics of the Five-Year Plan.[10]

In the last decade, Russian scholarship of Platonov has flourished. Unlike their Soviet predecessors, recent critics do not delve into the political views implied in Platonov's prose, but

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[7] Joseph Brodsky, "Catastrophes in the Air." in *Less Than One. Selected Essays*, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986), 268-303.

[8] Lev Shubin, *Poiski smysla otdel'nogo i obshchego susshschestvovaniia: ob Andree Platonove*, (Moscow: Sovestkii pisatel', 1987).

[9] Mikhail Geller, *Andrei Platonov v poiskakh schast'ia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1982).

[10] Thomas Seifrid, *Andrei Platonov: Uncertainties of Spirit*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

focus on the aesthetics and ethics of his world view. Viugin's *Andrei Platonov: poetika zagadki*, Malygina's *Andrei Platonov: poetika vozvrashchenia*, Barsht's *Poetika prozy Andreia Platonova* all set out to discover how language shapes *The Foundation Pit's* ontological landscape. Mapping out symbols and themes recurring throughout Platonv's oeuvre, these scholars systematically describe the inner workings of Platonov's universe in an effort to unravel the multitude of philosophical mysteries presented in his novels.

The task of explaining Platonov's comprehensive worldview is an arduous one. With great admiration of those scholars who have attempted this feat, I will narrow my framework to specifically examine only the transformation of NEP-era satirical language into philosophical poetics. For such scholars as Mikhail Geller, Platonov's idiosyncratic bureaucratic vocabulary inserted into the very center of personhood signifies linguistic violence, a verbal force capable of destroying individual humanity in the name of an imagined utopia. Geller contrasts Mikhail Bulgakov's acerbic commentary on Soviet language in *The Heart of a Dog* to Platonov's compassionate depiction of individuals "crippled by the language of utopia":

> The author of *The Foundation Pit* not limiting himself to Bulgakov's acerbic metaphor, with bitterness, with pain and sympathy tells, as it turns out, the same story: how the new language, the language of utopia cripples the human being, robs him of human feeling, forms man into an obedient citizen of a utopian society.[11]

[11] Автор «Котлована», не ограничиваясь злой метафорой Булгакова, с горечью, болью и сочувствием рассказывает, в конечном счете, то же самое: как новый язык, язык утопии калечит человека, лишает его человеческих чувств, формирует из человека послушного

This treatment of bureaucratic language was certainly true in Platonov's early satire, where the author described how bureaucratic structures stifled human intention and spirit.

In *The Foundation Pit*, however, I have found that bureaucratic language plays a much more complex and interesting role. Mangled bureaucratese mutates into a meaningful form of expression: the dead language of Soviet platitudes blooms into evolving word roots, rich with meaning. In fact, language survives all physical destruction within the novel. It not only outlives the horrific deaths of the characters, but continues to exist when hope and faith in the Socialist dream seem impossible. The resurrection of Soviet rhetoric into poetic imagery linguistically suggests the possibility that the nightmarish ontological atmosphere of the foundation pit can be transcended with spiritual effort. The political implication of my finding is that Platonov still harbored hope for a Socialist future despite witnessing the bleak realities of dekulakization, forced collectivization, deportation and execution.

My emphasis on Platonov's language as a poetic medium possessing philosophical significance bears kinship to the recent work of Russian scholars such as Viugin, Barsht, and Malygina. The literary inquiries of these critics differ from my own, however, as they have abandoned the study of the NEP-era satirical feuilleton as a crucial source of Platonov's language. I will employ formal analysis to trace the evolution of NEP-era satire from light-hearted humor to philosophical significance within the context of *The Foundation Pit* by first separating out phrases and expressions that I have identified as satirical language. Then, I will

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жителя идеального общества. Mikhail Geller, *Andrei Platonov v poiskakh schastia* (Moscow:"MIK," 1999), 291.

demonstrate how this language has lost its humorous, didactic function, emerging instead as a locus of transcendence.

This view resonates with Martin Heidegger's treatment of language as an ahistorical refuge from the horror of the here and now. Heidegger's sentiment in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971) is aptly paraphrased by Allan Megill: "In the delirium of the present, man is without a dwelling place. The task of language is to create such a dwelling place, to create a world in which man may once more live."[12] It may seem counterintuitive to compare Platonov and Heidegger, given their opposing views on technology. After all, unlike Platonov who idealized technological progress as a path toward utopia, Heidegger predicted that technology would dehumanize and destroy mankind. Remaining mindful of these differences, I would nonetheless like to suggest Heidegger as a useful reference to understand Platonov's linguistic experiment. For Heidegger, language is self-referential, creating the world out of itself as it speaks. Being itself is a condition of linguistic creation.[13] Platonov artistically echoes (or rather, anticipates) this treatment of language in *The Foundation Pit*. Language acquires a mystical, eternal quality, relinquishing its practical functions to a higher purpose; it creates rather than merely describes. Instead of referring to topical phenomena of the immediate, historical present, Soviet language begins to reference mythological timelessness.

Intertwining philosophical poetics with Soviet jargon, Platonov explicitly associates the private search for meaning with Socialist building. The awkwardness of peasant expression

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[12] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 168.

[13] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 199.

previously signifying the estrangement of the masses from Soviet linguistic institutions in *The Foundation Pit* denotes that Soviet languages has been internalized and personalized by the worker populations. This transformation of institutionalized dogma into poetic meaning constitutes the creation of proletarian art. In this way, linguistic distortion does not necessarily signify damage or a "crippling" as Joseph Brodsky and Mikhail Geller have described it. A transmuted language allows its users to create new worlds, to forge passageways into alternate realities through which they can escape the nightmare of history.

Platonov's Idea of Proletarian Art

During the prolific period (1917-1926), Andrei Platonov wrote hundreds of articles for local Voronezh newspapers (*Zheleznyi put'*, *Krasnaia derevnia*, *Voronezhskaia kommuna* and many others).[14] Most of these early journalistic pieces lacked the satirical elements that would later emerge in Platonov's writing. The articles focused on the fate of proletarian culture in the Soviet Union. Although the author never discussed the influence of philosophical predecessors directly, many of Platonov's writings echoed the idiosyncratic theories of the philosophers Alexander Bogdanov and Nikolai Fedorov.[15]As Thomas Seifrid points out, Platonov's orientation toward these thinkers manifested itself in his tendency to discuss the historical fate of the proletariat as messianic.[16] In Platonov's essays, proletarian culture emerges as the answer to man's "accursed questions" about life's meaning and the inevitability of death.

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[14] Shubin, "Tak ya sluzhil i uchilsia," *Poiski smysla*, 92-97.

[15] For more on the connection between Platonov and Fedorov please see Mikhail Geller, *Andrei Platonov v poiskach schastia* (Moscow: MIK, 1999), 28-54.

For instance, Platonov saw the October revolution as the first step toward the realization of Fedorov's utopian vision. Nikolai Fedorov prophesized about a not-too-distant future when the dead from all ages past would be resurrected and in his articles of the 1920's Platonov transposes Fedorov's thoughts to a modern context by heralding Lenin as the usher of the new age.[17] Platonov believed that through Socialist building, which included technological advancement, elimination of individuality and cessation of sexual desire, man would "conquer the cosmos."The proletariat would lead the world to utopia not only through political action, but also through art. As he wrote in 1919:

> We are living through a great epoch of the rebirth of the human spirit in all of its manifestations […] Reviving all of life, the working class revives art as well […] *Proletarian art* reflects in itself all of humanity and its best aspirations.[18]

In this early period, Platonov searches for the literary form that would best represent and embody the proletariat's creative transfiguration of the universe. Platonov's non-fictional writing is thematically bound up with his literary efforts. As Shubin puts it "Platonov's critical prose is similar to his literary prose in its philosophical intent, the desire, the imperative need to clarify –

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[16] Seifrid, 34.

[17] Mikhail Geller, "Paradoks Platonova" in Andrei Platonov, *Potaennyi Platonov: povest' i rasskazy* (Paris-New York: Tret'ya Volna, 1983).

[18] Мы переживаем великую эпоху возрождения духа человеческого во всех его проявлениях[…]Возрождая всю жизнь, трудовой класс возрождает и искусство[…] *Пролетарское искусство* отражает в себе все человечество в его лучших устремлениях. Andrei Platonov, *Zheleznyi put'* #9 (Voronezh, 1919).

and in simple words (not philosophical terminology) to express his understanding of man, society and nature."[19]

The author envisions the Socialist Future as the ultimate artistic expression, where the material and the spiritual combine to create an eternal work of art that is the communist society. In an essay entitled "Svet i sotsializm" ("Light and Socialism"), Platonov writes that after communism is achieved man will no longer need art:

> And only then the light industry will give rise to the Socialist society, the new man --- a creature full of consiousness, miracle and love, communist art--- this sculpture of the universe, planetary architecture, and only then humanity will aggregate into a single physical being, and art --- as it is presently understood, will be obsolete, because art --- is an amendment of revolutionary material in a reactionary consciousness, and with the arrival of communism material and consiousness will be one.[20]

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[19] "Критическую прозу Платонова роднит с его прозой художественной и философская устремленность, желание, потребность и необходимость выяснить --- и в простых словах (а не в философских терминах) выразить своё понимание человека, общества, природы." Lev Shubin, "Kriticheskaia proza Andreia Platonova," in Andrei Platonov, *Razmyshlenia chitatelia: stat'i* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1970), 4.

[20] И только тогда из светового производства вырастет социалистическое общество, новый человек --- существо полное сознания, чуда и любви, коммунистическое искусство --- эта вселенская скульптура, планетная архитектура, и только тогда совершится совокупление человечества в одно физическое существо, а искусство, --- как его теперь понимают, будет не нужно, п. ч. искусство --- это корректив революционной материи в реакционном сознании, а при коммунизме материя и сознание будут одно. Andrei Platonov,"Svet i sotsializm"in *Gosudarstvennyi zhitel'* (Minsk: Mastatskaia literature, 1990), 647.

Platonov described communism as a living work of art, created by the collective body of an enlightened humanity. The idea of communist art as a restructuring of the universe and the restructuring of the universe as communist art similarly appears in the author's short works of science fiction published in the 1920s. These stories set in a distant future explore the same leitmotifs of proletarian creativity, the search for meaning and connections between technological and spiritual progress.[21]

Platonov and his Readers

In a 1927 letter written from Tambov to his wife, the author expresses apprehension at revealing himself in his literature:

> My ideals are homogenous and constant. I could not be a writer, if I were to expound only my unchanging ideas. No one would read my works. I must cheapen and vary my ideas, so that I can create acceptable works. Precisely—to cheapen! And if I endowed my creations with the real blood of my brain, no one would print them.[22]

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[21] Platonov early stories of science fiction include "Markun" (1921) "Potomki solntsa," (1922) "Lunnaia bomba" (1926) and "Efirnyi trakt" (1926).

[22] Мои идеалы однообразны и постоянны. Я не буду литератором, если буду излагать только свои неизменные идеи. Меня не станут читать. Я должен опошлять и варьировать свои мысли, чтобы получились приемлемые произведения. Именно- опошлять! А если бы я давал в сочинения действительную кровь своего мозга, их бы не стали печатать. Andrei Platonov, letter to Maria Platonova, 1927 in *Gosudarstvennyi zhitel'*, 667.

The assertion that the author had to "cheapen" his most sacred views was perhaps referring to his engagement with popular literary genres of the 1920s, including science fiction and satire. This letter clearly illustrates the author's desire to publish, even at the cost of withholding self-expression.

Unfortunately, evidence documenting Platonov's connection to real readers is limited to the response from the official press of the 1920s and 30s. Prominent Soviet figures such as Ermilov and Fadeev wrote damaging articles accusing the author of creating kulak art and bourgeois expression.[23] These literary denunciations reacted to the modernist elusiveness of the author's prose. The open-ended complexity of Platonov's thought allowed critics to distort and maim his "literary body." In 1937, the author wrote a response entitled "A Potest without Self-defense" to a disparaging review in *Literaturnaia gazeta*: "They took my, so to say, "literary body" and critically dissected it. As a result of this experiment my human body was reduced to: one dog, four nails, a pound of sulphur and a clay ashtray."[24] Platonov's career ended after a particularly vicious attack by the critics in 1946. The misunderstandings encountered by the author are likely the result of his original views and expressions. We can only speculate about contemporary Soviet readers' reactions to *The Foundation Pit*, given that it appeared in print

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[23] A. Ermilov, "Burzhuaznaia i poputnichiskaia literature," in *Ezhegodnik literatury i iskusstva na 1929 g.* (Moscow: Kom. Akademii, 1929), 67; V.S. "Priznanie oshibki nado ispravliat'" in *Vecherniaia Moskva* June 2, 1929; A.Selivanovskii "V chem somnivaetsia Andrei Platonov*," Literaturnaia Gazeta*, June 10, 1931; A. Fadeev "Ob odnoi kulatskoi khronike," *Krasnaia nov'* no. 5-6, 1931.

[24]"Было взято мое, так сказать «литературное туловище» и критически препарировано. В результате этого опыта из моего человеческого все же тела получилось: одна собака, четыре гвоздя, фунт серы и глиняная пепельница." Andrei Platonov, "Vozrazhenie bez samozoshchity. Po povodu stat'i A. Gurvicha" "Andrei Platonov. Pis'mo v redaktsiu," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 20 December 1937.

only in 1987. Most likely, common readers of the 1930s would have found the work incomprehensible.

Platonov's Satire

In his NEP-era short satires "Platonov the Prophet" and "Platonov the Satirist" speak in unison, but the Satirist speaks much louder than the Prophet in works such as *The City Gradov*, "Doubting Makar," and " The Governmental Citizen.'" In many respects, these stories are typical representatives of NEP- era satire. In each tale, the author highlights the absurdities of the Soviet bureaucratic order and its destructive influence on the building of Socialism. The difference between Platonov and other satirists who took on similar topic is that in addition to commenting on the themes of the day, Platonov's satires sympathetically emphasize the fate of the proletariat as central to the ideological restructuring of both historical and metaphysical realms.

Platonov depicts a reality where abstract Soviet slogans reign supreme over the tangible sphere. The faultiness of this logic is exposed by the proletarian protagonists who are unable to find a correspondence between vague ideology and their own phenomenological experience. These worker heroes are in constant search of a concrete embodiment of the intangible "government" and "Socialism." In the mouths of these characters, Soviet vocabulary signifying abstract concepts inappropriately references immediate reality. Yet, to the extent that these misguided souls echo some of Platonov's own cherished ideas, they sometimes appear as holy fools, acting as vessels for their creator's message.

Hints of bigger philosophical ideas appear throughout these works, but they are not fully developed and are subsumed into a satirical structure exposing the problems of bureaucracy. In this way, Platonov fully participates in the dominant literary trend of NEP satire, albeit he makes use of its conventions somewhat late. *The City Gradov* was published in 1926, while "The Governmental Citizen" and "Doubting Makar" both appeared in 1929. It is clear that even in these early works Platonov had a bigger philosophical project in mind. However, he does not make the satirical mode serve his own purposes until the writing of *The Foundation Pit* in 1930.

The City Gradov (1926) is the first and the longest of these satires. Paying homage to the style and content of Saltykov-Shchedrin's *History of a Town* (1870), *The City Gradov* tells the tale of a consummate bureaucrat, Fedor Shmakov and the town he comes to rule with an iron, bureaucratic fist. Shmakov is fully devoted to the idea of Socialism, believing that an all pervasive bureaucratic order will best achieve Socialist goals. He records his thoughts on the importance of clerical activity in a secret manuscript entitled "Notes of a Governmental Person":

> I conduct my work in secret. But one day it will become a world-renowned juridicial essay, more specifically: I state that clerks and other officials --- are the most valuable agents of Socialist history, they are a live tie under the rails toward Socialism.[25]

[25] Я тайно веду свой труд. Но когда-нибудь он сделается мировым юридическим сочинением, а именно: я говорю, чиновник и прочее всякое должностное лицо --- это ценнейший агент социалистической истории, это живая шпала под рельсами в социализм. Andrei Platonov, *Gorod Gradov* , *Sobrannie sochinennii: Vol.1* (Moscow: Sovetskaiia Rossia, 1984), 305.

Shmakov's literary efforts are themselves a satirical expose, as the journal's very existence testifies to this character's predilection for substituting paperwork for real social action. In fact, Shmakov firmly believes the document to be more real than the tangible world.

The replacement of deed with paper corresponds to the replacement of the proletariat with the bureaucrat advocated by Shmakov throughout this short work of fiction. He goes so far as to say that the bureaucrats are surrogates of the proletariat meant to bring about social change. "We are the sub-sti-tutes of the proletariat. It follows, for instanct, that I am the substitute of the revolutionary and the master! Do you sense the wisdom? Everything has been replaced!"[26] Shmakov justifies his position by stating that without bureaucracy anarchy would reign supreme. Yet Shmakov serves no useful purpose in the city, limiting his social activism to the solipsistic activity of archiving documents and writing his opus magnum: "The Notes of a Government Citizen."

Shmakov's work among the proletariat does not amount to "the establishment of order," but rather imposes tedium on the peasants' lives. He transforms all of Gradov's citizens into petty bureaucrats made in his own image by devising daily calendars of tasks to be performed by each city dweller. These errands include: "Find out from Marfa Ilyichina, how to make raspberry compote," "Exterminate the bedbugs and check your wife's personal account," "Don't forget to draw up a 25 year plan of national economy- only 2 days left."[27] Menial, enumerated tasks usurp the personal lives of the town's non-bureaucrat faction. Shmakov's tyrannical reign eventually

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[26] «Мы за-ме-сти-те-ли пролетариев! Стало быть, к примеру, я есть заместитель революционера и хозяина! Чувствуете мудрость? Все замещено!» Ibid., 317.
[27] «Узнать и Марфы Ильинчины, как варить малиновый узвар.», «Переморить клопов и проверить лицевой счет жены», «Не забыть составить 25-летний перспективный план народного хозяйства- осталось 2 дня.» Ibid., 319.

ends when the surrounding vicinity subsumes the independent city Gradov and Shmakov becomes a powerless pawn.

Shmakov's bureaucratic obsession manifests as zealous excess, as he carries out his duties and imposes bureaucratic order on the town's citizens. Shmakov's motivations, however, are idealistic in nature. He believes that bureaucracy is the foundation of a peaceful, prosperous State and moreover, that bureaucracy can bring harmony to the universe. Although Platonov clearly shows the flaws of Shmakov's worldview, this character's devotion to his cause is unquestionably sincere. In this way, alongside a critique of bureaucratic indifference toward the proletariat and the absurd logic of devout clerks, a measure of ambiguity manifests in the author's attitude toward the story's main hero. In this early short story, the realm of bureaucratic abstraction begins an affiliation with the spiritual and utopian.

"The Governmental Citizen" (1929), in many ways embodies the themes presented in *The City Gradov*. However, in this work, the negative hero hails from the proletariat and voluntarily infects himself with the bureaucratic spirit. This is a darkly comical short story about an elderly, unemployed barge worker named Petr Evseevich Veretennikov who categorizes all seen and unseen phenomena as beneficial or harmful to the Socialist government. Like Shmakov, Veretennikov values the abstract authority of governmental institutions more than the concrete experience of the proletariat. Despite the fact that he is a worker, Petr Evseevich considers himself as an essential member of the invisible governmental body.

Petr Evseevich feels responsibility for overseeing and carrying out the orders of his government, despite the fact that he does not occupy any position and therefore does not receive any orders. Nonetheless, this pitiful character has psychologically merged his identity with the

invisible, omnipresent entity that is the Soviet State: "Peter Evseevich always called himself and the government by the informal "thou."[28] Petr Evseevich walks around surveying governmental land, visits construction sights and train stations.

The sight of "the government" hard at work, even in the forces of nature, brings Peter Evseevich enormous spiritual and emotional satisfaction.At the sight of a laboring locomotive, his whole being fills with compassion and love for the machine.

> Now Petr Evseevich worried for the locomotive, which with a breathless, sharp cutting-off of steam, resulting in an intensification of Petr Evseevich's feelings, hauled some kind of a load uphill. Petr Evseevich paused and with a sympathetic sense of helping imagined the suffering of the machine, oppressively pulling upward the inetrness of the heavy, bulky weight.[29]

Petr Evseevich's perception of reality, colored by Socialist concerns represents an uncanny reversal of commonsense logic. According to Petr Evseevich, machines are anthropomorphized into sentient beings, while nature and its creatures are mechanized to fit governmental agendas.

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[28] "Петр Евсеевич себя и государство всегда называл на «ты»." Andrei Platonov, "Gosudarstvennyi zhitel'," *Potaennyi Platonov: povesti i rasskazy*, edited by Mikhail Geller (Paris and New York: Tretia volna, 1983), 31.

[29] Сейчас Петр Евсеевич несколько волновался за паровоз, который с резкой задыхающейся отсечкой пара, доходившей до напряжения чувств Петра Евсеевича, взволакивал какие-то грузы на подъем. Петр Евсеевич остановился и с сочувствием помощи вообразил мучение машины, гнетущей вперед и на гору косность осадистого веса. Andrei Platonov,"Gosudarstvennyi zhitel'," 29.

As he explains to his friend Leonid, he believes that the government controls all biological processes.

> 'Without the government you wouldn't have cow's milk to drink.' 'But where would it go?' 'Who knows where it would go? Maybe the grass wouldn't even grow.' 'But what would happen?' 'The soil, Leonid, is the main thing --- the soil! And the soil is governmental territory, without government there would be no territory!'[30]

The type of reasoning that instits that biological and natural realities are inevitably interconnected with the activities of the Soviet State resembles the humor encountered in Il'f and Petrov's *Twelve Chairs*. In one memorable passage, a poster displayed in a dining hall at a nursing home urges its citizens to thoroughly chew their food to benefit society: "When you chew your food thoroughly, you help society."[31] Petr Evseevich's statements also resonate with a comical aphorism, written a decade after Stalin's death, which exposed the false omnipotence attributed to the Communist Party in the nationalist myth of Soviet power: "The winter has passed, summer has come. Thanks to the Party!"[32]

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[30] Без государства ты бы молочка от коровы не пил. – А куда ж оно делось бы? --Кто ж его знает, куда! Может и травы бы не росла. --- А что ж было бы? --- Почва, Леонид, главное дело- почва! А почва ведь и есть государственная территория, а территории тогда бы не имелось! Ibid., 34.

[31] "Тщательно пережевывая пищу, ты помогаешь обществу." I. Il'f and E. Petrov. *Dvenatsat' stul'ev* (Moscow: Panorama, 1995), 151.

However, the seemingly humorous idea that the Soviet government could be responsible for the grass growing, sun shining and the seasons changing closely conforms to Platonov's un-ironic ideas about Socialist technological conquest over the forces of nature. The notion of a governmental jurisdiction over the natural world is both comical and serious. In "The Governmental Citizen" the satirical and the philosophical modes appear intermingled, endowing the story with a measure of ambiguity. Furthermore, Petr Evseevich's simple, but heartfelt devotion does not in itself signal a satirical intent on the author's part. In fact, up until a certain point, this story could be read as straightforward praise of a worker's commitment to Socialism.The portrayal of Petr Evseevich as a negative character becomes unmistakable only when the author reveals Petr's callous treatment of a small child.

At the end of the story Petr Evseevich encounters a small boy assigned to burn rotten train ties in the furnace. The little boy tells Petr Evseevich that he left home because his family could not feed him anymore. He explains that he has too many unmarried sisters who cannot find husbands because they are pockmarked. Unaffected by the other details of the boy's tragic fate, the fact of the sisters' pockmarks greatly angers Petr Evseevich, as he cannot understand his family's carelessness. The government offers free vaccination against pockmarks. Since his sisters did not choose to take advantage of this service, they are culpable for their inability to find husbands which in turn caused the family's destitution. He sees the boy as an unnecessary strain on the Soviet government, whose family committed a grave indiscretion:

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[32] "Прошла зима, настало лето. Спасибо партии за это!" A popular Russian aphorism since the 1970s, attributed to the poet Yuri Vlodov.

> Your family is entirely at fault: the government immunizes against smallpox for free. Had your sisters been immunized, they would have been married long ago and you too would have a place at home! But since you refuse to live according to the government's rules, it serves you right to wander around the railroads. You yourselves are at fault---go and tell your mother so! How can I give you two kopecks after this? I will never give you money! One should immunize against smallpox in a timely manner, citizen, so that later in life you don't have to lurk around the roads and ride the trains for free![33]

Petr Evseevich's cruelty toward a defenseless child retroactively renders his logic in all previous situations invalid. The nonsensical speech about the smallpox vaccination reveals to the readers that Petr Evseevich reasoning is not only ridiculous, but unethical. His fanatical mentality damages the notion of communal consciousness. In the final assessment, although "The Governmental Citizen" does carry some of Platonov's utopian ideas about dominance over nature, the story ultimately functions as a satire, as the main character grossly misunderstands and misrepresents the government's function.

Several months after the publication of "The Governmental Citizen," Platonov penned a very similar short story, with a much more sympathetic protagonist. The title character of

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[33] Во всем виновато твое семейство: государство ведь бесплатно прививает оспу. Привили бы ее твоим сестрам, когда нужно было, и сестры бы замужем давно были и тебе бы место дома нашлось! А раз вы не хотите жить по государству, --- вот и ходите по железным дорогам. Сами вы во всем виноваты --- так пойди матери и скажи! Какие же я тебе две копейки после этого дам? Никогда не дам! Надо, гражданин оспу вовремя прививать, чтоб потом не шататься по путям и не ездить бесплатно в поездах! Andrei Platonov,"Gosudarstvennyi zhitel',"35.

"Doubting Makar," like Petr Evseevich, wishes to observe the government at work and feels deep concern for the anthropomorphized Soviet machine "'Poor laborer!' thought Makar about the machine. 'She carries a load and strains herself.'[34] Unlike Petr Evseevich, who is certain of his importance within the blissful omnipresence of the government, Makar suffers from doubt about his usefulness to the proletariat.

Makar works with his hands, but does not know how to think, a predicament that creates problems for him in the course of the story, and signals his status as a true prophet. Makar builds a carousel which distracts the masses' attention from minding the livestock. When a neighbor's colt escapes, Makar shoulders the blame and is sent to Moscow to work off his fine. Upon his arrival in the city, Makar suffers from a crisis of faith in the Socialist deity as he observes inefficiency, wasted labor and no visible government center: "Makar began searching the square for some pole with a red flag, indicating the center of the capital city and the center of all of government, but no such pole could be found."[35] He eventually locates the center and walks around the city with the intention of finding work, but cannot find employment without proper documentation. Unable to work on the construction site, Makar decides to sell his invention: a tube that will speed up construction.

The reader shares the frustration of Makar's fruitless epic journey through Moscow's bureacracy.

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[34] "Бедная работница! – думал Макар о машине. --- Везет и тужится." Andrei Platonovov, "Usmonivsheisia Makar,"*Potaenniy Platonov*, 41.

[35] "Макар стал искать на площади какую-нибудь жердь с красным флагом, которая бы означала середину центрального города и центр всего государства, но такой жерди ни где не было." Ibid., 42.

> Makar immediately went in search of Moscow's main office of science and technology […] In another room Makar received a paper to take to the trade union[…]The trade union was located in an even more enormous house than the technical office […] At dusk the director arrived, ate an omelet and read Makar's paper through his assistant[...][36]

The difficulty of finding the appropriate bureaucratic office is exacerbated by Makar's misunderstanding of bureaucratic instructions. He interprets the directions to find "the line of commerce" literally and goes in search of a physical "line" on the ground.

> Makar was satisfied and the next day went in search of the line of commerce […] The posters clearly indicated that all of proletariat should resolutely stand on the line of industry development. This immediately gave Makar an idea: first he must find the proletariat, and under him will be the line and somewhere nearby --- comrade Lopin.[37]

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[36] Макар сейчас же пошел искать главную московскую изучнотехническую контору […]В другой комнате Макару дали бумагу в профсоюз…Профсоюз помещался еще в более громадном доме чем техническая контора […]В сумерки начальник пришел, съел яичницу и прочитал бумажку Макара через посредство своей помошницы[…] Ibid., 44.

[37] Макар остался доволен и на другой день пошел искать промышленную линию[…] На плакатах ясно указывалось, что весь пролетариат должен твердо стоять на линии развития промышленности. Это сразу вразумило Макара: нужно сначала отыскать пролетариат, а под ним будет линия и где-нибудь рядом товарищ Лопин. Ibid., 45.

Makar's wandering among the masses ("khozhdenie po massam") eventually takes him to the "lowest" levels of the proletariat --- a group of poverty stricken workers living in communal housing. After traveling from the "center of government" to the source of its labor force, Makar has a dream in which he prophetically glimpses the relationship between the bureaucracy and the working masses. In his dream Makar sees a "learned man" as tall as a mountain, who in his far-sightedness does not notice the small person looking up at him. The empty and distant gaze frightens and intrigues Makar. Finally, he asks the statue-like figure how he, Makar, could be useful to society. The statue does not answer, but falls down in an immobile heap.

This dream reveals to Makar the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic structures and moves him to action. Makar decides that he, as a representative of the proletariat, is better suited to run the bureaucratic offices; eventually bureaucracy is eliminated altogether as the common people learn how to govern and organize themselves:

> From this day forward Makar and Petr sat at desks across Lev Chumov and began to talk with the poor people who arrived at their office, deciding all matters in their minds --- based in their sympathy toward the destitute. Soon the people stopped coming to Makar and Petr's institution, because they reasoned so simply, that even the poor could reason in the same manner, and the workers began to think for themselves in their own homes.[38]

[38] С тех пор Макар и Петр сели за столы против Льва Чумового и стали говорить с бедным приходящим народом, решая все дела в уме --- на базе сочувствия неимущим. Скоро и народ перестал ходить в учреждение Макара и Петра, потому что они думали настолько просто, что и сами бедные могли думать и решать также, и трудящиеся стали думать сами за себя на квартирах. Ibid., 52.

Makar's distorted logic conveys quite a different message than the one found in "The Governmental Citizen." While Petr Evseevich's naive misinterpretations of Soviet ideology engendered a negative outcome: he privileged bureaucratic order above human welfare, Makar's "doubts" lead him to improve conditions for the proletariat by creating an alternative to the bureaucratic runaround. In all three of these works the imposition of bureaucratic terminology on everyday phenomena primarily functions as a comical device. The notion that the physical world has changed in accordance with a new rhetoric exists in the minds of laughable characters whose awkward linguistic manipulations expose their faulty logic.

The narrator stands apart from his heroes in these short satirical works, commenting as a critical observer. The spoken language of the characters and the narrator's commentary do not coincide stylistically. Satirical language creates characters, not worlds. In *The Foundation Pit*, however, the narrator and characters share the same language, mangled "bureaucratese" loses its humorous attributes and becomes part of another kind of rhetorical system that communicates philosophical ideas and shapes the fictional reality in the novel. The abstract realm no longer hinders Socialism as previously empty signifiers are injected with Platonov's meaning. As "Sovietspeak" seamlessly blends with contemplative vocabulary, two semantic realities which were previously juxtaposed come together as one.

Satirical Language in *The Foundation Pit*

While in the aforementioned short satirical works, the author humorously shows how characters interpret or misinterpret reality through the prism of Soviet rhetoric, in *The Foundation Pit*,

Platonov *himself* uses this refracted linguistic mode to embody his philosophical ideas within a fictional universe. This signals that the author has to come to terms with "Sovietspeak" as an inevitable part of life in the Socialist State.

Thomas Seifrid characterizes the language as "the speech patterns of Russian lower classes, it presents itself as an embodiment of the voice of the "dark" masses suddenly enfranchised after 1917."[39] While there are certainly intermittent expressions that could be categorized as "speech patterns of the Russian lower classes," the prevalence of poetic and political neologisms indicates that the language of *The Foundation Pit* represents more than a mimetic representation of a historical phenomenon, but exists as a truly sui generis mix specific to Platonov's unique vision of reality.

One of the components that comprises this linguistic material is the satirical language of the NEP period. Many scholars have rightly argued against a satirical interpretation of *The Foundation Pit* as a whole. However, in the following section I would like to point out that numerous phrases, taken out of context, clearly resemble the satirical quips penned by Platonov's contemporaries. Although I will compare lines from *The Foundation Pit* with those taken from other works, the intertextual dialogue between specific texts is not the focus of my study. Rather, I simply wish to illustrate that Platonov drew linguistic expressions from the same NEP-era satirical well, demonstrating once again the significance of early Soviet satire to the prose masterpieces produced during the late 1920s and 1930s.

As I have already mentioned, the prevalence of bureaucratic language and political rhetoric in every aspect of private life functioned as a key theme of NEP-era satire. After the

[39] Seifrid, 2.

Russian Revolution, every element of human existence came under the microscope of political scrutiny and categorization. Like Platonov, many satirists of the early 1920s made light of the fact that language had come to dominate reality: to create it rather than describe it. Thus, everyday actions acquired new meaning simply by being called by new names and words. This defamiliarization of everyday activity was treated humoursly by authors describing quotidian routines such as eating, sleeping and working using the new Soviet jargon.

Certain passages in *The Foundation Pit* read exactly like a satire of this type. For those intimately familiar with this novel the task of separating philosophical from the potentially comical passages presents considerable difficulty, as the two linguistic modes blend into one. I will defamiliarize and disorient the veteran Platonov reader by extracting individual phrases from the novel's text and comparing them to phrases from satirical short stories and feuilletons from the 1920s.

Personal Life in the Collective

The very first lines of the novel tell the reader that the main character, Voshev, has been fired from his job on his birthday. "On the day when he reached the thirtieth year of his personal life Voshchev was discharged from the small machine factory where he had earned the means of his existence."[40] This formulation may appear funny or in the very least strange, to a reader not yet acquainted with Platonov's literary style. Calling Voshev's birthday "the 30th anniversary of his

[40] Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit* translated by Mirra Ginsburg (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), 3. "В день тридцатилетия личной жизни Вощеву дали расчет с небольшого механического завода, где он добывал средства для своего существования."Andrei Platonov, *Kotlovan* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2000), 21.

personal life" sounds contrived and hyperbolic. Afterall, isn't it assumed that a life should necessarily be "personal"? A very similar phrase occurs in Il'f and Petrov's short story "A Conversation at the Table." Il'f and Petrov use socio-political language to describe the family members: "There were three members in the family --- father, mother and son. "The father was an old Bolshevik, the mother – an old housewife, and the son was an old pioneer with cropped hair and twelve years of life experience."[41] The convoluted manner of providing information about the son's age as "twelve years of life experience" is a statement similar to the one made by Platonov about Voshev's age. Il'f and Petrov's story vividly shows that family life has become inseparable from public, political life. In this humorous appraisal of Soviet life, even a twelve year old child is enlisted as a member of a Socialist society.

What's in a Name?

Many humorists playfully pointed out that even being named, or having a name was deemed a socially conscious act in early Soviet Russia. In *The Foundation Pit* a character named Lev Ilyich Pashkin receives criticism from his supervisors at work for the combination of his first name and patronymic: "Pashkin's wife remembered how Zhachev had sent a letter of denunciation against her husband to the Regional Party Committee, and the investigation lasted a holw month. They had even picked on his name: why Lev, and why Ilyich on top of it? It should be one or the other!"[42] The two names politically contradict each other as one refers to Vladimir

[41] "В семье было три человека --- папа, мама и сын. Папа был старый большевик, мама-старая домашняя хозяйка, а сын был старый пионер со стриженой головой и двенацатилетним жизненым опытом."I. Il'f, E.Petrov "Razgovory za Chainym Stolom" in *Sovetskii iumoresticheskii rasskaz*, 304.

Ilyich Lenin and the other to Leo Davidovich Trotsky, the people's Commisar who attempted to form an opposition against Stalin's policies in the late 1920s. Clearly, the man had no choice in the matter of his naming. Nonetheless, the involuntary act of carrying the wrong name was perceived as an act of conscious rebellion against the State. The obsession with names in the new Soviet world is yet another symptom of words prevailing over substance. Humorous treatment of this phenomenon appears in the works of Bulgakov, Il'f and Petrov, Zoshchenko and many others. Here, I will give a very typical example from a short story by Victor Ardov about a man who loves slogans and even performs a socially conscious act by naming his children after a slogan.

> Citiziens, I am a responsible and conscious person […] And as far as consciousness is concerned, it will suffice to say that I have always stigmatized religion and always will. For this reason, I did not even baptize my children but named them in honor of the October revolution and called my daughter --- Decreetina, and my son ---Unifier, meaning let's face the countryside and unify.[43]

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[42] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 36. "Жена Пашкина помнила, как Жачев послал в ОблКК заявление на мужа и целый месяц шло расследование, --- даже к имени придерались.Почему и Лев и Ильич? – Уж что-нибудь одно!" Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 40.

[43] The name "Decreetina" comes from the word "decree" or "law." Я граждане, человек ответственный и сознательный […] А что касается до сознательности, то довольно того, что я религию всегда клеймил и буду клеймить. И даже детей на этой почве не крестил, а октябрил и назвал дочь – Декретиной, а сына- Смычек, в смысле лицом к деревне, смычки. Victor Ardov. "Lozungofikatsia" in *Sovetskii iumresticheskii rasskaz*, 16.

The silly "slogan" names of the children bear testimony to the fact that slogans are not appropriate in every aspect of life.

A Historical Birth

A comically absurd idea similar to the notion that one's name carries political significance treats birth as a socio-historical rather than a personal event. In *The Foundation Pit*, the little girl Nastya explains that she did not want to be born before Stalin became leader. When the diggers inform Nastya of her good fortune of being born during Socialism, she takes the credit for this revolutionary act.

> 'I didn't want to get born --- I was afraid my mother would be a bourgeois.' 'Then how did you get organized?' […]
>
> 'The chief one is Stalin[44], and the one after him, Budenny. Before they came, there wrere only bourgeois and I didn't get born because I didn't want to. But as soon as Stalin came to be, I came to be as well!"[45]

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[44] Ginsburg's translation says "Lenin," but the Russian text (edited and appended by Platonov after it was inspected by censors) mentions "Stalin." I have altered Ginsburg's translation to maintain consistency between English and Russian versions of the text.

[45] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 62. Ginsburg's translation says: "as soon as Lenin came, I came too." I have changed "came" to "came to be." My formulation more closely approximates Platonov's text.

-А я сама не хотела рождаться, я боялась – мать буржуйкой будет.
-Так как же ты организовалась? […]
-Главный- Сталин, а второй- Буденный. Когда их не было, а жили одни буржуи, то я и не рожалась, потому что не хотела! А теперь как стал Сталин, так и я стала!

In Il'f and Petrov's *Twelve Chairs* Ostap Bender humorously follows similar logic that views birth and death as an event of socio-historical significance. When Ostap learns that the magnificent mansion previously belonging to Ippolit Matveevich inhabited by elderly women, he mockingly feigns lack of personal familiarity with this demographic, identifying the geriatric population in abstract terms as "those ones who were born before historical realism": " 'Here we have a government-run almshouse: old women live on a full pension.' 'I see. Are those the ones that were born before historical realism?'"[46] With this statement, Bender asserts that age can only be measured in historical terms, even the years of one's life are robbed of personal significance and become engulfed in the timeline of Marxist historicity.

From the Mouths of Babes

In *The Foundation Pit*, little Nastya's remarks similarly beg a humorous interpretation as they could be classified in the category of early Soviet satire under the rubric "kids say the darnest things!" Several humorists of the 1920s wrote satires illuminating how Soviet rhetoric comically functions in a child's world. For instance, in a story by Victor Ardov, a twelve year old boy decides to become politically active by putting up a "sten-gazeta" in his communal apartment. Of course, the boy's "political agenda" centers on a child's interest. His first objective of cultural enlightenment is to buy a soccer ball. The first installation of the "sten-gazeta" reads as follows:

Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 57.

[46] " –У нас тут государственная богадельня: старухи живут на полном пенсионе. – Понимаю. Это которые еще до исторического реализма родились?" I.Il'f and E.Petrov. *Dvenatsat' stul'ev*, (Moscow: Panorama, 1995), 132.

ABOUT THE FAMILY NEWSPAPER AND FAMILY LIFE

Many will say 'Why do we need a family paper? It is entirely useless, it is pure tomfoolery.' However, to say such a thing is none other than backwardness. In our communal apartment there still remain many vestiges of the old life, for instance, dad drinks Russian vodka etc. All in all, we should establish sensible deductions from the family's earnings for the purposes of cultural development, for instance to purchase a soccer ball or something else.[47]

The young boy identifies the object of his desire--- a soccer ball, as a useful tool of cultural enlightenment. His observations about his neighbors' supposed backwardness betrays innocence cloaked in grown-up, political jargon. The young pioneer's aping of overheard clichés reveals the all-pervasive influence of Soviet ideology.

Romancing the System

The transfiguration of romantic relationships under Socialism was another socio-cultural phenomenon that presented material for the satirist's sharp wits. In Platonov's novel, the romantic sphere is inextricable from a Socialist consciousness. One couple's affection for each other is motivated by political understanding and expressed with Soviet jargon. "Olgusha, my

[47] О СЕМЕЙНОЙ ГАЗЕТЕ И СЕМЕЙНОМ БЫТЕ. Многие скажут: «Зачем нужна семейная газета. Это совсем ни к чему, а одно только баловство». Между тем такое сказать есть не что иное, как отсталость. В нашей квартире осталось еще очень много пережитков старого опыта, как например, папа пьет русскую горькую и т.д. И вообще, почему бы не установить разумных отчислений из заработка на культурные цели, скажем футбольный мяч или что другое? Victor Ardov, "Sten-gazeta" in *Sovetskii iumoristicheskii rasskaz*, 14.

little frog, but you have a colossal sense of the masses! Let me organize myself next to you for that!"[48] Another character named Kozlov is a petty bureaucrat who decides to lighten the postal workers' burden by cutting off his romantic correspondence with a local woman.

> That morning Kozlov had liquidated as a feeling his love for a certain middle-class lady. Vainly she wrote him letters about her adoration. For his part, toiling at his public tasks, he was silent, refusing in advance to confiscate her caresses, because he was looking for a woman of a nobler, more active type. Having read in the paper that the post office was overloaded and worked poorly, he decided to strengthen his sector of socialist construction by putting an end to the lady's letters to him.[49]

Kozlov's romantic feelings or lack thereof are entirely based on political advantage. This passage could be construed as very funny and entirely in line with similar satires commenting on the changed nature of "love in the time of Socialism." As a point of comparison, Sergei Shvetsov's poem "Evolutsia liubovnoi liriki" ("The Evolution of the Love Lyric") (1938), though written in

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[48] Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 37. "Ольгуша, лягушечка, ведь ты гигантски чуешь массы! Дай я к тебе за это приорганизуюсь!"Andrei Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 40.

[49] Ibid., 70. Сегодня утром Козлов ликвидировал как чувство свою любовь к одной средней даме. Она тщетно писала ему письма о своем обожании, он же, превозмогая общественную нагрузку, молчал, заранее отказываясь от конфискации её ласк, потому что искал женщину более благородного, активного типа. Прочитав же в газете о загруженности почты и нечеткости её работы, он решил укрепить этот сектор социалистического строительства путем прекращения дамских писем к себе. Ibid., 63.

the late 1930s, these chastushka-like verses illustrate the changing attitudes toward love and the subsequent linguistic transformation of love vocabulary in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Year 1925

You are ruining my productivity plan, my dear!

Leave, I feel no pity for you!

The rock drill is more precious to me

I feel more affection for the cement mixer!

[1925 год

Промфинал ты срываешь, милка!

Уходи, мне тебя не жалко!

Мне дороже камнеудробилка

И милее бетономешалка!]

Year 1930

I am an enchanted by your professional experience

I burn with the desire to start a family

We'll have our love coordinated by the Union Branch Committee

And submit it for approval to the People's Commissariat for Education

[1930 год

Очарован твоим профстажем,

Заболел я семейным вопросом

Мы с месткомом любовь увяжем

Согласуем её с наркомпросом […]][50]

Stalin's Hierarchy of Needs

Individual participation in the building of Soviet economy by altering one's hygienic, sleep and eating habits as contribution to national economic efforts was another common theme in NEP-era satirical literature. In *The Foundation Pit*, a manipulative, maimed war veteran name Zhachev tries to establish an ethical economic regime by stealing food from the bourgeois rather than from the workers "But in the midsummer he changed his course and began to eat at the expense of the maximum class, by which he hoped to be of use to the whole upropertied movement toward future happiness." [51] Zhachev's meals do not merely provide satiation or even sensual enjoyment. Rather, they constitute the implementation of a political regime. Sleep similarly transforms into a willful act serving the interests of the State.

[50] Sergei Shvetsov, "Evoliutsia liubovnoi liriki" in *Classics of Soviet Satire* ed. Peter Henry, (Collets: London & Wellingborough, 1972).

[51] Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 38. "Жачев сменил курс – питался не у рабочего, а у максимального класса." Andrei Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 41.

> 'Stop cutting my wages, so the speak, Safronov,' said Kozlov awakening. 'Stop making speeches when I'm asleep, or I will lodge a complaint against you! Never mind --- sleep is also a kind of wage, they'll tell you all about it.'[52]

Sleep, like eating has changed from a private phenomenon to a political one. The comical augmentation of daily actions to national significance frequently appears in Mikhail Zoshchenko's short satires. In one short story entitled "An Economical Regime," the people are called upon to "economize" in their households. In practical terms this means that people who are already living in poverty must further deprive themselves to "implement" the regime. The character-narrator speaks about these useless actions with enthusiasm. "And what were people thinking before this? Why haven't we implemented such an advantegeous regime before? It's a pity! We put this very regime into effect in the fall.[53] Finally, they decide to stop heating their bathroom in the winter, thereby contributing to the economic well-being of the country. Poverty, typically an unpleasant, involuntary condition is triumphantly described as a positive action in service to the Soviet State.

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[52] Ibid., 41.---Довольно тебе, Сафронов, как говорится, зарплату мне снижать,---сказал пробужденный Козлов. ---- Перестань брать слово, когда мне спится, а то я на тебя заявление подам! Не беспокойся --- сон ведь тоже как зарплата считается, там тебе укажут. Ibid., 42.

[53] "И об чем только народ раньше думал? Отчего такой выгодный режим раньше в обиход не вводил? Вот обидно-то! А начался у нас этот самый режим ещё с осени." Mikhail Zoshchenko, "Rezhim ekonomii," *Sovetskii iumoristicheskii rasskaz 20-30x Godov* (Moscow: "Pravda," 1987), 213.

Satirical Language and the Impossibility of Laughter

Why is laughter impossible in *The Foundation Pit* after comical lines that have fared so well in eliciting chuckles in other contexts? The source of the humor in the other satires stems from the recognition of real situations and their hyperbolic distortions. Readers familiar with Soviet reality of the 1920s and 1930s could nod knowingly at the topicality of NEP-era satire and their laughter would be the result of identification tinged by disbelief. The effect of satirical language proves similar to a fun-house mirror, whereby the reflected distortion makes us laugh because it does not quite match the familiar original.

In the case of *The Foundation Pit*, the fictional world presented in the novel eludes mimetic comparison due to its surreal eccentricity. The very same situations that appear funny in other satires, including Platonov's earlier works, lose their humorous qualities in *The Foundation Pit* because this particular novel suspends the reader's disbelief, drawing him into a peculiar, self-contained universe. This work is not only laden with fantastical elements, but has no firm footing in reality whatsoever. As in many works of modernism, the narrator is "in conspiracy" with his characters to hermetically seal the reality of the novel from outside systems of meaning. Through the act of reading, the audience inadvertently participates in the shared illusion. Phrases and expressions that can be recognized as bureaucratic Sovietspeak have been largely severed from their original socio-cultural context and re-appropriated within *The Foundation Pit's* specific semantic and philosophical schemata. I will analyze this transformation of satirical language by reinserting the previously discussed satirical phrases back into their original context. The following subheadings represent titles of imaginary satirical feuilletons to demonstrate the unrealized comical potential of each episode.

Happy Birthday

The potentially humorous lines: "On the day when he reached the thirtieth year of his personal life Voshchev was discharged from the small machine factory where he had earned the means of his existence"[54] are followed by a somber passage describing an empty landscape. "Back in his room, Voshchev gathered his belongings into a sack and went out, to gain a better understanding of his future in the open air. But the air was empty; the motionless trees carefully held the heat in their leaves; and dust *drearily* lay in the open road. *There was a quiet situation in nature*."[55] The first lines in isolation resemble the hyperbolic parody of bureaucratic language, but the text that follows lacks cues for a humorous interpretation. The lines describing Voshev's personal life and work at the factory could be read satirically in the context of a feuilleton or a satirical sketch. In this novel, the satirical language acquires double meaning, revealing the interconnectedness between philosophical and Socialist quests. The word "существование" (existence) evokes two meanings: physical survival and existence as a philosophical concept. This formulation implies that Voshev's work at the factory not only put food on the table, but provided him with philosophical purpose. After he leaves the factory, Voshev experiences a sense of emptiness and loss.

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[54] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 3. "В день тридцатилетия личной жизни Вощеву дали расчет с небольшого механического завода, где он добывал средства для своего существования."Andrei Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 21.

[55] The italicized words are my corrections of Ginsburg's translation, intended to more accurately reflect the text of the original. Ibid. "Вощев взял на кавартире вещи в мешок и вышел наружу, чтобы на воздухе лучше понять свое будущее. Но воздух был пуст, неподвижные деревья бережно держали жару в листьях, и скучно лежала пыль на безлюдной дороге --- в природе было тихое положение." Ibid.

The lyrical description that follows similarly contains phrases verging between ridiculous and philosophical. In the sentence, "в природе было тихое положение," ("there was a quiet situation in nature") the word "situation" denotes human organization or human participation. In this way, nature appears artificial as though set up into a particular configuration by human hands. This insertion of official language into a landscape description once again connects ontological inquiry to Socialism's false confidence in replacing mystery with monolithic meaning.

Laughter proves impossible because it has been followed by a poetic description of a desolate landscape and philosophical angst. The odd wording does not invite the reader to laugh, but to consider the source of this absurdity. Voshev's journey unfolds not as a picaresque adventure traveled through landmarks of witty aphorisms, in the manner of Ostap Bender, but as a boundless spiritual search. The physical space of Voshev's surroundings echoes his philosophical sense of aimlessness and emptiness, as experienced in the recesses of his psyche.

> He walked all over town silently till evening, as if waiting for the world to make itself entirely known. But still the world remained unclear to him, and in the darkness of his body he felt a quiet spot, where there was nothing and nothing *prevented something from beginning there*.[56]

[56] Ibid., 11. The italicized phrase is a correction of Ginsburg's translation: "nothing prevented things from swaying there" is incorrect, should be "nothing prevented something from beginning there." До самого вечера молча ходил Вощев по городу, словно в ожидании когда мир станет общеизвестен. Однако ему по-прежнему было неясно на свете, и он ощущал в темноте своего тела тихое место, где ничего не было, но ничто ничему не препятствовало начаться. Ibid., 26.

Both the external conditions of physical space and the internal mechanism of Voshev's being can be characterized as empty. As indicated by the quote above, this emptiness is not without potential. There is "nothing preventing the beginning of something." This future potential similarly resides in the image of the foundation pit itself. The dug-up ditch exists as the basis for innumerable imagined buildings. Like the emptiness it describes, the linguistic narrative functions without a discernible beginning or end. In contrast to the feuilleton, or satirical short story, the episode of Voshev's sudden unemployment is not regulated by a comical "punch line," signaling the reader to chuckle. If the same line had been utilized in one of Zoshchenko's satirical short stories, it would have elicited a "laughter through tears" reaction, an instance of recognition. After all, being fired on one's birthday for thinking too much provides an appropriate set up for the humor of misfortune. In this case, Voshev's experience marks the beginning of a complex narrative about a philosophical search.

Love in the Time of Socialism

In another case, the author has an opportunity to mock the invasion of the romantic sphere with Soviet language. Instead, Platonov chooses the seemingly ridiculous Socialist love vocabulary as a starting point to explore the nature of intimacy. After Pashkov expresses his affection for his wife with Soviet slogans: "Olgusha, my little frog, but you have a colossal sense of the masses! Let me organize myself next to you just for that!"[57] the narrator reveals a sincere love between these two characters: "He laid his head upon his wife's body and kept still in the enjoyment of

[57] Ibid., 37."Ольгуша, лягушечка, ведь ты гигантски чуешь массы! Дай я к тебе за это приорганизуюсь!" Ibid., 40.

happiness and warmth."[58] The humorous effect of the oddly bureaucratic conversation between husband and wife is diminished by Pahskin's touching display of affection. This indicates that for Pashkin and his wife, personal meaning and bureaucratic jargon have merged into a single entity.

The verb приорганизоваться (to organize oneself) changes from an impersonal verb of political action and acquires a deeply affectionate tone, indicating bodily closeness, warmth and human connection. The word root of "organization" brings to mind the idea of an "organism" when placed in association with the body. Platonov reminds the reader the physicality of organization, as cooperation between living organisms. The primal experience of life informs the impersonal linguistic formulation. Pashkin relies on his wife's love to find purpose in social and personal spheres. Bureaucratic jargon does not diminish the significance of his feelings as it would in a satire. In this context, the reverse proves true: Pashkin's sentiment elevates distorted bureaucratese to the level of poetic tenderness.

This usage of "organization" as an expression of intimacy, redefines the concept of Socialist organizing. Socialism does not merely accomplish political goals, but establishes a connection between human beings whereby many bodies become one entity. The notion of communal life as comforting and intimate is echoed in other parts of the novel, where workers sleep huddled together to preserve warmth and escape isolation. In this way, Platonov endows the impersonal Soviet vocabulary with additional meanings linking abstract Socialist concepts to the most visceral aspects of the human experience.

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[58] Ibid., 37. "Он приложил свою голову к телу жены и затих в наслаждении счастьем и теплотой." Ibid., 40.

In Stalin's Womb

Little Nastya's explanation as to why she was born in Stalin's time could have served as a child's comical interpretation of Communism in another work of satire, but in *The Foundation Pit* it is drained of humor, as the child's fear for her life is described in the same paragraph. After Nastya cutely states that she did not want to be born because she was afraid that her mom would be a "bourgeois," the reader finds out that the little girl's speech is not testimony of her innocence, but an intentional attempt at self-preservation.

> "I didn't want to get born --- I was afraid my mother would be a bourgeois."
>
> "Then how did you get organized?"
>
> Confused and fearful, the girl dropped her head and started plucking at her shirt. She knew very well that she was present among the proletariat, and she guarded herself, as her mother had told her long ago and for a long time.[59]

Once again, the comical quality of Nastya's words is lost, as fear and a reminder of her dead mother are introduced alongside the little girl's precocious "political awareness."

We can neither laugh nor fully sympathize with the girl's tragic predicament because of this semantic presentation. Nastya's childish self-expression cloaked in Soviet terminology contains a philosophical dimension. As she reflects on her auspicious birth in the time of Socialism she

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[59] Ibid., 62. -А я сама не хотела рождаться, я боялась – мать буржуйкой будет.
-Так как же ты организовалась?
Девочка в стеснении и в боязни опустила голову и начала щипать свою рубашку; она ведь знала, что присуствует в пролетариате и сторожила сама себя, как давно и долго говорила ей мать. Ibid., 57.

states: 'The chief one is Stalin,[60] and the one after him, Budenny. Before they came, there wrere only bourgeois and I didn't get born because I didn't want to. But as soon as Stalin came to be, I came to be as well!"[61] In the explanation of her birth, Nastya directly implicates Stalin as a godlike creator of her existence. Linguistically, the notion of "becoming" is connected to Stalin's name: "как стал Сталин, так и я стала." ("as soon as Stalin came to be, I came to be") The suggestion that Nastya came into being as a direct result of Stalin's becoming connects biological birth to the notion of political power. Clearly, Nastya is not referring to the leader's infancy, but conceives of Stalin as a spontaneously manifested entity who has come into the world fully grown and powerful. Stalin "became" the moment he gained control over Soviet Russia, trading his god-given humanity for a new indestructible mythical form, a body made of steel, bestowed on him by the Socialist party. This play on words implies an image of political re-birth, a second chance to alter what the fates have bestowed upon the individual. Nastya, as an offspring of a bourgeois mother is reborn after her mother's death when she is adopted by the Socialist collective.

Learning to Dig Beyond the Surface

As I have demonstrated in the previous section, in *The Foundation Pit*, satirical expressions acquire new, philosophically evocative meanings. Phrases which on the surface appear as

[60] Ginsburg's translation says "Lenin," but the Russian text (edited and appended by Platonov after it was inspected by censors) mentions "Stalin." I have altered Ginsburg's translation to maintain consistency between English and Russian versions of the text.

[61] Ibid., 62. Главный – Сталин, а второй --- Буденный. Когда их не было, а жили одни буржуи, то я и не рожалась, потому что не хотела! А теперь как стал Сталин, так и я стала! Ibid., 57.

historically specific critiques of contemporary Soviet reality, in fact engage with the Socialist project not as straightforward commentary about the project's effectiveness, but as a query into the ontological implications of this new social order. NEP-era satire schooled its readers to use a binary model of moral judgments by scorning socially harmful behaviors such as alcoholism, bureaucratic inefficiency and bourgeois remnants of the old regime. Platonov's prose explodes the feuilleton's didactic framework into poetic debris. Once metaphysical elements are introduced into the novel, all previous value judgments come into question. Whereas dire physical conditions such as those experienced by the characters in Platonov's novel would elicit outrage from a reader of satire, in *The Foundation Pit* suffering represents a sacrifice for the sake of future harmony and therefore is not necessarily a negative outcome.

The search for happiness proves deceptive in the novel, as the protagonist Voshev seeks meaning, not personal fulfillment. In response to Kozlov, a misguided character obsessed with social advancement, Voshev explains that an awareness of life must take precedence over its enjoyment: "'Sadness doesn't mean a thing, Comrade Kozlov,' he said. 'It shows that our class feels the whole world, and happiness is a far-off business anyway…Happiness will only lead to shame!"[62] In a Socialist utopia mankind surrenders individual gain for the greater goal of unification--- Kozlov's or any other worker's life satisfaction does not constitute an accurate measurement of progress.

In a similar vein, the description of workers huddled together in a small barrack could serve as humorous fodder for one of satirical Zoshchenko's commentaries on the housing

[62] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 23. "Грусть --- это ничего товарищ Козлов, --- сказал он, --- это значит, наш класс весь мир чувствует, а счастье все равно буржуазное дело…От счастья только стыд начнется." Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 31.

shortage in the Soviet Union. Within the context of the novel, the cramped living quarters provide an atmosphere of camaraderie, physical warmth and comfort.

> Voshev felt the chill of fatigue and lay down for warmth between the bodies of two sleeping workmen. He fell asleep unknown to those people who had closed their eyes, pleased that he was spending the night beside them. And so he slept, without knowledge of the truth, until bright morning came.[63]

The sleeping workers' bodies have the appearance of corpses, their gauntness indicative of back-breaking labor. Given that the novel does not follow the feuilleton's formulaic structure of presenting a social ill and satirically condemning it, the reader must dig deeper than the obvious to derive meaning from the presented images. The bleak existence in the worker collective can be redeemed if viewed as mortification of the flesh for a higher goal.

Characteristics of the proletariat most revered by Platonov are the ability to endure suffering and the nearly naïve persistence of faith. Although martyrdom reaps no material rewards, the one who suffers will be rewarded in the non-corporeal realm of ideas. Platonov's poetic prose carries the promise of another world. The proletarian characters' ability to transform Soviet rhetoric into metaphysical poetics indicates their active participation in this subtle revolution of the spirit, invisible to the materialist viewpoint. By surreptitiously inserting

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[63] Ibid., 13."Вощев почувствовал холод усталости и лег для тепла среди двух тел спящих мастеровых. Он уснул, незнакомый этим людям, закрывшим свои глаза, и довольный что около них ночует, ---и так спал, не чувствуя истины, до светлого утра." Ibid., 27.

meaningful content into seemingly meaningless official vocabulary the author alerts his readers of a hidden dimension revealed by proletarian characters' oblivious wisdom.

Exploiting the Exploited Language

The distinction between the artless proletarians and the duplicitous bureaucrats, initially explored in Platonov's early satires, persists in the novel as not all characters use political vocabulary to express their own meaning. In parts of *The Foundation Pit*, Platonov returns to the satirical mode to show that some individuals exploit language as a means to achieve bureaucratic promotion, rather than attempting to build a new reality. For instance, Kozlov, a character more concerned with advancing his career than with the building of Socialism, abuses Socialist formulations to intimidate his subordinates:

> Every day, as he awakened, he generally read books in bed and, fixing in his mind the formulations, slogans, poems, instructions, words of diverse wisdom, theses of various reports and resolutions, verses of songs, and so on, he would set out on his rounds of various government organs and institutions, where he was known and respected as an active social force. And there Kozlov intimidated the already frightenend employees with his scientific approach, mental outlook and firm grasp of principle.[64]

[64] Ibid., 7. Каждый день, просыпаясь, он вообще читал в постели книги, и, запомнив формулировки, лозунги, стихи, заветы, всякие слова мудрости, тезисы различных актов, резолюции, строфы песен и прочее, он шел в обход органов и организаций, где его знали и уважали как активную общественную силу, --- и там Козлов пугал и так уже напуганных служащих своей научностью, кругозором и подкованностью. Ibid., 63.

Kozlov's lineage can be traced back to the personified impediments to Socialism in Platonov's early satires. He does not use Soviet language creatively to reflect on the mysteries of existence, but memorizes static formulas to exercise control. Kozlov begins to exploit language after he moves up in the ranks to a bureaucratic position.

Through Kozlov's example, we can see how the author differentiates between productive and destructive uses of Soviet language. The true proletariat has the ability to poetically transform static Soviet speech, stretching its semantic potentials with evolving word roots and neologisms, while for the bureaucrat Soviet expression functions to maintain the status quo.

Language as Time and Space

The unique language of *The Foundation Pit* not only expresses an *internal* sense of subjective meaning, but shapes the *external* phenomena of this fictional world as well. The physical and psychic properties of Platonov's fictional universe are entirely interconnected, such that the conditions of being are dictated by a kind of "linguistic natural law."

Soviet terminology in *The Foundation Pit* no longer represents the chasm between overblown abstract rhetoric and daily reality, as it did in NEP-era satires of Platonov and other writers. Within the context of the novel its elemental properties have drastically changed in confluence with Platonov's complicated philosophical aims. The resulting semantic combination of satire and poetics dictates the phenomenological possibilities of Platonov's universe. The unique plot, setting and character are products of this linguistic alchemy. The psychic and physical spheres co-exist in unison: language does not merely reference the world of the novel,

but embodies it. Spatial, temporal and emotional dimensions are constructed from this linguistic matter.

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope posits that each literary genre houses its own conception of time and space, which in turn dictates the events possible within the artistic universe. Morson and Emerson describe the chronotope in their seminal work on Bakhtin's poetics: "In its primary sense, a chronotope is a way of understanding experience, it is a specific form-shaping ideology for understanding the nature of events and actions."[65] A time-space continuum in a novel differs from the time-space construction in a Greek myth: characters in a novel age, grow and change with the passage of linear time, whereas mythological time stands still, allowing for gods and humans to co-exist on the same plane. *The Foundation Pit* contains both historical and mythological sensibilities as expressed by two linguistic modes. The language of metaphysical poetics suggests atemporal infinity, while Soviet jargon is historically specific. This linguistic mixture allows for the historical and the fantastical to co-exist within the novel.

For instance, the hardest working proletarian hero in the novel is a blacksmith anthropomorphical bear who despite his years of labor has been unfairly excluded from the collective farm:

> Yelisey went with Chicklin to show him the most oppressed farm laborer, who had worked most of his life without pay for prosperous households, and now

[65] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Creation of a Prosaic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 367.

> toiled as a hammerer in the kolkhoz smithy and received food as a blacksmith's helper.[66]

The surreal appearance of an upright standing, working bear verges on fairytale, but the bear character as an oppressed proletarian worker evokes socio-cultural specificity grounding his narrative in historical time. In the fictional world of the novel, the bear appears as a humanlike character, in the tradition of the Minotaur. This mute and beastly entity fully experiences the world physically and emotionally and therefore is included as a Soviet citizen participating in the class struggle: "Looking at the blackened, singed bear, Nastya rejoiced that he was for them, not for the bourgeois. 'He also suffers --- so he's ours, isn't it so?' said Nastya.[67] The image of the proletarian bear aptly sums up the symbiotic relationship between mythology and history in the text of the novel. The bear is both poetic symbol and historical actor, corporeal and metaphorical.

Thomas Seifrid calls *The Foundation Pit* a parody of the five-year-plan, a "grotesque inversion of Five-Year Plan intentions and their corresponding representation in Soviet literature."[68] This view holds up only if one considers *The Foundation Pit* to be a novel set in historical time, specifically in the late 1920s. "Inversion" implies that the author's purpose was to construct a historical replica of the five-year plan and then distort it. While historical and

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[66] Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 104. Елисей пошел с Чиклиным, чтобы указать ему самого угнетенного батрака, который почти спокон век работал даром на имущих дворах, а теперь трудится молотобойцем в колхозной кузне и получает пищу от приварок, как кузнец второй руки. Andrei Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 89.

[67] Ibid.,106. Настя, глядя на почерневшего, обгорелого медведя, радовалась, что он за нас, а не за буржуев. – Он ведь тоже мучается---он, значит, за Сталина, правда ведь? – говорила Настя. Ibid., 90.

[68] Seifrid, 141.

cultural details of the five-year plan are certainly recognizable in the work, just as satirical language is recognizable, the familiar setting cannot be called a parody, as it has been transported into an entirely new temporal reality.

The question of how the reader should interpret such events as the brutal de-kulakilization of a village with the help of an anthropomorphical bear, the sudden death of key characters, the collectivization of horses, and most importantly little Nastya's tragic demise at the end of the novel depends on the temporal context within which he or she views these occurrences. Just as the meaning of NEP-era satirical quips changes when the phrases are displaced within a philosophical text, so is the meaning of fantastical and horrific events contingent upon their temporal setting. While historical specificity endows events with ethical significance, the notion of infinity bathes all occurrences in redemptive indifference.

In *The Foundation Pit*, the expanses of time and space have the merciless quality of natural disasters, rendering the characters a faceless army of ants, dwarfed by the enormity of their surroundings. It follows that historical events in the lives of these ants lose their significance when viewed from such great heights. The cruelty of mythological time is compensated by the absence of death in a world devoid of history. The lyrical language of *The Foundation Pit* leads the reader away from historical realism and into the realm of metaphor. This linguistic manipulation lightens the burden of a literal interpretation of Nastya's death. Language aesthetically ameliorates the anxiety of corporeal horror and transforms the event into a multi-valent symbol.

> At midday Chiklin began to dig a special grave for Nastya. He dug it fifteen hours on end, to make it deep, so that no worm, no root, no warmth nor cold would ever reach it, and so the child would never be troubled by the noise of life from the surface of the earth.[69]

The description of Nastya's grave aptly sums up Platonov's linguistic transition from the temporal/literal perspective to the atemporal/mythological view. The narrator first draws the reader's attention to the specifics of time and space: Chiklin begins digging a *deep* grave *at noon* and digs for *fifteen hours*. What follows, however, is a strange transfiguration of the concrete event into a myth. The folkloric description of impermeability (no worm, no root, no warmth nor cold) establishes the grave as a space removed from earthly cause and effect. Moreover, the statement that "the child will never be disturbed" suggests that Nastya will continue to exist in a dimension apart from the living. This physical preparation of Nastya's final resting place evokes the Egyptian practice of mummification. That is, the careful preservation of the body indicates hope for an afterlife.

In accordance with Soviet atheism, the only existence beyond the grave is the life of the collective continuing the work of Socialism in spite of their fallen comrade's untimely death. In this context, as Viugin ascertains, Nastya's demise is not an unequivocal tragedy: "Death and a sacrificial death carry entirely different semantic meanings. Sacrifice is not pessimistic. At least

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[69] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, 141. "В полдень Чиклин начал копать для Насти специальную могилу. Он рыл ее пятнадцать часов подряд, чтоб она была глубока и в нее не сумел бы проникнуть ни червь, ни корень растения, ни тепло, ни холод и чтоб ребенка никогда не беспокоил шум с поверхности земли." Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 115.

it has such a potential if it is justified."[70] According to another Russian scholar, Malygina, the sacrifice is justified as it moves other characters to further action.[71] From a modern reader's vantage point, given the historical consequences of the Socialist project, Nastya's death cannot be read as a justifiable sacrifice. The stark discrepancy between expectation of future happiness and the reality of a failed social system comprises the tragedy of *The Foundation Pit*. One must be aware, however, of the tendency to endow authorial intent with an anachronistic perspective. The child's death in *The Foundation Pit* is rooted in a cultural paradigm characterized by a strong faith in the Socialist utopia.

The death of the child was a common trope in Socialist mythology. The widespread narrative of precocious heroism inevitably ends with the child's physical demise. The story of Pavlik Morozov, a young boy who denounced his father for hiding grain during the Stalinist "dekulakization" and subsequently killed by his own family, was a required text in Soviet schools until the fall of Communism. A 1932 poem by Edward Bagritsky called "The Death of the Female Pioneer" ("Smert' pionerki") aptly sums up the connection between a child's death and the triumphant, ongoing Soviet project. Below, I am including the majority of this long poem, as it beautifully illustrates several key themes of the times: the replacement of Christianity with the cult of Socialism, Stalinist anti-peasant sentiment, the aesthetic treatment of death as celebration, the idea of the collective as locus of the afterlife.

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[70] "Смерть и смерть-жертва несут в себе совершенно разное семантическое наполнение. Жертва не пессимистична. Или способна быть таковой, если она оправданна."Viugin, *Poetika zagadki*, 249.

[71] N.M., Malygina, *Khudozhestvennyi mir Andreia Platonova* (Moscow: Izd-vo Mosk. Ped. un-ta,1995), 60.

In the first part of the poem, Valia, the young pioneer lies dying in a hospital bed. Aware of her daughter's impending death, Valia's peasant mother brings in a golden cross to comfort her. Valia looks out of the window as a storm approaches. The sounds of thunder and the appearance of lightening are in fact pioneers marching all over the world. Valia pushes the cross away defiantly as the mother laments over her deathbed.

Trumpets. Trumpets. Trumpets.
Raise a howling noise.
Over the hospital garden
Over the waters of lakes
Ranks are advancing
Toward the evening meeting

[Трубы. Трубы. Трубы
Подымают вой.
Над больничным садом,
Над водой озер,
Движутся отряды
На вечерний сбор.]

They are blocking out the light
(The distance is blacker than black)
Pioneers of Kuntzev
Pioneers of Setun
Pioneers of Nogin's factory

[Заслоняют свет они
(Даль черным-черна),
Пионеры Кунцева,
Пионеры Сетуни,
Пионеры фабрики Ногина.]

But below, hunched over
Laments the mother:
She will never again
Kiss the child's palms
Never relieve the parched lips
Valentina will not live any longer

[А внизу, склоненная

Изнывает мать:
Детские ладони
Ей не целовать.
Духотой спаленных
Губ не освежить -
Валентине больше
Не придется жить.]

“Did I not collect
a dowry for you?
Silk dresses
Fur and silver
Did I not save,
And lose sleep
Milked the cows,
Guarded the fowl
So that the dowry woud be
Sturdy, undamaged
So your wedding veil would suit you
When you go to the altar!
Do not protest Valen’ka
It will not hurt you,
This small, goldplated
Cross from your baptism.”

[- Я ль не собирала
Для тебя добро?
Шелковые платья,
Мех да серебро,
Я ли не копила,
Ночи не спала,
Все коров доила,
Птицу стерегла,-
Чтоб было приданое,
Крепкое, недраное,
Чтоб фата к лицу -
Как пойдешь к венцу!
Не противься ж, Валенька!
Он тебя не съест,
Золоченый, маленький,
Твой крестильный крест.]

Let these trite,
stale words sound

Youth is not dead,
Youth lives on!

[Пусть звучат постылые,
Скудные слова -
Не погибла молодость,
Молодость жива!]

The second part of the poem describes a scenario of resurrection. The thunder commands Valia to prepare for death and remember all those who heroically died before her. Valia salutes the thunder and dies.

Let there be a friendship
Between the warrior and the raven
Strengthen yourself, courage,
With steel and lead

[Возникай содружество
Ворона с бойцом -
Укрепляйся, мужество,
Сталью и свинцом.]

Let the stern earth
Be flooded with blood
So that a new youth
May rise from buried bones.

[Чтоб земля суровая
Кровью истекла,
Чтобы юность новая
Из костей взошла.]

Let it be that in this tiny
Body- forever
Our youth sings
Like torrents in the spring

[Чтобы в этом крохотном
Теле - навсегда

Пела наша молодость,
Как весной вода.]

Valia's death, however, is not the end: the pioneers' song lives on for future generations.

Quietly, the ghastly weightless
Child's hand
Raises above the hospital bed

[Тихо подымается,
Призрачно-легка,
Над больничной койкой
Детская рука.]

The song
Will not wait

[Но песня
Не согласна ждать.]

The song appears
In the childrens' babble

[Возникает песня
В болтовне ребят.]

The song carries on
In the pioneer ranks

[Подымает песню
На голос отряд.]

The song runs free
With the stomping of steps

[И выходит песня
С топотом шагов]

Into the world, opened wide
Toward the frenzy of the winds.

[В мир, открытый настежь

Бешенству ветров.] [72]

The sentiment of "triumphant death" evident in the Bagritsky poem appears in Platonov's diary in the year 1931:

> And new ranks, new participants may die, before the arrival of socialism, but their "pieces," their sorrow, the flood of their emotion will enter into the world of the future. The faces of young Bolsheviks are beautiful, --- but you have not yet won; your infants will win. The revolution will spread wider than all of you. Hurrah for the believers who die of overexertion! [73]

In this passage Platonov describes the immortality of feeling, stating that the invisible realm of thoughts and hopes does not vanish with death. "Pieces of sorrow" will enrich the future world. The young of today are laying the groundwork for future generations, Communism will be built on the foundation of their bones. The author urges for patience, gazing into a distant future.

In light of this discussion, the significance of Nastya's death and of the foundation pit itself, changes. Critics who have interpreted Nastya's death as an unequivocal protest against the horrors of Socialism have overlooked the importance of child sacrifice in the Soviet ideological narrative. The child dies in order to be reborn as a symbol that inspires future generations. Like

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[72] Edward Bagritsky, "Smert' pionerki" in *Stikhotvorennia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1956).

[73] И новые силы, новые кадры могут погибнуть, не дождавшись ещё социализма, но их «кусочки», их горе, их поток чувства войдут в мир будущего. Прелестные молодые лица большевиков,--- вы ещё не победите; победят ваши младенцы. Революция раскатиться дальше вас! Привет верующим и умирающим в перенапряжении! Andrei Platonov, "Trud' est' sovest' iz zapsinykh knizhek raznykh let," *Gosudarstvennyi zhitel'*, 692.

the dying pioneer in Bagritsky's poem, Nastya represents a martyr. The implications of Platonov's child sacrifice, however, are considerably more complex than those of Bagritsky. The death of the two girls are similar in that "the song" in Bagritsky's poem like the philosophical language in Platonov's novel continue to live on and generate meaning. For Platonov, the idea of eternal life bears a subtle, metaphysical connotation. Unlike Bagritsky, he does not trade religion for Socialist dogma. In *The Foundation Pit* the Socialist project in its true sense is inseparable from philosophical and spiritual concerns. Nastya's death is valuable not so much as a sacrifice for the collective cause, but as a source of poetic revelation.

In a postscript to his novel, the author-narrator reveals his poetic behind his portrayal of the possible death of the "Socialist future" personified by the death of the little girl:

> Will the essesersha[74] die like Nastya, or will she grow into a whole person, a new historical society? This anxious feeling represented the main theme of this composition when the author was writing. The author may have been mistaken in portraying in the girl's death the death of a Socialist generation, but this mistake occurred only from overwhelming concern for the loss of something dear, a loss that would mean not only losing the past, but also the future.[75]

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[74] neologism representing Soviet Russia as a woman.

[75] Ginsburg's translation omits this addition made by the author. Погибнит ли эсесерша подобно Насте или вырастет в целого человека, в новое историческое общество? Это тревожное чувство и составляло тему сочинения, когда его писал автор. Автор мог ошибиться изобразив в виде смерти девочки гибель социалистического поколения, но эта ошибка произошла лишь от излишней тревоги за нечто любимое потеря чего равносильна не только всего прошлого, но и будущего. Andrei Platonov, *Kotlovan*, 116.

The added explanation at the end of the novel serves as yet another example where poetic expression trumps social commentary. Baring the device of the metaphor, it is revealed to the reader that Nastya's death is merely an artistic possibility, a stage death. Identifying the little girl's demise as a symbolic signifier of Russia's potential fate ("Will the essersha die like Nastya?") transports the entire novel from historical to mythological territory. The postscript reveals that the nightmare of *The Foundation Pit* was "just a dream" and a Socialist future is still possible.

Conclusion

Andrei Platonov's esoteric text encompasses many of its creator's unorthodox and often confusing views on Socialism as a philosophical search. Using language to transform the "dead words" of Soviet rhetoric into poetically charged fields of semantic possibility, the author evokes a metaphysical answer to the problem of history. By connecting to the eternal, mythological sphere of reality through language man can transcend the nightmare of the historical present. This interpretation may not satisfy critics who will argue that Nastya's death at the end of *The Foundation Pit* confirms the horrific impasse of the Socialist project. However, throughout the novel, the author provides numerous cues to switch the reader's interpretation from a literal to metaphorical mode. The transformation of satirical language into contemplative linguistic riddles signals a fundamental shift from topicality to timelessness. *The Foundation Pit* cannot be assessed as a pro-Soviet or anti-Soviet work, they way one would read a work of satire, nor is it an expression of political ambiguity. Andrei Platonov's prose is descriptive rather than prescriptive, portraying the Socialist cause as a search for meaning.

CHAPTER 5

Mikhail Zoshchenko's Prose Trilogy and the Parodied Proletarian Writer

I recalled many stories. And all of them convinced me of the correctness of my conclusions…
-Mikhail Zoshchenko, Before Sunrise

In his last long work, *Before Sunrise* (1943), Mikhail Zoshchenko takes on the most ambitious project of his career. Through a peculiar mixture of scientific, historical, biographical and fictional material the author attempts to present humanity with formulas for happiness, health and possibly eternal life. *Before Sunrise* in length and purpose resembles two other late, long works by the author: *Youth Restored* (1933) and *The Sky Blue Book* (1934). The three works form a didactic trilogy of moralistic, philosophical works that have puzzled scholars familiar with Zoshchenko's popular satirical texts.

Within the "mass culture to master" paradigm I have set up in this dissertation, Zoshchenko stands out as an exception. His transition from writing simplistic mass satire to creating complex literary works happened very quickly, almost instantaneously. Moreover, in contrast to the other discussed authors, both mass and masterful literary modes appear in Zoshchenko's short, comical works. Though it is difficult to establish a definitive Zoshchenko "canon" I will characterize the salient features of Zoshchenko's literary mastery later in the

chapter. Unlike his short satirical stories, Zoshchenko's longer works have not withstood the test of time, and though some scholars attempt to defend their artistic worth they lack the magical cohesion that have raised the other novels discussed in this dissertation to the level of masterpiece. The most obvious downfall of these works consists of the author's evident prioritization of moralizing over literary merit. Mikhail Zoshchenko has been quite rightly compared to both Lev Tolstoy and Nikolai Gogol, who denounced their literary genius because it represented a hindrance to higher spiritual goals.[1] In Zoshchenko's writings, scientific utopianism replaces religion. Nonetheless, the tone of his declarations of conversion resembles that of his literary predecessors.[2]

Critics have employed various intellectual tactics in attempts to bridge the incongruous gap between Zoshchenko the satirist and Zoshchenko the savior of humanity. Several scholars have endeavored to re-read Zoshchenko's 1920's works anew, using his later prose trilogy as insight into the author's hidden psychology. Linda Scatton points out that Zoshchenko exhibited the same moralistic tendencies in his short comical works, Alexander Zholkovsky detects echoes of Zoshchenko's neuroses and psychological concerns discussed in the semi-autobiographical *Before Sunrise* in his early stories and Elizabeth Papazian notes that the documentary impulse evident in his prose trilogy was already an integral part of Zoshchenko's literary ethos in his satirical period.[3]

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[1] See Gregory Carleton, *The Politics of Reception: Critical Constructions of Mikhail Zoshchenko* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

[2] In his Introduction to *Before Sunrise*, Zoshchenko differentiates his messianic message from Leo Tolstoy's, stating that Tolstoy's philosophy was based on religion, whereas his own view is based on science.

In my reading of Zoshchenko's oeuvre, I will similarly explore the connections between 1920's satire and the author's prose trilogy. As I will argue, the psychology of the NEP-era satirical feuilleton lies at the core of both Zoshchenko's short stories and his longer prose works. In his short stories Zoshchenko masterfully satirizes the conceptual foundation of the feuilleton while faithfully replicating all of its formal aspects. This situation is reversed in his prose trilogy, which includes *Youth Restored*, *The Sky Blue Book* and *Before Sunrise*, the external markers of the feuilleton such as colloquial language are less evident than in the short story, but the psychology of the "parodied proletarian" writer reappears. The author attempts to put forth universal principles by providing anecdotal information, substantiated only by the author's assurance of factual certainty. In this way, Zoshchenko's trilogy resembles the early feuilletons' claim at documentary status, accompanied by a lack of credibility through solid evidence. The notion of what Zoshchenko means by "parodying a proletarian writer" will be investigated to show that the author employs several meanings of "parody" interchangeably: parody as imitation and parody as satire. He imitates the proletariat writer when he utilizes the literary devices of the feuilleton, but satirizes him when he questions the feuilleton's conceptual structure.

Comparing Zoshchenko's creative trajectory to that of the other authors in this study illuminates some common patterns in transformations of satirical materials. Although Bulgakov, Olesha and Platonov chose to work with different elements of the feuilleton, they all successfully reconfigured its simplistic semantic structure to serve a modernist aesthetic. That is, although the

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[3] Elizabeth Papazian, "Reconstructing the (Authentic Proletarian) Reader," in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.4, No.4 (Fall 2003),816-848; Linda Hart Scatton, *Mikhail Zoshchenko: Evolution of a Writer* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993); Alexander Zholkovsky, "What is the Author Trying to Say with His Artistic Work? Rereading Zoshchenko's Ouevre," *Slavonic and Eastern European Journal* 40, No.3 (1996): 458-74.

feuilleton's satirical language, characters and plots persist, these elements become imbedded in a complex hermeneutic structure demanding sophisticated interpretive faculties from the reader. Zoshchenko, on the other hand, does not change the fundamental logical structure of the feuilleton in his longer works. He re-uses it rather naively, wholeheartedly adapting the literary and rhetorical flaws of the genre as characteristic of his own authorial voice.

In this chapter I will focus on Zoshchenko's late "trilogy": *Youth Restored*, *The Blue Notebook* and *Before Sunrise* to show how the author returns to the ethos of the early feuilleton, unmediated by the self-reflective, critical narrator present in Zoshchenko's satirical short stories. In his prose trilogy, Zoshchenko replaces the satirical tone and local subject matter with serious discourse and epic topics, but the hybrid narrative strategies of the feuilleton remain. The reliance on anecdotal evidence mirrors the rhetorical structure of the feuilleton- written in co-authorship with the worker-correspondent. In the journalism of the early 1920s biased accounts with moralistic commentary masqueraded as documentary fact. Within the confines of this didactic genre, the reader loses interpretive freedom as the author dictates proper conclusions. In his late prose, Zoshchenko analogously operates under the assumption that readers can be told what to think, rendering the burden of factual proof irrelevant.

Mass Culture to Master

Recently, Zoshchenko scholars have focused on debating connections between Zoshchenko's authorial persona of the 1920s versus his narrative voice in the 1930s and 1940s. Jeremy Hicks and Gregory Carleton emphatically resist unifying the two Zoshchenkos while others, as previously mentioned, connect the two authorial personas with thematic and philosophical

strains.[4] This treatment of Zoshchenko's authorship as divided into two temporal phases fails to acknowledge the variety of the writer's creative output in his early career. Zoshchenko does not embody a single authorial image in the 1920s therefore the question should be restated to ask which aspects of his early career the author chooses to replicate in his later prose. I propose to re-classify Zoshchenko's short works of the 1920s into three categories, but one could divide these even further. Identifying the specific aspects of his early writing that Zoshchenko chose to carry over into his late prose illuminates the author's belief in his late career.

One strain of Zoshchenko's early short works that has escaped the scholarly gaze is the "ghost story" narrative. Between 1921 and 1926, he wrote a number of eerie tales vaguely resembling satirical feuilletons but essentially lacking comedy. The stories "Black Magic" (1921), "Warlock" (1924), "Demon" (1924) and "A Man without Superstitions" (1924) resemble both Gogol's Ukrainian tales and pre-revolutionary popular stories printed in *Ogonek* and *Niva*.[5] The fact that the supernatural elements in the stories are usually demystified aligns them closely to pre-revolutionary literature. The author's skaz is stylized as peasant speech and the narrator appears as a third party observer.[6]

The story "Warlock" (1924) is a representative example of this type of short story. The narrator retells a "fantastical" tale about a village warlock and his "magical" powers. The tone of

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[4] Jeremy Hicks, *Mikhail Zoshchenko and the Poetics of Skaz* (Nottingham: Astra Press, 2000); Gregory Carleton, *The Politics of Reception*; Hicks emphasizes Zoshchenko's skaz technique as separating the two phases of a career, while Gregory Carleton analyzes the marked differences in the writer's self-presentation in early and late periods.

[5] These stories can be found in Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Sobrannie sochinenii v trekh tomakh 1* (Moscow: Terra, 1994).

[6] For more on Zoshchenko's various skaz styles see Jeremy Hicks, *Zoshchenko and the Poetics of Skaz,* Chapter IV, 147-169.

the story is subtly ironic, as the narrator juxtaposes technological progress to superstitious belief: "Miracles all around us, citizens! Everywhere you look, steam so to speak, electric energy, sewing machines, --- and here along with this we have a warlock and soothsayers."[7]

The warlock's powers are exposed as fraud by a spying villager who sees him tricking the peasants. The angry villagers punish the warlock with a fatal beating. Beliefs in the supernatural persist after the warlock's death when misfortunes befall the village, which the naive narrator attributes to the warlock's powers. Ultimately, the tension between superstition and rational thought remains unresolved: the villagers' magical thinking perpetuates the "warlock's curse."

This category of stories demonstrates Zoshchenko's connection not only to the *Satyricon* "high" tradition of satire, but to lower, more popular sources. The ghost story with a demystifying moral was extremely widespread during the late imperial era.[8] I chose "Warlock" as an example because it specifically resembles a pre-revolutionary story with the same title published in a 1915 issue of *Ogonek*.[9] "The Warlock," written by N.N. Kiselev, is told from the perspective of a little girl whose blind grandfather is rumored to be the village warlock. Set in Ukraine during WWI, the story melds historical and supernatural narratives. When Nyusha

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[7] "Чудеса, граждане! Кругом, можно сказать пар, электрическая энергия, швейные ножные машинки, --- и тут же наряду с этим колдун и кудесники!" Mikhail Zoshchenko, "Koldun," *Sobrannie sochienii 1*, 228.

[8] Jeffrey Brooks. *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Culture, 1861-1917,* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

[9] N.N. Kiselev, "Koldun," *Ogonek* v.32, # 638 (1915).

gathers the courage to learn her grandfather's true identity, she spies on him performing a strange ritual in the barn and hears him invoking curses on the Germans.

> Never has Nyuskha heard such terrible words like Mamai and Germans and the army of the seven hundred, and it seemed to her, that these were all demons, and that her grandfather was summoning them and would somehow punish them.[10]

That night Nyusha dreams that her grandfather single-handedly defeats the German army; the dream proves prophetic when in the morning the Germans retreat from their village. Kiselev's "Warlock,"like Zoshchenko's story, ends on an ambiguous note. The little girl's belief that her granfather's curse caused the German retreat seems unreliable. The storyteller, however, provides no other explanation for the Germans' hasty departure, allowing for a lingering possibility of the warlock's magical powers. It is difficult to establish conclusively whether Zoshchenko received inspiration from this particular short work in *Ogonek*; undoubtedly the satirist evoked the general spirit of similar ghost stories.The connection between popular literature and Zoshchenko's work reveals an unexpected side of the author. Discussions of any continuity between the early and late works of the author must follow specific veins as points of commonality or difference.

The second category of Zoshchenko's feuilletons employs direct quotations from worker correspondent letters. The author's minimal literary contribution consists of creative

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[10] "Никогда Нюшка не слыхала таких ужасных слов как Мамай и немцы и рать семисотенная, и ей показалось, что это все бесы, и их дед вызывает и будет сейчас как-то карать." Ibid.,10.

improvisations artificially tacked on to the end of the rabkor's reported story. One such feuilleton comes from a rabkor's complaint about village communists marrying into "bourgeois" families.

A MANDATORY DECREE

In the newspaper "Communist" our correspondent from Izium reports that *at the united conference of the Savinsky village there were frequently noted cases of communists marrying daughters of the bourgeois and popes… The conference decided that members of the party must marry only the daughters of workers and supporters of the Soviet government."*

The Savinsky grooms are in a panic.

"And how can you recognize the dame?" --- moan the grooms. "She appears to be from the working class, her hair is cut short, and she smokes light tobacco… But once you marry her you are doomed: she will drag you to church, will begin baptizing the children… Ech, things are in a bad way for us grooms.[11]

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[11] ОБЯЗАТЕЛЬНОЕ ПОСТАВЛЕНИЕ
В газете «Коммунист» наш изюмский корреспондент сообщает о том, что «*на обьединенном собрании Савинской сельской ячейки отмечены случаи, что коммунисты зачастую женятся на буржуазных и поповских дочерях…Сообрание постановило, что члены партии должны женится только на дочерях трудящихся и сочувстующих совласти*».

Савинские женихи в панике.

--- И как её бабу, узнаешь? ---плачутся женихи. ---- На вид она и трудящаяся, и волосы у ней срезаны, и табак легкий курит…А женишься на ней и пропадёшь: в церковь потащит, ребят начнет крестить…Эх, плохо наше жениховское дело. Mikhail Zoshchenko, "Obiazatel'noe postavlennie," *Drezina*, August 1923, no.7, 3.

In this feuilleton from 1923, Zoshchenko quotes the correspondent's neutral tone of fact and then composes a brief satirical re-enactment of the incident.[12] He takes no liberty in changing or elaborating the situation described by the correspondent. The generalized adage that "communists should not marry daughters of the bourgeoisie or priests" is made comical and more concrete by a chorus of fictional grooms torn between their communist loyalties and village customs. Most of Zoshchenko's first feuilletons exhibit a slavish adherence to the worker correspondent statements.[13] I propose the term "unmediated feuilleton" to describe this type of writing as no narrative distance exists between the rabkor and the author.

Zoshchenko's prose gradually acquires more "mediation" in the persona of a more distinctive narrative voice. Collections of Zoshchenko's works inconsistently identify the same pieces of writing as a "feuilleton" or "short story." For the purposes of my analysis, I will differentiate between the feuilleton and the short story conceptually rather than formally. That is, the short story may have all the features of the feuilleton, but does not adhere to its naive ideology. The supposed rabkor's narrative becomes overly stylized and as a result verges on absurdity. The hovering presence of real worker correspondents is slowly replaced with fictionalized proletarian writers, Zoshchenko's literary pseudonyms and alter egos. Zoshchenko begins to replace real rabkor reports with fictional improvisation with the introduction of Semen Kurochkin and Gavrila, supposed correspondents for the journals *Begemot*, *Buzoter, Pushka and Krasnyi voron*. The feuilleton transforms into a short story at the moment when the author seizes

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[12] It is not certain whether these letters were penned by real or fictionally constructed worker correspondents.

[13] For more examples of Zoshchenko's earliest feuilletons please see Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Uvazhaemiye Grazhdane* (Moscow: "Knizhnaia Palata", 1991), 190-250.

narrative power from the worker correspondent and begins to comment on his limited psychology.

Zoshchenko's transition from mass culture to master occurs while the writer is still entirely submerged in the forms of mass culture. Despite formal similarities, a vast conceptual chasm separates Zoshchenko's early feuilletons from his short stories. In his article "About Myself, My Work and My Critics" Zoshchenko famously described his function within the Soviet literary world:

> I would just like to make one confession. Perhaps it will seem strange and unexpected. The thing is that I am—a proletarian writer. More accurately, in my writing I parody that imagined, but authentic proletarian writer, who would have existed under current conditions and in the contemporary milieu. Of course such a writer cannot exist, at least not now. And when he does emerge, then his public image, every aspect of his milieu will improve. I only parody. I am temporarily replacing the proletarian writer. This is why my themes may be permeated by a naïve philosophy that is just right for my reader.[14]

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[14] Я только хочу сделать одно признание. Может быть, оно покажется странным и неожиданным. Дело в том, что я--- пролетарский писатель. Вернее, я пародирую своими вещами того воображаемого, но подлинного пролетарского писателя, который существовал бы в теперешних условиях жизни и теперешней среде. Конечно такого писателя не может существовать, по крайней мере сейчас. А когда он будет существовать, то его общественность, его среда значительно повысятся во всех отношениях. Я только пародирую. Я временно замещаю пролетарского писателя. Оттого мои темы могут проникнуть наивной философией, которая как раз по плечу моего читателя. Mikhail Zoshchenko, "O sebe, o kritikakh, o svoyei rabote" in *Mikhail Zoshchenko: stat'i i materialy* (Leningrad: Academia, 1928), 7-11.

A discussion about what Zoshchenko means by "parodying" in each of his texts will assist us in understanding the early feuilleton's textual relationship to the works that came after. Gerard Genette's work on "hypertextuality" entitled *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* provides a theoretical framework to describe these various interconnections. Genette writes "By hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary."[15]

Following Genette's definition, in this case Zoshchenko's early, unmediated feuilleton functions as a hypotext, whereas the satirical short stories and the prose trilogy are hypertexts that utilize and transform its various aspects. The nonexistent proletarian writer emerges as an evoked "hypo-author" toward whom Zoshchenko takes a variety of attitudes. To differentiate modes of a text's transformation and imitation Gerard Genette identifies a range of "moods" implied in the hypertext: playful, humorous, serious, polemical, satiric and ironic. He identifies parody as a playful transformation, whereas travesty embodies a satiric tone. These emotive classifications similarly describe the author's relation to his created narrator. According to these terms is Zoshchenko's proletariat author parodied or travestied in his satirical short stories? Many critics see degrading mockery of the proletariat writer, while others, like Jeremy Hicks detect a sympathetic, playful attitude toward that character- narrator.[16] I side with those who favor travesty. As moods are all relative, the author's treatment of his proletariat writer appears

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[15] Gerard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 5.

[16] Hicks, 160-166.

quite acerbic when we compare it to the author/narrator relationship in later prose works, especially in *The Sky Blue Book*. The word "parody" may therefore not be the most accurate classification of Zoshchenko's transformation of the feuilleton into short story. Having pointed this out, I will continue to employ it as Zoshchenko's chosen term, keeping in mind the difference between satirical mockery and playfulness.

Most critics limit their discussions to Zoshchenko's linguistic parody of an imaginary proletarian. Marietta Chudakova uses Bakhtinian analysis to characterize the linguistic evolution of Zoshchenko's skaz, as the author's "own" words are slowly replaced by the words of "others."[17] Yuri Shcheglov views Zoshchenko's language as a reflection of contemporary Soviet culture and the paragons of vulgarity it produced.[18] However, Zoshchenko's parodying involves not only the technique of imitating language itself, but the manner in which language is organized and employed. Zoshchenko replicates the rhetorical clumsiness of the proletarian writer who has not yet learned to distinguish between documentary and fiction, between fact and anecdote.

Psychology of the Proletarian Writer

The rabkor psychology of the eyewitness, imbedded in the genre of the feuilleton and manifested as a pose of authorial ineptitude may have a direct connection to the acquisition of literacy. The results of a study conducted by Soviet psychologist Alexander Luria among illiterate populations

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[17] Marietta Chudakova, *Poetika Mikhaila Zoshchenko* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 58-70.

[18] "Entsiklopediia Nekul'turnosti: Zoshchenko: rasskazy 1920-kh godov i Golubaia Kniga " in Alexander Zholkovsky and Iurii Shcheglov, *Mir avtora i struktura teksta: stat'i o russkoi literature* (Tenafly, NJ, Hermitage, 1986), 53-84.

indicate that literacy or lack of it, dictates how an individual perceives the world. In the years 1931-32, Luria traveled to Central Asian communities to investigate a number of cognitive processes among pre-literate peoples' including the ability to reason about abstract topics. In his hypothesis Luria states that advanced cognitive development allows individuals to reason about events outside of their immediate experience

> It is known that in conceptual thought there consequently occurs a tremendous expansion of derivative forms of cognitive functions. A person possessing the faculty of abstract reasoning, reflects on the outside world more deeply and completely, makes inferences and draws conclusions based on observed phenomena, not relying solely on personal experience […][19]

The experimental method consisted of asking participants to make conclusions about two types of syllogisms: the first set queried about topics with which the participants had personal experience. The experimenter asked a question about growing cotton, a major resource in Uzbekistan: "Cotton grows well in hot and dry climates; In England the weather is cold and damp; does cotton grow there?" In the second case, syllogisms were based on topics removed from the participants' immediate experience: "In the far North all bears are white; the North Pole

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[19] Известно, что при понятийном мышлении происходит огромное расширение возникших на его основе форм познавательной деятельности. Человек, владеющий отвлеченным мышлением, более глубоко и полно отражает внешний мир, делает умозаключения и выводы из воспринимаемых явлений, опираясь не только на свой личный опыт […] Alexander Luria, *Ob istoricheskom razvitii poznavatel'nykh protsessov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 106.

is in the far north, what color are the bears?"[20] After sufficient prodding from the experimenter, some participants tried to guess whether cotton grows in England. Luria reports, however, that most of the participants refused to answer the second question concerning polar bears, citing a lack of personal experience:

> As a rule, most refused to assume a major premise**,** *stating that they "have never been to the North and have never seen a bear; to obtain the answer it is necessary to ask people, who have been to the North and have seen bears."* Often, they would completely ignore the premise, replacing the conclusion derived from the syllogism with their own thoughts: "there are different types of bears, if he was born red, he will remain red"; "the world is large, I do not know what kinds of bears there are," and began *general* conversations about the lives of bears *based on hearsay information*. That is, each time *they evaded solving the problem.*[21]

The worker-correspondent reports used in the 1920's feuilleton often exhibit a psychology very similar to the worldview of Luria's Uzbek subjects: exclusive reliance on personal experience or

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[20] Ibid., 111.

[21] Как правило, многие отказывались принять большую посылку, *заявляя что «они никогда не были на севере и никогда ни видели медведей*; для ответа нужно обратиться к людям, которые были на севере и видели медведей». Часто они, полностью игнорируя посылку, заменяли вывод из силлогизма собственными соображениями: «медведи бывают разные, если он родился красным, он и останется красным»; «мир большой, я не знаю, какие бывают медведи», и *заводили общие, основанные на слухах рассуждения* о жизни медведей, т.е. каждый раз *уходили в сторону от решения задачи*. Ibid., 111-112, Italics are mine.

hearsay information, as well as narrative digression from the topic, were typical characteristics found in rabkor letters. Luria's study demonstrates the importance of reading not only for the acquisition of knowledge, but as an essential tool of cognition, allowing the reader to understand how the world as a network of causes and effects. His other experiments demonstrated that illiterate individuals categorized colors and shapes differently from the literate control group. Illiterate participants could not group shades of the same color together, but could only compare each color to the hue of an object in their familiar surroundings.

This limited psychology of the illiterate or newly literate can be easily exploited for humorous effect, even the description of Luria's experiment, written without comical intent, may cause many readers to smile at the subjects unusual answers. Ironically, although Zoshchenko was an apt mimic of the proletarian psychology in his early career, in his later works he begins to sincerely embody an "illiterate psychology" in his writing, despite his considerable erudition and talent.

Most critics have discussed how Zoshchenko parodies the language of the rabkor and sel'kor, but have overlooked the author's subtle criticism of the feuilletonic genre itself. The feuilleton's pretension at documentary status held great comic potential, uncovered by Zoshchenko in his short stories.

Parody of the Feuilleton

Uniquely, Zoshchenko uses the form of the satirical feuilleton to both conform to the methods of mass literature and to satirically question them. Zoshchenko's short stories masterfully accomplish the literary metamorphoses evident in Bulgakov, Olesha's and Platonov's novels.

Very shortly after beginning his career as a "straightforward" feuilletonist, Zoshchenko transforms this simple literary form into a self-reflexive genre that exposes the discrepancy between the journalistic objective of reporting fact and its unconvincing, anecdotal delivery.

In his book on Mikhail Zoshchenko's skaz Jeremy Hicks writes:

> As well as employing the feuilleton proper, Zoshchenko's short stories also mirror the structure of the feuilleton. In particular, they frequently rely on factual material: Zoshchenko reckoned that 30% to 40% of his stories were based on incidents he read about in the papers.[22]

The term "factual material" proves misleading when applied to worker correspondent letters or even newspaper articles that used worker correspondents as collaborators. Moreover, Zoshchenko's short stories, unlike his early feuilletons do not use the worker correspondent letters as straightforward documents but satirize the insufficiency and absurdity of "anecdotal evidence".

Zoshchenko's short stories are negative imprints of his early feuilletons, as they satirically expose the genre's flimsy "factuality". The narrator hints at the dubious status of his "true accounts" with repeated, overzealous protests against authorial fabrication in fiction. Stating that he lacks an imagination, the narrator vows to tell only the truth. In the introduction to the story "Drova" ("Firewood"), the narrator defensively insists on the veracity of his tale, pre-empting the reader's suspicions.

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[22] Hicks, 113.

> The reader--- is a suspicious creature. He will think: how cleverly this guy lies. But I am not lying, reader. Even now, I can gaze into your clear eyes and state: "I am not lying." In general I never lie, and try to write without flights of fancy. I am not known for my imagination.[23]

After reading the story, the reader will most likely decipher this impassioned claim of truthfulness as pure irony. The "true story" lacks credibility due to its sheer absurdity. Moreover, the information presented is a second hand account revealed to the narrator by the "perpetrator of the event." The "eyewitness" tells the story of a firewood thief who was caught and punished when an angry neighbor in his communal apartment hid explosives in one of the logs. The marked log exploded when placed in the thief's fireplace and destroyed the guilty man's room, tearing the front door off of its hinges. The explosion only claimed one innocent victim, the story teller explains, a retired tenant named Gusev, who "died of fright" after suffering a blow to the head by a brick. The anecdote concludes with the speaker's chagrin that his nephew wishes to claim credit for catching the firewood thief.

> And there is only one thing that is regretful and upsetting, that now Mishka Bochkov is claiming, that son of a bitch, all the glory. But in court, I will say,

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[23] Читатель --- существо недоверчивое. Подумает: до чего складно врет человек. А я не вру читатель. Я и сейчас могу посмотреть в ясные твои очи и сказать: «не вру». И вообще я никогда не вру, и писать стараюсь без выдумки. Фантазией я не отличаюсь. Mikhail Zoshchenko, "Drova," *Uvazhaemiye grazhdane*, 245.

> what do you mean, I will say, his glory, when I hollowed out the log and inserted the explosives. Let the court distribute the glory.[24]

The incident strikes the reader as not only patently ridiculous, but offers no clear moral conclusion. Who is the villain and who is the hero of this tale? While the storyteller clearly considers his actions commendable, a discerning reader must realize that the results of the tenants' vigilante justice: the destruction of a building and the murder of a tenant, whose demise the narrator falsely attributes to fragile nerves, constitute far worse crimes than the theft of a few logs.

In this short story the very ethos of the feuilleton is undermined, as "Firewood" does not offer pedagogical guidance. In the world of the unmediated satirical feuilleton this story would serve as "documentary" evidence of the widespread theft in communal apartments leading the reader to conclude that thieves must be punished for the good of all. But contrary to expectations, the storyteller inadvertently exposes himself as a callous and stupid individual, thereby diverting the reader's attention away from the described crime to the storyteller's own guilty role in the affair.

Comparing "Firewood" to Zoshchenko's earlier feuilletons we also see a clear change in the fact/fiction hierarchy. Whereas in earlier works, faithful retelling of the rabkor's words took precedence over the author's interpretation, in this short story as in other works of this period,

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[24] И только одно обидно и досадно, что теперича Мишка Бочков приписывает, сукин сын, себе все лавры. Но я на суде скажу, какие же, скажу, его лавры, если я и полено долбил, и патрон закладывал? Пущай суд распределит лавры. Ibid., 246.

the very method of "eye-witness" reporting comes under satirical scrutiny. The fictional nature of the reported account becomes increasingly self-evident as it is related by an unreliable narrator.

Even though the short stories were often based on newspaper reports and worker correspondent letters, Zoshchenko alerts the reader of the fictional status of these works. The narrator's insistence that he did not lie only emphasizes the weak illusion of reality in his story. In the *Sky Blue Book*, intergeneric dialogue occurs between two versions of "Firewood" as Zoshchenko remarkets this very same story as a straightforward tract against greed, thus transforming fiction into "fact." The conceptual transformation of "Firewood" will be discussed later in the chapter.

In the short story "Guard your Health!" ("Берегите Здоровье!") Zoshchenko exposes the discrepancy between the pre-assigned didactic message and the narrative intended to illustrate this adage. The story begins with a laudatory exclamation about the benefit of winter sports: "They say---that winter sport acts on the organism very beneficently. This really is true. I have tested it on myself."[25] The short story is initially set up like a feuilleton whereby a singular personal experience serves to illustrate a larger principle, in this case the health advantages of practicing winter sports. Unexpectedly, the story set up to prove the benefits of sport does not logically support the introductory claim.

During an illness the narrator goes to the doctor who blames the patient's nervous system for his sickness and suggests that ice-skating will "eliminate his nervous system altogether." The narrator takes the doctor's advice, and after a few days of ice-skating feels better. As we find out

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[25] "Говорят --- зимний спорт очень благоприятно на организм действует. Это действительно, верно. Я сам на себе испытал." Ibid., 292.

at the end of the story, the narrator gets well as a result of enjoying much needed rest at the hospital after breaking his leg on a defective skate. In the end of the story the adage "proves" true: No matter what they say, winter sport --- is a great thing. Just let me repair my leg --- and I will take up skiing. Maybe I will break something else off.[26]

A glaring disconnect gapes between the protagonist's narrative and the slogan "winter sports are good for the body." In fact, judging by the storyteller's experiences the opposite proves true; winter sports *are not* good for your health, given that skating and skiing apparently cause injuries.

The "documentary evidence" does not fit the ideological frame proposed in the beginning of the tale. Here we see an instance of what Jeremy Hicks identifies as the discrepancy between "interpretive abstraction and reality of the experience of the event."[27] While Hicks treats this discrepancy as a philosophical, existential problem, one could also view it as a criticism of the feuilleton's literary ethos --- Zoshchenko exposes the ineffectiveness of isolated subjective accounts to teach life lessons.

Letters to the Writer

Anecdotal evidence, demarcated as fiction in Zoshchenko's short stories once again morphs into documentary proof in the author's *Letters to the Writer*. In fact, it is with this collection of readers' letters supported by authorial commentary that Zoshchenko makes his first return to the straightforward use of the early feuilleton's rhetorical methods. Like the rabkor letters and

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[26] "Как ни говори, а зимний спорт- громадная вещь. Вот дайте починю ногу --- за лыжи возьмусь. Может, еще что-нибудь отломаю."Ibid., 292.

[27] Hicks, 8.

reports which served as evidence of a Soviet moral, readers' letters become the anecdotal evidence necessary to prove Zoshchenko's social usefulness. The author plays the role of interpreter, explaining some of the more puzzling letters to fit the larger message of the work. As Gregory Carleton and Elizabeth Papazian have pointed out, Zoshchenko offers the collection of letters as a rebuttal to his critics. In the beginning of the work the author triumphantly declares that readers are better able to appreciate his writing than the critics: "Clearly the reader receives me a little bit differently than the critics."[28]

The author advertises this book as proof of his connection with the mass reader. In *Letters to the Reader* the author *imitates* the psychology of the proletarian writer rather than satirizing it. In the introduction the author clearly states his purpose in publishing the collection. "I compiled this book in order to show the authentic, uncovered life of the authentic living people with their wishes, tastes and thoughts."[29] Zoshchenko unites these letters under the rubric of "documentary reality." Like the letters of the rabkors, the readers' epistolary efforts form the core of the book. However, Zoshchenko controls the authoritative meaning to be imposed on the collection as whole.

The letters in this collection function similarly to Zoshchenko's unmediated feuilletons. He treats the reader letters as rabkor reports by reframing the epistolary material with his own commentary to fit certain thematic narratives. In his replies to readers seeking advice about personal matters Zoshchenko incongruously offers Socialist life lessons and adages. One vivid

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[28] "Видимо читатель воспринимает меня не совсем так как критика." Zoshchenko, "Pis'ma k pisateliu," *Uvazhaemye grazhdane*, 345.

[29] "Я эту книгу собрал для того, чтобы показать подлинную и неприкрытую жизнь, подлинных живых людей с их желаниями, вкусом, мыслями." Ibid., 345.

example of this "bait and switch" phenomenon appears in a correspondence with a woman from an intellectual family who has trouble connecting with her less educated proletarian compatriots. Zoshchenko advises the young lady to become a leader among her cohort rather than bemoaning their cultural lack and crude manners:

> I wrote to her that if she considers herself more cultured than the milieu in which she finds herself, she should not sigh and bemoan her situation, but on the contrary---exert influence over this milieu. Let it be two or three people, in whom she will develop a taste for literature, or whom, let us say, she will convince that swearing demeans a person--- this in itself would accomplish a lot, and in some sense would give her satisfaction.[30]

The letter and more importantly Zoshchenko's response to it serve as illustrations of a Soviet moral that intellectuals should raise up their proletarian "brothers and sisters." The actual letter from the young woman expresses many aspects of her experience of working at the factory: loneliness, issues of identity confusion, indecisiveness about her future career. However, rather than addressing the young woman's personal dilemmas, Zoshchenko instantly "recognizes" the particular theme of her letter and provides an ideologically appropriate response, thus framing the entire correspondence as if it were a feuilleton written on a pre-assigned theme.

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[30] Я написал ей, что если она считает себя в культурном отношении выше той среды, в которой она находится, то ее дело не ахать и огорчатся, а наоборот ---- оказывать влияние на эту среду. Пусть это будут два-три человека, которым она привьет вкус к литературе или, скажем, убедит, что брань попросту унижает человека, --- это уже будет очень много, и это в какой-то мере даст удовлетворение. Ibid., 413.

The author's sudden interest in the documentary genre was in part a response to his critics, who castigated Zoshchenko's humorous stories for lacking ideology or social significance. Jeremy Hicks argues that Zoshchenko employed the documentary form as "an attempt to attract readers who had previously not been interested in literature."[31] Hicks' hypothesis is inconsistent with research conducted by cultural historians which has shown that "the masses" were more interested in fiction and entertainment. As Peter Kenez and David Shepherd point out, when popular pre-revolutionary literature disappeared, peasants' interest in reading declined dramatically.[32] The feuilleton writers had to learn how to combine journalism with fantasy and adventure to attract common readers. Mikhail Zoshchenko's short satires were wildly popular among common readers and the writer did not need to change his style in order to remain favored by the wide public. Rather, Zoshchenko returns to the conceptual framework of the feuilleton because it allows him to make messianic claims on the nature of reality without the daunting responsibility of having to prove them.

Zoshchenko's "Trilogy," or the Proletarian Writer Incognito

It may seem strange that in his next works Zoshchenko returns to longer form and to serious questions, seemingly abandoning his hard-earned image of a writer connected with "the people." But in fact, Zoshchenko does not deviate far, as the longer novels in the trilogy are a return to the "naive anecdote" of Zoshchenko's early feuilleton days where information was relayed through

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[31]Hicks, 113.

[32] Kenez, Peter and Shepherd, David. " 'Revolutionary' Models for High Literature: Resisting Poetics" in eds. Kelly, Catriona and Shepherd, David. *Russian Cultural Studies: an Introduction* (Oxford, 1998).

word of mouth reports, unquestioned and unaltered by the author. The "parodied proletarian writer" returns in his longer works. This time he is better educated and commands an impressive vocabulary. The proletarian writer's sophisticated veneer hides a limited interpretive scope and an inability to reason abstractly beyond immediate experience. The writer who "tells it like he sees it," whose responses to the world around him remain unmarred by intellectual analysis represents an ideologically sound model for Zoshchenko. With each successive installment of his edifying trilogy the author gradually abandons his signature skaz style and satirical complexity. Deceptively, the works are full of "high brow" intellectual material based on historical, scientific and literary research. The author organizes his vast treasury of knowledge according to rhetorical conventions of the feuilleton. Encyclopedic vignettes on subjects varying from medical conditions to Roman rulers are rewritten in first person, as if witnessed by the narrator. The information is artificially inserted into a didactic framework preaching Socialist rejection of all things "bourgeois." This technique clearly mirrors the early feuilleton, which substituted anecdotes for news. The feuilleton's confusion of fact and fiction previously satirized becomes a virtue in his later prose.

As compared to the satirical short stories, the relationship between author and proletarian writer, between hypotext and hypertext changes from "travesty" to earnest imitation. In Genette's words, one could even view the prose trilogy as an "expansion" of the early feuilleton: "In grossly oversimplified terms, the procedure consists of doubling or tripling the length of each sentence in a hypotext."[33] Genette uses examples of Aesopian fables stylistically expanded by French fabulists:

> In its classical phase, expansion explored only one stylistic direction, which I have termed for lack of a better word, "realistic animation." The hypertext, in this case, for all its colloquial and mischievous undertones, remains a serious text; the fable is after all a didactic and moralizing genre, even though its "moral" often happens to be somewhat down to earth.[34]

The transformation of the fable into a longer playful, yet didactic text aptly parallels the relationship between the early feuilleton and *Youth Restored*, *The Sky Blue Book* and *Before Sunrise*. The ethos of the feuilleton is faithfully adapted to a longer prose form bearing similar themes. This imitation is predominately conceptual, as the author adapts the peculiar psychology of the feuilleton's portrayal of reality. In the case of the prose trilogy, Zoshchenko "assigns" his own topics by transforming complicated human dilemmas into simple problems of "regressive mentality." *Youth Restored*, the first novel in the trilogy, examines the difficulties of old age as nothing more than side effects of a sedentary lifestyle and a reluctance to accept new ideas. In *The Sky Blue Book*, Zoshchenko offers Socialism as a solution to all of the tragedies of human history. The last of his works, *Before Sunrise* treats mental illness as a remnant of pre-revolutionary culture which can be cured with physical exercise and positive thinking.

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[33] Genette, 260.

[34] Ibid., 261.

Youth Restored

Youth Restored (1933) is divided into three sections: an introduction of main themes, the story of Volosatov an aging professor who has regained his youth, and commentary on the aforementioned themes. From the outset of the work, the narrator distinguishes between these planes by granting his readers permission to skip the "scientific" discussions and enjoy the belletristic portion of the work. It begins with a warning to the reader that this book should not be received as pure fiction, but should be read as an instructional manual on the restoration of physical health and vitality:

> In this book I will touch upon difficult questions which are even somewhat too difficult, removed from literature, to which the writer's hands are unaccustomed. Questions such as, for instance, the search for a lost youth, the restoration of health, freshness of feeling and so on and so forth. I will also touch upon questions about the restructuring of our lives, and the possibility of such a restructuring, about capitalism and socialism and about the development of a worldview. [35]

[35] В этой книге будут затронуты вопросы сложные и даже отчасти чересчур сложные, отдаленные от литературы и непривычные для рук писателя. Такие вопросы, как, например, поиски потерянной молодости, возвращение здоровья, свежести чувств, и так далее, и тому подобное и прочее. А также будут затронуты вопросы о переустройстве нашей жизни и возможностях этого переустройства, о капитализме и о социализме и о выработке мировоззрения. Mikhail Zoshchenko, Vozvrashchennaia molodost', *Sobranie sochinenii 3* (Moskva: Terra, 1994), 7.

The author carefully words the preface to indicate that certain issues will only by "touched upon,"not conclusively proven. Furthermore, one finds a number of self-deprecating statements about the author's lack of expertise in scientific and medical matters. From the first pages of *Youth Restored* the reader encounters contradictory explanations of the work's purpose. On one hand it is advertised as a useful work, intended for the improvement of humanity. On the other, the author resorts to vagueness to deflect any responsibility for what he has written and consequently for those who may follow his advice.

In his commentaries following the publication of this work, Zoshchenko similarly strives toward the incompatible goals of authority and freedom from fact. In one commentary to *Youth Restored* published in 1934 in the newspaper *Rabochiy krai* he clearly asserts that his novel has practical use:

> I wrote this book as an instruction to myself and others. I did not write it in order to philosophize. I have never respected such pointless philosophy, I simply wanted to be useful in our country's struggle for Socialism. I have always been surprised by people's extreme lack of understanding and their extreme ignorance of elemental rules regarding the care of their own bodies.[36]

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[36] Эту книгу я написал в назидание себе и людям. Я написал ее не для того, чтобы пофилосовствовать. Я никогда не уважал такой бесцельной философии. Мне попросту хотелось быть полезным в той борьбе которую ведёт наша страна за социализм. Я всегда удивлялся крайнему непониманию людей и крайнему незнанию самых элементарных правил руководства своим телом. Quoted in Leonid Ershov, *Iz istorii sovetskoi satiry: M. Zoshchenko i satiricheskaia proza 20-40x godov* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), 116.

In this particular instance of commentary, Zoshchenko endows his work with tremendous power. Not only does he promise to help Soviet citizens regain their health and their youth, but prophecies that these improvements will strengthen Socialism in the Soviet Union. In the same year, Zoshchenko once again shirks from his self-imposed authority by remarking that readers should not seek practical advice from his book. In an interview given to *Literaturnaia gazeta* in 1934, the author dismisses criticism that his novel lacks clear guidelines for restoring one's youth:

> For instance one professor declared, that he read the novel and found no recipe for restoring one's youth. But I am not a charlatan! I myself do not know this recipe. I refer to the exhaustion of the mind only. I am not taking out patents on recipes for youth. I only want to attract attention to these questions.[37]

In his rebuttal to critics, who make unreasonable demands of his work, Zoshchenko states that *Youth Restored* was only intended as an abstract discussion of philosophical questions, precisely the kind of "empty philosophizing" that the author spoke out against earlier. Thus the author maneuvers between different presentations of his work, depending on his particular rhetorical need.

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[37] Например один профессор заявил, что прочел повесть но никакого рецепта возвращенной молодости не нашел. Но я не шарлатан! Я сам не знаю этого рецепта. Я говорю об усталости мозга --- и только. И я не беру никаких патентов на рецепты молодости. Я хочу лишь привлечь внимание к этим вопросам. Ibid., 121.

Analogously to Zoshchenko's representations of *Youth Restored* as alternatively hypothetical and practical, the conceptual framework of the early feuilleton allows for flexibility, an oscillation between fact and fiction. I refer specifically to the feuilleton of the early 1920s, written during the height of the rabkor movement. As Ershov points, toward the end of the 1920s the satirical feuilleton gradually became more like the short story than a newspaper article.[38] Moreover, the voice of the rabkor eventually disappeared as the feuilleton became the creation of a sole author.[39] The documentary pretense of an "eyewitness report" was replaced by pure fiction.

In *Youth Restored*, Zoshchenko establishes a quasi-documentary tone by offering his observations as basis for factual proof. In the introduction the narrator identifies the common problem of pre-mature death and aging.

> Well, until about the age of thirty-five, as far as the author has observed, people live tolerably, they labor on their lot, enjoy themselves, spend waywardly, whatever nature has given them, but after that, in most cases they begin to experience a sharp decline and the approach of old age[…][40]

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[38] Leonid Ershov, *Sovetskaia satiricheskaia proza 20x Godov* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk,1960), 147-150.

[39] Some examples of this "belletristic" feuilleton were written by Zorich, Il'f and Petrov, Gladkov and Kol'tsov.

[40] Ну, ещё лет до тридцати пяти, сколько мог заметить автор, люди живут сносно, трудятся на своем поприще, веселятся, тратят безрассудно то, что им отпущено природой, а после этого по большой части начинается у них бурное увядание и приближение к старости[…] Mikhail Zoshchenko, Vozvrashchennaia molodost', 10. This statement is accompanied by a footnote of clarification: Автор имеет в виду так называемую интеллигентскую прослойку, причем прослойку, имеющую прежние буржуазные привычки.

This thesis clearly lacks scientific objectivity or conclusive basis in reality. The author does not provide statistics to support his claim that at thirty-five the body begins to decline, but only cites "observation" without specifying who and where the author has observed. Nonetheless, despite the statement's dubious validity, the question of fading youth comes to represent humanity's most pressing dilemma in Zoshchenko's book.

The rhetorical technique of transforming a subjective observation into a universal principle and conversely proving universal principles with anecdotes resembles the methodology of the feuilleton. The rabkor's report of a single incident from everyday life becomes magnified in the feuilleton as a widespread phenomenon plaguing the entire country. Here we may also recall Zoshchenko's parodied narrators who unsuccessfully draw from their own experiences to prove "objective truths" such as "Winter sport is good for your health,"or "Stealing is bad." Zoshchenko plays both the role of the rabkor who reports an incident and the author whose job it is to make the rabkor's report socially relevant and entertaining. The fictional story of Professor Volosatov and his recovered youth serves as an imaginative illustration of "documentary fact," much in the same way an author would create a fictional short story based on the rabkor's reports.

Zoshchenko undermines his own claims about the scientific importance of *Youth Restored* by advising his readers to skip the scientific portions and simply enjoy the fascinating "true account" of Volosatov's life.

> In this case, they can without any regrets, begin their reading with chapter 17, a truthful novel about the astonishing life of one man, who in our realistic days, in

> the days of, so to say triumph and materialism and physiological foundations, restored his youth.[41]

Describing the tale as a "true account" the narrator offers it as evidence verifying his theories. Telling his readers that the professor Volosatov is a real person whom he actually met the author sets up the work as a feuilleton-like eyewitness account.

Moreover, by instructing his readers to bypass the introductory discussion and skip ahead to the "belletristic section," the narrator implies that the quasi-fictional story sufficiently substitutes for the "scientific facts" presented at the beginning and end of the book. In the naive world of the feuilleton anecdotal information convinces the readers more readily than factual proof. Any reported incident, no matter how reliable or unreliable the messenger, is sufficient evidence to prove universal truths.

Despite Zoshchenko's claims that the work was not intended to establish a "recipe for good health", he does set up some vague parameters for a long life, "affirmed" in the plot of Volosatov's story. The narrator states that "as far as he has observed" physical exercise is essential for a long life, while mental exertion causes pre-mature aging and death. These observations conjure up the Socialist division of individuals into "laborers" and "thinkers." Zoshchenko makes this association quite explicit in the book, demonstrating that intellectual labor engenders physical weakness.

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[41] В таком случае они без ущерба для себя прочтут, начиная с 17й главы, правдивую повесть об удивительной жизни одного человека, который в наши реальные дни, в дни так сказать торжества и материализма и физиологических основ, возвратил свою молодость. Ibid., 8.

The astronomy professor Vasilek Volosatov's "conversion narrative" which comprises the larger portion of the *Youth Restored* text tells the story of an ailing intellectual regaining his health and vigor by channeling his energies toward physical activity. After experiencing a bout of critical illness, Vasilek Volosatov has an astounding epiphany: old age can be reversed with regular exercise! Volosatov tests out his intuitive theory by beginning a physical regimen: "Now he did gymnastics on a daily basis […] he ran around the garden back and forth, jumping over lawns and benches like a goat."[42] The comical description of an older gentlemen "jumping over benches like a goat" recalls some of Zoshchenko's satirical short stories. Indeed, the tone of these descriptions is highly humorous. Vasilek's participation in winter sports vividly reminds us of the discussion of the "benefits of winter sports" discussed in the satirical short story "Guard your Health":

> Vasilek, in better health, almost blooming, ice-skated, not at all abashed by the smiles and crooked stares […] When he appeared on the skating rink in his snowmaiden skates, shouts of admiration and joy could be heard… You could hear yelling: "Grandpa is here. Grandpa, don't fall- you will break the ice."[43]

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[42] "Он теперь ежедневно занимался гимнастикой […] он бегал по саду туда сюда, перепрыгивая, как козел, через клумбы и скамейки." Ibid., 57.

[43] Василек, поздоровевший и почти цветущий, бегал на коньках, нимало не смущаясь улыбок и косых взглядов […] Когда он появлялся на катке на своих снегурочках, раздавались возгласы восхищения и крики радости…Раздавались возгласы : Папаша пришел. Папаша, не упади --- лед раздавишь. Ibid, 61.

Unlike the ill-fated hero of "Guard your Health," Volosatov does reap significant benefits from both summer and winter exercise. Emboldened by his improved circulation Vasilek decides to leave his dowdy wife for his neighbor's daughter, a nineteen year old beauty with petty bourgeois tastes. The romance ends in heartbreak, coupled with heart attack, as even Vasilek's enviable physical health wanes under the stress of his mistress's caprices and philistine psychology. A broken man, he returns to his wife, who by this time has also embraced exercise and personal hygiene. Though in the novel Zoshchenko presents his readers with comical moments and even satirical language, he is clearly serious about the underlying moral around which the story is organized. Just as he promises in the beginning, he "proves" through the story of Volosatov that psychological stress is bad and exercise is good.

The commentaries that follow the "true tale" are written in the form of footnotes. These are also anecdotes or stories of sorts, extracted from biographies of famous writers, musicians and philosophers. Most of this material is re-used in *Before Sunrise*, therefore I will discuss this biographical evidence in more detail in the analysis of this later work. Here I will only mention that the "footnotes" to *Youth Restored* are written in a dry tone, using sophisticated vocabulary and intellectual insight. Formally, these notes have nothing in common with the feuilleton. However, the tales from famous people's lives are narratively fitted to fulfill the ideological requirements of the overall work. The conceptual function of these biographical examples falls in line with the rabkor tales used as evidence in the feuilleton.

The Sky Blue Book

The Sky Blue Book (1935) presents a vivid example of Zoshchenko's conceptual regression to the logic of the feuilleton. The same satirical short stories that mocked and exposed the feuilleton's

rhetorical shortcomings are transformed to replicate them in *The Sky Blue Book*. This collection of Zoshchenko's short stories from the 1920s and 1930s emerges under the rubric of "the history of human relations." This book, as indicated by Zoshchenko's letter to Maxim Gorky presented as an introductory document on the first page of the novel, was written as a response to Gorky's suggestion that Zoshchenko should write a "funny and satirical book about the history of humanity." The satirical short stories are thus made historically significant, as they become embedded in a larger narrative that combines observations of human behaviors with "historical examples" to substantiate the author's claims. In the introduction Zoshchenko explains his intention to emphasize the educational enlightening aspects of his satire and urges the reader to seek more than lighthearted entertainment from the collection.

> Now we have set out to write a no less amusing and happy book about all different kinds of human actions and feelings. However we have decided to write not only about the behavior of our contemporaries. Skimming through the pages of history, we have found some amusing facts and funny scenes, painting a picture of actions taken by people of the past[…] These will be very useful to prove and confirm our dilettante ideas.[44]

[44] Нынче мы замыслили написать не менее веселую и забавную книжонку о самых разнообразных поступках и чувствах людей. Однако мы решили написать не только о поступках современников. Перелистав страницы истории, мы отыскали весьма забавные факты и смешные сценки, наглядно рисующие поступки прежних людей […] Они нам весьма пригодятся для доказательства и утверждения наших дилетантских мыслей. Mikhail Zoshchenko, Golubaia kniga, *Sobrannie Sochinenii* 3, 163.

In his strategy of enlisting his satirical short stories to serve as historical evidence, moreover historical evidence that proves great truths about human behavior, Zoshchenko (or the Zoshchenko-like narrator) commits the same mistakes as his parodied proletarian writers. He substitutes his own observations, in this case his own creative efforts, for indisputable facts. The admission that his views might be "dilettante" is simply a gesture of false modesty as no other instances of self-doubt surface throughout the rest of the work. In *The Sky Blue Book*, Zoshchenko inverts fact and fiction. He elevates his satirical short stories to the status of documentary proof and conversely presents his historical research in the form of satirical anecdotes. In this way, history and fantasy are mixed together into a quasi-historical, didactic narrative.

The *Sky Blue Book* consists of five sections dedicated to what Zoshchenko identifies as the principle forces driving human nature: "Money," "Love," "Treachery," "Misfortune" and a section entitled "Amazing Tales," which demonstrates that Socialism has transformed human relations into utopian perfection, thereby eliminating the first four symptoms of a bourgeois society. Zoshchenko tells readers about the redeeming conclusion at the end of the first section, once again giving them permission to skip ahead in order to facilitate a pleasant reading experience for the faint of heart.

> And as far as positive sides go, our optimistic friend who only wants to read about happy and worthy occurrences, we will send you with a light heart to the fifth

> section, located at the end of the book. And there your weary heart will be soothed by all the good.[45]

Zoshchenko's previously published stories from the 1920s and 1930s are reframed and assigned to represent one of the four themes. A few of the short stories are rewritten, most are renamed to better suit their particular category. Each section begins with an introduction explaining how each of the aforementioned elements (Money, Love etc.) has historically functioned in society. This preliminary discussion includes historical examples, written as amusing anecdotes.

The first part of the book under the heading "Money" begins with the author's rapturous pronouncement that money no longer holds sway over Soviet citizens: "We live in a country where the majestic procession of capital has ceased."[46] He goes on to compare the glorious Stalinist present to a dark past beginning in the Roman times and lasting until the end of the NEP- era, when money was the root of all evil. The narrator provides a number of historical, sometimes cross-cultural illustrations of this fact. The author seems especially fond of mentioning ancient Rome. One example of human folly incited by money is a killing spree that began as a result of Roman dictator Sulla's decision to reward murder.

> For instance, one the Roman dictator Sulla (83 years before our era) having seized power, ordered to destroy all the supporters of his enemy and rival Marij. And to

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[45] А что касается до положительных сторон, то мы тебя, как пресветлую личность, желающую все время читать только хорошие и достойные случаи, с легким сердцем отсылаем к пятому отделу, что имеется у нас в конце книги. И там твое усталое сердце успокоится от всего хорошего. Ibid.

[46] "Мы живем в той стране, в которой прекратилось величественное шествие капитала." Ibid., 166.

> insure that no one escaped this destruction, Sulla, being an expert on life and human souls, offered an incredibly high reward for each head.[47]

The author narrates this and other episodes using colloquial language to abbreviate the event. In the *Sky Blue Book* Roman history takes on the familiar form of an everyday event. Zoshchenko's significantly abridged and democratized retellings of history uproot the past from its documentary foundations, relegating it to the quasi-factual/fictional limbo like realm of "hearsay" information. Chudakova astutely characterizes this treatment of historical events as follows: "All cultural barriers are lifted, which prevented us from accepting the historical fact as an everyday occurrence being played out before our eyes."[48]

Yuri Shcheglov argues that the narrator we meet on the pages of *The Sky Blue Book* is the very same uncultured "new man" encountered in Zoshchenko's satirical short stories. "We first and foremost are referring to a specific style of narration, expressing skepticism and disrespect toward other cultures."[49] To equate Shcheglov's "uncultured man" in the short stories and the narrator of *The Sky Blue Book* implies a critical distance separating author and narrator. Further a

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[47] Например, однажды римский диктатор Сулла (83 год го нашей эры), захватив власть в свои руки, приказал истребить всех приверженцев своего врага и соперника Мария. А для того чтобы никто не избег этого истребления, Сулла, будучи большим знатоком жизни и человеческих душ, назначил необычайно высокую цену за каждую голову. Ibid., 182.

[48]"Сняты все культурные барьеры, не позволяющие нам отнестись к историческому факту так же непосредствен но, как к житейской истории, разыгрывающейся перед нашими глазами." Marietta Chudakova, *Poetika Mikhaila Zoshchenko*, (Moskva: Izd-vo "Nauka,"1979), 91.

[49] "Мы имеем в виду прежде всего специфический стиль повествования, выражающий скептицизм и непочтительность по отношению к инокультурам." Shcheglov, 75.

disagreement between "narrator" and "author" in *The Sky Blue Book* would mean that the tone of the entire work must be interpreted as mocking. If the author regards his narrator's words as "uncultured" then even the section about "Amazing Events" describing the greatness of the Socialist State and the bright future must also carry a dose of irony. A reading of *The Sky Blue Book* as a boldly anti-Soviet work is not supported by the text. Zoshchenko's letter promising Gorky to fulfill a social demand in his literature stands as the most direct piece of evidence against interpreting *The Sky Blue Book* as a work of satire. Thus I attribute the ignorant treatment of other cultures in *The Sky Blue Book* to the author's intention, not a satire on the "man on the street." By adapting, rather than mocking a proletarian author, Zoshchenko embraces a philistine attitude toward foreign cultures.

In his treatment of history Zoshchenko imitates, albeit with a better vocabulary, his parodied writers. In Zoshchenko's satirical short stories narrators often insert "facts" about other times and cultures as irrelevant digressions. In the short story "Thieves" the narrator boasts cultural and historical knowledge. In one particular instance, he narrates an imagined scenario from Finnish culture.

> They say in Finland, in the olden days they would chop off thieves' hands. Some Finnish comrade will thieve around a little, and suddenly they … chik, and go on without your hand, you son of a bitch! But from that time on people have become very virtuous. They say that you don't even need to lock your apartment over there. And if for instance some citizen drops his wallet in the street, no one will

> take it. They will just place the wallet on a visible post and let it sit there till the end of the century… Such fools.[50]

In "Thieves" the narrator resembles Luria's illiterate subjects who can only reason within a limited scope of familiar experience. He discredits this anecdote by constructing an imaginary scenario that ignores Finnish culture. In this case, the author intends the historical digression for comic effect, accentuating his parodied narrator's cultural dearth. In *The Sky Blue Book* Zoshchenko quite seriously imitates the proletarian storyteller's tactic of transposing all historical information to fit a limited Soviet plane of reference. After providing a neutral, historical account of Sulla's bloodthirsty orders, Zoshchenko rewrites history in the familiar form of an anecdote, by penning an imagined dialogue between the Roman dictator and one of his many hired killers.

> The assassin enters, carefully holding his precious cargo. "Excuse me!" says Sulla. "What the heck did you bring me? What is this?" "Nothing special… a head" " I can see that it's a head. But what kind of a head? What are you sticking in my face?" "A normal head… Just as you ordered." "I ordered… But I don't even

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[50] Вот, говорят, в Финландии в прежнее время ворам руки отрезали. Поворуется, скажем, какой-нибудь ихний финский товарищ, сейчас ему – чик, и ходи сукин сын без руки! Зато и люди там пошли положительные. Там, говорят, квартиры можно даже не закрывать. А если, например, на улице гражданин бумажник обронит, так бумажника не возьмут. А положат бумажник на видную тумбу , и пущай он лежит до скончания века… Вот дураки-то. Zoshchenko, "Vory," *Uvazhaemiye Grazhdane*, 259.

> have this head in my list. Whose head is this? Head secretary, can you be so kind as to inspect whose head this is.[51]

The author hypothesizes about a surplus of overzealous killings that could have taken place in a set of given historical circumstances. Sulla's cruelty evokes Stalin's murderous actions of the 1930s. Although given Zoshchenko's apparent desire to please authority it is doubtful that the connection was intentional, this episode does cast a suspicious shadow on the author. The re-enactment of a theoretical situation renders history accessible to "the masses," teaches a lesson about human nature and most importantly validates Zoshchenko's social function of enlightener.

After a smattering of historical examples, sometimes presented as anecdotes and at other times as sentence long "bullet points," Zoshchenko offers more examples of human folly in the form of short stories. As I already mentioned, these particular works had all been published, sometimes more than once, in satirical journals in the 1920s and 1930s, but the titles are now changed to better fit the given theme. To ensure an appropriate response from his readers, these themes are reiterated in introductions and transitions.

By way of seemingly minor transformations, the meaning of many stories completely changes. To illustrate this I will use the example of "Firewood", a story analyzed earlier in the

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[51] Входит убийца, бережно держа в руках драгоценную ношу.
----Позволь!---говорит Сулла. ---Ты чего принес? Это что?
----Обыкновенно-с…Голова…
----Сам вижу что голова. Да какая это голова? Ты что мне тычешь?
----Обыкновенная-с голова… Как велели приказать…
----Велели…Да этой головы у меня и в списках-то нет. Это чья голова? Голова секретарь, будьте любезны посмотреть, что это за голова. Zoshchenko, Golubaia kniga, *Sobrannie sochinenii 3*,182.

chapter as satirizing the conceptual framework of the feuilleton. The story appears in the section on Treachery, under a new title "How a Thief was Caught in an Ingenious Manner" ("Поимка Вора Оригинальным Способом").

The plot remains essentially the same, except for the ending, which changes dramatically. Both parties – the thief and the neighbors who caught him by placing dynamite in one of the logs- are summoned to court to pay for their actions: "By the way, our entire brave trio was called to court --- both Vlasovs and Boborykin. They were accused of illegal actions and of damaging government property. So they will be in court as well."[52] Unlike in the original story, in which the crimes committed by vigilante actions were unpunished and rendered the entire story morally ambiguous, in "How a Thief was Caught" Soviet courts carry out justice against the thief and the mastermind behind the explosion. Misha Vlasov's scientific talent, however, is not wasted. After learning his lesson about damaging property, Misha joins in the fight against treachery and continues to conduct forensic experiments for good, not evil.

In a pattern of "reforging" his satirical stories that persists throughout *The Sky Blue Book*, Zoshchenko clearly changes from parodying the proletarian writer to imitating him. In the first version of the satirical short story the narrator playfully swore that the absurd tale of the firewood was true, while winking at the reader. In the second version the documentary claim is made outside the story's fictional parameters and supported by the author. The "dialogic" quality present in "Firewood" disappears from the second version. The story of the firewood thief turns into a moral tale about deception and treachery. Zoshchenko performs Procrustean operations on

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[52] Между прочим, на суд попала также вся наша боевая тройка --- оба Власовы и Боборыкин. Их обвиняли в незаконных поступках и в порче государственного имущества. Так что они тоже будут судится. Ibid., 308.

this idiosyncratic work to make it fit the ideological theme of the section. In this way he eliminates the distance between author and narrator, making their voices sound in monologic unison. In the absence of a skeptical authorial commentator, the story's inconsistencies are left unquestioned. In contrast to "Firewood," in "How a Thief was Caught" the author directs his readers toward the conclusion that treachery can be easily recognized and should be punished.

The Sky Blue Book ends with a section called "Amazing Events," a collection of short stories endowed with hope for a brighter future. In the preamble to "Amazing Events," Zoshcenko argues with the philosophical intellectual. In an imaginary dialogue the naive proletarian writer (played by Zoshchenko) and a bourgeois philosopher (played by Not Zoshchenko) battle for readers' souls. The philosopher offers an existential view that life is but an illusion, to which the proletarian writer wryly replies by asking if the philosopher's lavish house too is an illusion. Armed only with the "commonsense" of dialectical materialism and a few examples from revolutionary history, the *imitated* proletarian wins the fight. Here, Zoshchenko constructs an effigy of a melancholy pre-revolutionary intellectual, burdened with Zoshchenko's existential doubts to be ridiculed and destroyed. The author employs a similar technique of disassociation from negative projections in his *Sentimental Tales* and *Michel Syniagin*. The introspection and melancholy of various characters are debunked as nothing more than self-indulgent habits of the petty-bourgeois.

Similarly, In *The Sky Blue Book* the imitated proletarian writer makes a direct link between the philosopher's worldview and his privileged economic position. When the philosopher pessimistically complains about the ephemeral brevity of life, Zoshchenko points out the hypocrisy of his outlook. "And as far as the fact that for you life is short, well despite its

brevity, this did not stop you from putting around a hundred thousand in the bank."[53] The philosopher leaves angry and defeated. After exorcising his pre-revolutionary demon Zoshchenko bestows to the reader words of encouragement to aid in the battle against poisonous, philosophical contemplation.

> We have described this imagined little scene, in order to show the struggle on the front of ideas. And it is true that some of these rationalizations can upset a weaker soul. Some weaker soul may become despondent from such words as "dream, short life, unreality, numbered days […]." One must have a truly courageous heart in order to not become upset by the poison of these words, which do contain a dose of truth ---otherwise they would not affect anyone. Nonetheless these words are wrong and false.[54]

The narrator counteracts the philosopher's pessimism with uplifting tales about the triumph of the revolutionary spirit. "The Amazing Tales" offer hope to those seeking meaning in the face of inevitable mortality. Stories of good deeds, bravery and love for the Soviet Union offer the reader compelling reasons to hope for a bright future. In an afterward, titled "Saying Goodbye to

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[53] "А что для вас жизнь коротка, то не смотря на ее краткость, вам, вероятно не помешало положить в банк тысяч сто."Ibid., 398.

[54] Мы описали вам эту воображаемую сценку, чтобы показать, какая бывает борьба на фронте мысли. И действительно, некоторые рассуждения могут отчасти смутить более слабую душу. Более слабая душа может поникнуть от таких слов --- сон, короткая жизнь, нереальность, считанные дни (…) И тут надо действительно иметь мужественное сердце чтоб не смутиться от яда этих слов, в которых есть доля правды, --- иначе они бы не действовали ни на кого. Тем не менее эти слова не правильные и ложны. Ibid., 399.

the Reader," Zoshchenko illustrates by his own example that a deep enjoyment of everyday life is at the root of good health. Putting down his pen, the author reflects that writing and thinking are not substitute for direct experience. As he finishes the last lines of the book he looks out of his window.

> We are sitting behind a desk and writing these lines. The window is open. Sun. Down there is the boulevard. The wind orchestra plays. A gray house across the street. And there we see a woman in a lilac dress on the balcony. And she laughs, observing our barbaric activity, in essence unnatural for a man and human. And we are embarrassed. And we abandon our work. Hello, friends.[55]

The woman in the lilac dress observed from the open window brings the author out of his literary reverie and into the present. His embarrassment at having been "caught" in a moment of inward contemplation reflects a pervading motif evident across Zoshchenko's serious prose--- the creation of art as an unhealthy compulsion, a shameful fetish. This is not the first time Zoshchenko identifies the writer's profession as "barbaric" and "unbefitting man." In his *Sentimental Tales* (1927) and *Michel Syniagin* (1930) Zoshchenko similarly portrays the realm of the artist as a solipsistic illusion disconnected from authentic, immediate experience. If "literature of fact" is superior to fiction, then unmediated experience is superior to "literature of

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[55] Сидим за письменным столом и пишем эти строчки. Окно открыто. Солнце. Внизу-бульвар. Играет духовой оркестр. Напротив серый дом. И там, видим, на балкон выходит женщина в лиловом платье. И она смеется, глядя на наше варварское занятие, в сущности не свойственное мужчине и человеку. И мы смущены. И бросаем это дело. Привет, друзья. Ibid., 446.

fact." The proletarian writer, unspoiled by education, comes closest to creating a literature that relies first and foremost on experience rather than contemplation. By channeling this writer, rather than mocking him, Zoshchenko ideologically transforms his authorial persona from a pre-revolutionary intellectual in a Soviet "man of action."

Before Sunrise

In the final work of the prose trilogy Zoshchenko once again battles the projected philosopher introduced at the end of *The Sky Blue Book*. This version of the pre-revolutionary intellectual is considerably more difficult to destroy, as in *Before Sunrise*, Zoshchenko admits that he is actually battling himself and the soul that will be saved is his own rather than that of his readers. As in *The Sky Blue Book* the proletarian writer does not make himself known with linguistic markers. In Genette's terms, the relationship between the "hypotext" of the feuilleton and the "hypertext" at hand also appears hazy. *Before Sunrise* stands out as a unique work even within the small sample of works in the prose trilogy. Lacking any hints of irony or satire, one might describe it as a heartbreaking search for the cure of a mental illness.[56]

In his methodological approach toward identifying the root cause of his illness Zoshchenko once again borrows from the logic of his early feuilletons. As in the feuilleton, a persuasive claim appears in the very beginning of the work, in this case a statement that

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[56] Some scholars have detected irony and sarcasm even in *Before Sunrise*. See for instance Rachel May, "Superego as Literary Subtext: Story and Structure in Mikhail Zoshchenko's Before Sunrise," *Slavic Review* 55 no.1 (1996):106-24. However, there is no evidence that Zoshchenko was "kidding." On the contrary archival materials confirm the seriousness with which he wrote the book. *See Mikhail Zoshchenko: materialy k tvorcheksoi biografii*. Vol.1, edited by N.A. Groznova (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997).

depression or "neurasthenia" can be cured. Subsequent proof of the stated hypothesis follows in the form of anecdotes from the narrator's own experiences, the experiences of people he has known and from the biographies of famous figures. Many of these tales seem irrelevant to the overall thesis. The author suggests that the stories themselves are sufficient evidence to substantiate his ideas.

The first part of the book consists of brief, semi-autobiographical vignettes. Arranged in reverse chronological order, sometimes with lapses in chronology, the reader glimpses various episodes of the author's life beginning in his early twenties and regressing back to first memories from early infancy. As the narrator peers further into the abyss of memory, the recollections become increasingly more incoherent. "Here are the folds of some blanket. Some kind of a hand emerging from the wall. A tall swaying shadow. But these were chaotic visions. They resembled dreams. They were almost unreal."[57] But even these vague remnants of memory become "reliable material" to structure Zoshchenko's established theory. Gradually, he reconstructs vague memories of bathing, of an early operation and of eating. Using Pavlov's theories of reflexes, the narrator-author concludes that his present phobias of water, hands and food can all be traced to traumas in infancy. This line of thinking clearly evokes Freud, whose ideas briefly dazzled the imagination of the Soviet scientific community. In the 1930s, however, Freud fell from grace in Russia. He was therefore an unacceptable source of wisdom. Thus, for political reasons, Zoshchenko appropriates some of Freud's ideas but misattributes them to Pavlov.

[57] "Вот складки какого-то одеяла. Какая-то рука из стены. Высокая колеблющаяся тень. Но это были хаотические видения. Они напоминали сны. Они были почти не реальны." Zoshchenko, "Pered voskhodom solntsa," *Sobrannie Sochinenii 3*, 564.

Although Zoshchenko names Pavlov as the inspiration of his book, the scientist's ideas are applied loosely and haphazardly to an emotional, disjointed narration of trauma.

Despite the work's serious tone, one finds conceptual strains leading back to early Soviet mass literature. The quasi- fictional structure of the early feuilleton appears amidst psychological analysis. Anecdotes of personal experience comprise the majority of the text. These vignettes are artificially superimposed onto a larger edifying schema. The discrepancy between experience and the desired message is evident as the narrators personal accounts must be convoluted to fit the argument. Zoshchenko plays several roles in recreating the feuilleton, he is both the naive rabkor and the educated author whose job entails appropriating the proletarian's experiences to illustrate a particular point. Fact and fiction appear intermingled as equals to prove their author's universal principles. Here, one can imagine Zoshchenko as a 'rabkor' assigned to write on the topic of suffering and its cure.

In fact, like *The Sky Blue Book*, *Before Sunrise* came about with the encouragement of Maxim Gorky. In an exchange documented in Starkov's 1991 book about Zoshchenko, Gorky apparently suggested that the author write satirically on the topic of suffering. "Suffering --- is the shame of the world, it is necessary to hate it in order to eliminate it…To laugh at professional sufferers --- that is a beneficial thing, dear Mikhail Mikhailovich."[58] Zoshchenko responded that he was more inclined to examine the underlying causes of suffering, rather than satirizing them. Admittedly, "suffering" is an inappropriate theme for a short feuilleton, the topic significantly

[58] "Страдание --- позор мира, и надобно его ненавидеть для того чтобы истребить…Высмеять профессиональных страдальцев --- вот хорошее дело, дорогой Михаил Михайлович…"Quoted in A. Starkov, *Mikhail Zoshchenko: Sud'ba khudozhnika* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 185.

differs from issues of housing and bath house difficulties, nonetheless it served as a pre-condition to shape the way the author would report the "facts."

The general theme of the book could be identified as suffering and its alleviation, but the thesis remains unclear. The author calls his book anti-fascist, a triumph of rationality and repeatedly refers to the patron saint of Russian psychology- Ivan Pavlov. With a mixture of fact and fiction, *Before Sunrise* promises to enlighten humanity with a set of principles developed on the basis of Pavlovian research. In a recorded conversation between the author and Dr. Speransky, Zoshchenko explains the premise of his work:

> "In short, this book is about how I rid myself of many unnecessary sorrows and became happy."
>
> "Will this be a treatise or a novel?"
>
> "It will be a work of literature. Science will enter into it, just as history sometimes appears in novels."[59]

While Zoshchenko insists on the supremacy of the literary, rather than the scientific mode in his work, he nonetheless advertises the book as possessing documentary relevance. The author simultaneously shirks responsibility, however, by stating that he will not promise the people more than he can deliver in such a book. "I will be careful. I will promise only that which I have

[59] --Вкратце---это книга о том, как я избавился от многих ненужных огорчений и стал счастливым.
---Это будет трактат или роман?
---Это будет литературное произведение. Наука войдет в него, как иной раз в роман входит история. Mikhail Zoshchenko, "Pered voskhodom solntsa," *Sobrannie sochinenii 3*, 451.

myself gained. And only to those people who posess qualities similar to mine." After this brief disclaimer, Zoshchenko asserts the credibility of his findings. "I am referring to the iron-clad formulas, tested by the great scientist."[60] The "iron-clad" formulas are nonetheless illustrated using non-documentary and semi-documentary material such as poems, anecdotes, personal experiences and literary biographies.

The chaotically organized and self-contradictory information apparently intended as evidence leading to proof offers little more than confusion. As expected of such lofty promises as "the cure for everything,"the work does not accomplish what it sets out to do. Several scholars have made it their mission to help Zoshchenko arrive at his desired conclusions. For instance, Rachel May offers a very interesting reading of *Before Sunrise* as a palimpsest of layers of consciousness: "Zoshchenko takes on various guises and traverses the various strata but is always held between an unseen lower layer of unconscious repression and an unmentionable upper layer that is the social context in which he wrote."[61] This interpretation certainly demonstrates the scholar's ability to make sense out of chaos, but Zoshchenko could not be credited with such an elaborate design.

The patient and analyst relationship in *Before Sunrise* closely mirrors the cooperative collaboration between worker correspondent and writer. The analysand experiences and reports, the analyst interprets and mines meaningful conclusions from his patient's chaotic narrative. The naive reports of Zoshchenko the infant, the child and the young man are transformed into

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[60] --Я буду осторожен. Я пообещаю только то, что получил сам. И только тем людям, которые имеют свойства, близкие к моим. --- Я говорю о железных формулах, проверенных великим ученым. Ibid., 452.

[61] Rachel May, "Superego as Literary Subtext," 106-124.

appropriately edifying materials by the enlightened, present-day Zoshchenko. The infant may only see folds of a blanket and a dark arm in the shadows, but the cured adult detects early sources for subsequent phobias. He supplements these descriptions with extensive commentary on the significance of these nascent experiences. "And so, the unfortunate incident has been identified. The small, unconscious creature, acquainting itself with the surrounding world, was mistaken, having perceived objects that posed no danger as dangerous."[62] Likewise, memories of school, unhappy love affairs, trips to the zoo all add up to support the etiology of an illness. As Gregory Carleton describes the rhetorical principles governing *Before Sunrise*: "Essentially everything, no matter how, when or why Zoshchenko may have thought of it, merges into a single plane of reference that serves as a fund from which to draw the necessary proof"[63] All experiences add up to one cohesive whole supporting the theory that false "Pavlovian" reflexes should be blamed for all problems.

After "establishing" the cause of his own suffering, the author goes on to expand his findings to others' lives, stating universal relevance and social usefulness of his discovery. To this end, he provides examples of similar problems and cures from the lives of his acquaintances and literary figures. Zoshchenko comes up with a list of famous melancholics who suffered a similar fate.

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[62] "Итак, несчастное происшествие найдено. Маленькое безумное существо, знакомясь с окружающим миром, ошиблось, восприняв опасными те вещи, кои не были опасны." Ibid., 613.

[63] Gregory Carleton, 144.

> We left off at the black list of extraordinary and famous people. Astonished by the misfortune, the depression of these people, and even their sometime suicidal tendencies, I wanted to know: what were the reasons for their disasters. Were they the same as mine?[64]

After acknowledging that each case is unique and specific as the individuals on his list come from a variety of epochs, Zoshchenko proceeds to disregard the uniqueness of each artist. Consequently in Zoshchenko's narrative Poe, Balzac, Mayakovsky, Pushkin, Gogol and others all suffered for one simple reason: they were unable to break the false reflexes they developed in youth. In each of these biographies the author sees his own malady, his own fears and treats his famous, imaginary "patients" accordingly, as mirror reflections of his own limited world.

The book also includes positive examples of individuals overcoming their fears and anxieties. The proof that Zoshchenko's therapeutic method works appears in the form of reported "real-life incidents": "I remembered a whole group of stories. I remembered many stories. And they all convinced me of the correctness of my conclusions. These were stories of unbroken symbolic associations, stories of difficult illnesses, catastrophes, dramas."[65] Zoshchenko goes on to relate several contrived tales about "broken reflexes."

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[64] Мы остановились на черном списке замечательных и прославленных людей. Потрясенный несчастьями, хандрой этих людей, а подчас и стремлением их к смерти, я захотел узнать: по каким причинам возникали у них эти нестастья. Не по тем ли самым, что у меня? Zoshchenko, "Pered voskhodom solnsta," 643.

[65] Я вспомнил еще целый ряд историй. Я вспомнил множество историй. И все они убеждали меня в справедливости моих выводов. Это были истории неразорванных условных связей, истории тягчайших болезней, катастроф, драм. Ibid., 638.

One of these stories features a circus artist who fails to perform his trick ostensibly because he is aware of a safety net suspended below him. After the safety net is removed, the circus artist once again regains his skills and confidence. By the end of the story, the connection between the reported incident and the theory of broken reflexes still remains unclear. Moreover, according to Zoshchenko's own explanations of the mind's workings, the circus performer's miraculous improvement lacks credibility. In *Before Sunrise*, the narrator undergoes a long and painful journey into his psychological past, to the first memories of infancy in order to establish the root cause of his fear, whereas the circus performer accomplishes the same feat of self-analysis in a single day, correcting his misconceptions instantaneously.

In his conclusion, Zoshchenko states that rational thought conquers all. He ends with a curious anecdote confirming the social usefulness of the entire trilogy. As he reports, a murderer writes to the author that after reading *Youth Restored* he has gained control of himself and had he read it earlier wouldn't have committed the crime. This non-sequitor appears as the crowning jewel in Zoshchenko's final three book "feuilleton" about a variety of topics from exercise to fascism to Pavlov. These themes are unified only by the writer's pledge to serve humanity.

Conclusion

The painfully naïve arguments presented in *Before Sunrise* would have provided the earlier, acerbic Zoshchenko of the 1920's plenty of satirical material to masterfully parody. The fact that the author trades the parody of a proletarian author in for imitation indicates a change of artistic goal. In his trilogy Zoshchenko no longer aims for literary mastery, but for literary acceptance. In his satirical short stories Zoshchenko rendered the socially useful feuilleton impractical, providing vivid examples of the rabkor's ineptitude in the role of social commentator. In the

trilogy, the skeptical attitude toward the rabkor disappears entirely, as the worker correspondent becomes Zoshchenko's teacher and the feuilleton his template.

Despite these attempts at fitting into the Soviet literary scene, Zoshchenko missed the mark by a decade. In his prose trilogy, Zoshchenko grasps at thin air, trying to use literary conventions that won him acclaim in the early Soviet period. This anachronistic literary style vividly demonstrates the demonic speed of change in the State's demands resulting in writers' confusion about the form of proper Soviet literature. Zoshchenko's intentions were clearly not rebellious or subversive as he completely relinquished the double-voiced mischief of his short stories, finally following the proletarian writer's logic with a straight face. Ultimately, Zoshchenko was unable to remain in the critics' good graces. After the publication of the first half of *Before Sunrise* in 1943 Zoshchenko's work was condemned as "amoral" and as out of line with "the people".[66] As it turned out, the simple hearted, sincere proletarian writer of Zoshchenko's imagination did not coincide with the State's version of this figure.

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[66] Starkov, 191-195.

Conclusion

The Artist and the Crowd

Alexander Pushkin's poem "Poet i tolpa," (1828) describes a poet's frustration at having to address a group of unenlightened plebeians. The poet's exquisite song falls on deaf ears as the crowd cannot comprehend the practical purpose of poetry. Disgusted with their pedestrian utilitarianism, the poet chastises the masses for their ignorance:

> Silence, you foolish public,
> A laborer, slave of poverty, of worry!
> Your insolent murmur is intolerable,
> You are an earth worm, not a son of the heavens;
> All that you value is measured by weight
> You evaluate the Belvedere idol.[1]
> You see no purpose in him.
> But this marble is a god!... so what?
> A baking pot is more precious to you
> You cook your food in it.
>
> [Молчи, бессмысленный народ,
> Поденщик, раб нужды, забот!
> Несносен мне твой ропот дерзкий,
> Ты червь земли, не сын небес;
> Тебе бы пользы всё — на вес
> Кумир ты ценишь Бельведерский.
> Ты пользы, пользы в нем не зришь.

[1] Refers to "Belveder Apollo" - a marble statue of the god of poetry discovered in the 15th century.

Но мрамор сей ведь бог!.. так что же?
Печной горшок тебе дороже:
Ты пищу в нем себе варишь.][2]

In response, the crowd asks the poet to improve society with his god-given gift. They tell him that his powers must be used to instruct and enlighten the masses. Admitting to their moral failings, the common people ask the poet to morally elevate them.

The Ignorant Masses:
Well, if you have been chosen by the heavens,
Your gift, divine messenger
Should be used to for our benefit:
Reform the hearts of your brothers
We are weakwilled, treacherous,
Shameless, mean and ungrateful
We are cold-hearted skoptsy,[3]
We are liars, slaves, fools.
Defects amass within is.
You could, for the sake of brotherly love
Give us bold lessons
And we will listen to them.

[Чернь.
Нет, если ты небес избранник,
Свой дар, божественный посланник,
Во благо нам употребляй:
Сердца собратьев исправляй.
Мы малодушны, мы коварны,
Бесстыдны, злы, неблагодарны;
Мы сердцем хладные скопцы,
Клеветники, рабы, глупцы;
Гнездятся клубом в нас пороки.
Ты можешь, ближнего любя,
Давать нам смелые уроки,
А мы послушаем тебя.][4]

[2] Aleksandr Pushkin, "Poet i tolpa," (1828), Stikhotvorennia Tom 3 (Moskva-Leningrad: Izd-vo akademii nauk SSSR, 1949), 85.

[3] Reference to a Christian sect who believed that castration was the way to spiritual salvation.

The poet dismisses their plea stating that prisons, not poetry discipline the wicked. He refuses the taks of enlightener and rejects the suggested connection between art and edification. The writer's predicament in a newly classless society of the 1920s in many ways resembled the plight of the artist in Pushkin's poem. Unlike the disdainful poet, however, pre-revolutionary intellectuals did not have the option of maintaining a proud distance from the masses. Literature in the years of NEP was bound to the interests of common readers. The dialogue between the artist and the crowd became accomodating in part due to financial and political pressures placed on authors, and in part due to the disappearing boundary between high and low cultural spheres.

The problem of including a mass reader among the implied audiences of a complex literary text echoes some of the broader social and cultural tensions evident in the years following the revolution. The reconciliation of pre-revolutionary tastes and values with Soviet ideology remained a central concern not only for writers but for politicians as well throughout the early 1920s. The traditional narrative describing early Soviet culture depicts a struggle between the values of the pre-revolutionary intellectuals and the proletarian ideals of the newly formed State. In my study, I have countered this binary view by demonstrating the process of negotiation between artistic aims and adaptation to newly literate audiences. Furthermore, the definition of pre-revolutionary culture has been expanded to include not only the literary classics, but more widely popular publications.

By drawing on the NEP-era satirical feuilleton, which was in turn conceived from models of pre-revolutionary popular literature, the authors continued the relationship between writer and

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[4] Ibid., 86.

common reader established in the years of NEP, despite the State's interference. *The Master and Margarita*, *Envy*, *The Foundation Pit* and Zoshchenko's prose trilogy persistently engage with the idea of a "mass culture." This finding is significant to our understanding of Bulgakov, Olesha, Zoshchenko and Platonov's cultural positions within the new Soviet Union. The creative output of these writers was clearly out of line with the conventions of Socialist realism. Parodoxically, these writers continued the abandoned project of initiating common readers into literature by injecting recognizable elements of the feuilleton into their modernist prose.

The continued presence of popular elements in these novels indicates a cultural current flowing beneath the surface of Soviet officialdom. It is vital to make a distinction between this hidden second life of Soviet literature and what scholars have identified as underground literary culture. The latter term carries a connotation of elitist exclusivity as well as intentional separation from the main stream. The writers' concern with the tastes of a perceived wide contemporary audience indicates just the opposite --- a desire to remain relevant to future generations of Soviet readers.

"The Artist and the Crowd" in Post-Soviet Culture: Future Directions for Research

The connection between the masters of Soviet literature and popular culture continues to this day--- in the the theater, on the screen and on the internet. It may come as a surprise to many readers that *Gudok*, the railway worker's organ where Mikhail Bulgakov, Yuri Olesha, Evgeniy Ilf and Vladimir Petrov, Valentin Kataev and Isaac Babel began their literary careers in the 1920s, still exists as an online journal dedicated to the railroad and topical humor (www.gudok.ru); moreover, the publication proudly boasts of its literary heritage and continues

to publish articles about its most famous alumni. As a 2004 editorial piece entitled "An Ordinary Miracle States" states: "Its [Gudok's] entire history – is an illustration of miracle: an unknown beginning author arrives, and leaves a Master."[5] This statement is of course alluding to Mikhail Bulgakov's illustrious career, which began at *Gudok* in the 1920's. Other proprietary claims over their star contributors include a yearly "Bulgakov prize" for best feuilleton, and a recently produced play entitled "A Deathly Funny Adventure" about the comical exploits of Yuri Olesha and Evgeniy Ilf' as young feuilleton writers riding a train to Moscow.[6]

In 2005 Vladimir Bortko transposed *The Master and Margarita* into a television series. The cinematic rendering capitalizes on the vaudeville spirit of the novel: the special effects and rampant nudity seem to overshadow the theological and philosophical aspects of Bulgakov's masterpiece. Andrei Platonov has gained enormous popularity both in Russian and in the West in the last 20 years. The author's incredible complexity has not prevented directors from adapting his works to the screen: Vladimir Mirzoev began filming "The Foundation Pit" in 2005, but aborted the project due to disagreements with the studio. One of Platonov's short stories "The Return" is currently being made into a film called "Father" (2007). Another indication of post-Soviet interest in these authors is the re-releasing of Soviet era films based on works by Olesha and Platonov. In 2001, film studios resurrected *Tri tolstiaka* (1966) and Platonov's *Odinokii golos cheloveka* (1978).

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[5] Viktor Viktorov, "Obyknovennoye Chudo." *Gudok* 23 (December 2004), accessed 1 August 2007 <http://www.gudok.ru/index.php/4180>.

[6] This play was undertaken by the Moscow Youth Theater under the direction of Vyacheslav Spesitsev in the spring of 2007.

The cultural negotiations between high art and commercial accessibility evident in the adaptation of classic novels to the tastes of current Russian audiences resemble the difficult relationship between the writer and the newly literate public in the early 1920s. Although the authors themselves are long gone, the task of mediating artistic merit and popular appeal falls to the directors and screenwriters. A future study examining receptions and transpositions of Bulgakov, Olesha and Platonov's works using recent films, theatrical reviews, book reviews, literary articles and internet publications would significantly aid our understanding of the connection between writer and reader. Examining these masterpieces against the backdrop of the trends in post-Soviet reading and viewing culture one stumbles upon the same set of questions encountered in the discussion of the Soviet 1920s: How do changes in the economy and new reader demographics contribute to the aesthetic re-imaginings of Soviet prose works? What popular potentials are uncovered when high-brow literary texts are re-opened within the context of commercial culture?

The seventy-five years of Soviet rule rendered Russian culture a unique phenomenon, guided by the whims of several tyrannical leaders and a nationalist ideology. But is seventy-five years a long enough time span to completely sever the mechanisms of cultural production which existed before the revolution and have been revived after the fall of communism? Scholars have no doubts about the considerable influences of nineteenth century literary themes, philosophy and linguistic style on Soviet literature. It appears logical that a notion of a market driven writer-reader relationship, which began to develop toward the end of the 19th century, would also be carried into the brave new world of Soviet literature. The NEP years certainly capitalized on this pre-existing connection to reach a newly literate reader. The mass culture of the 1920s developed

on the idea of a common audience may not be all that different from the commercial post-Soviet culture. In this modern sphere the intellectual author and the mass audience reunite through new media and technologies: the dialogue between the artist and the crowd continues.

Maria Isabel Kisel was born in Kiev, Ukraine. She received a B.A. in psychology from the University of Wisconsin- Madison in 2001 and in 2008 earned her doctorate in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Northwestern University.