The University of Sheffield

Boris Pil'niak and the Crisis of Subjectivity: An Intertextual Approach

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Abstract

By demonstrating the limitations of selected models of intepretation employed to date in the analysis of the works of Boris Pil'niak, this thesis explores the role of the subject both as textual protagonist and reader, recasting the texts under discussion as expressions of both the nature of the dual status of the individual as both object and subject, and the attempt to come to terms with this condition. In so doing it draws on a variety of intertextual sources.

Chapter 1 is devoted to an appraisal of the value of inter-media modelling in the light of the concept of Modernism, and chapters 2 to 5 investigate further aspects of modelling both in terms of analytical strategy, and the fictionalization of personal existence. Chapter 2, through an analysis of *Tselaia zhizn'*, introduces the question of the inescapability of subjectivity in the compulsive modelling process. Chapter 3, devoted to *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, exposes the frustration that inheres in the incommunicability of subjectivity, and chapter 4, through the medium of *Tret'ia stolitsa*, discusses the question of isolation that is a function of that incommunicability. The analysis of *Ivan Moskva* which comprises Chapter 5 explores the nature of the exertion required to construct a viable, objectifying model of existence, and the consequences of the degradation of the will to maintain faith in it. Chapter 6 expands on the limitations of language in the process of communication, self-determination and integration. Using Heidegger's concept of inauthentic existence as a descriptive tool, the thesis concludes that, although the diagnosis of inauthenticity is appropriate to the mode of existence portrayed in the texts discussed, textually there is no viable alternative, and existence can be prosecuted only through a personal illusion of objectivity.

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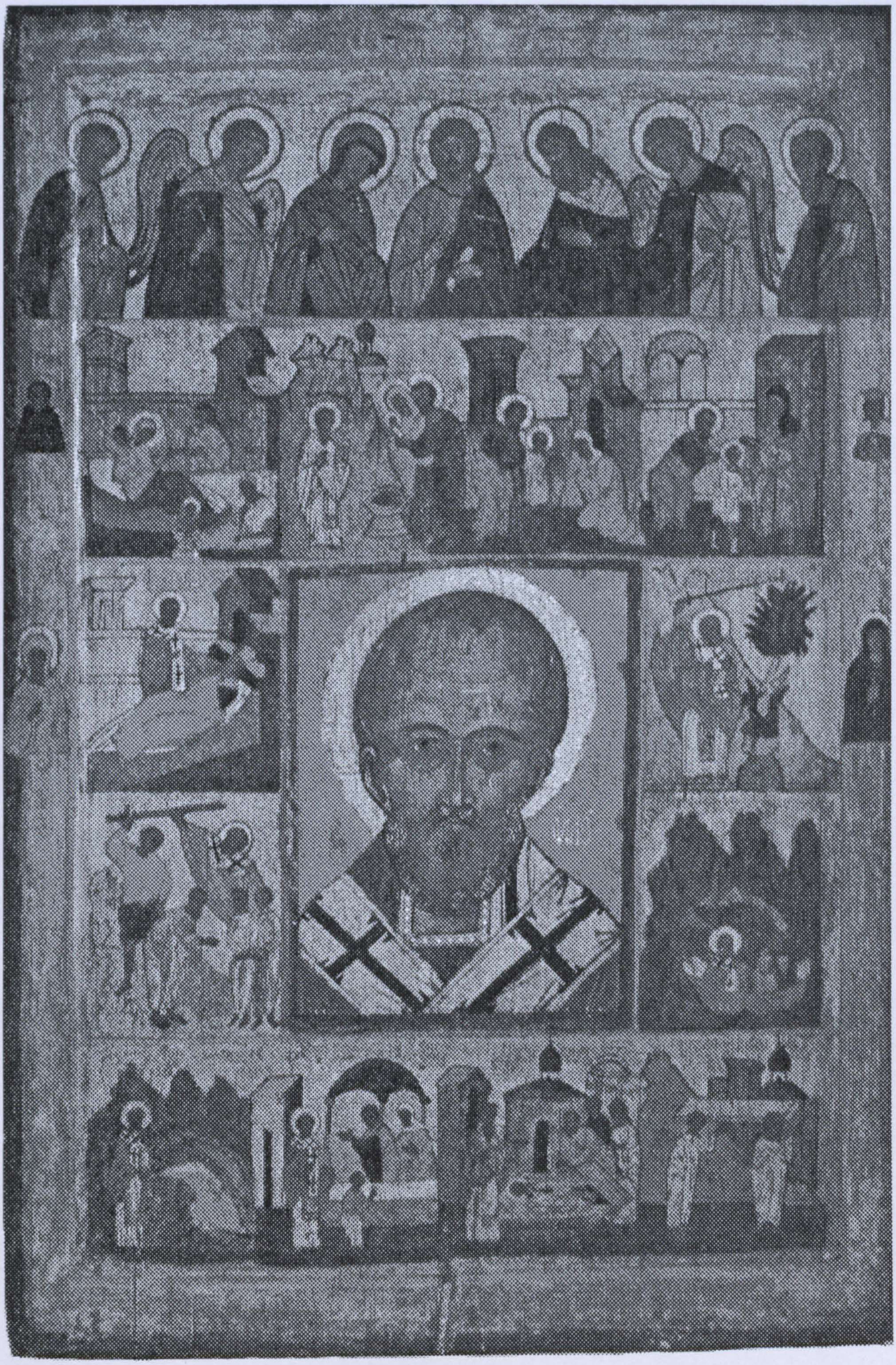

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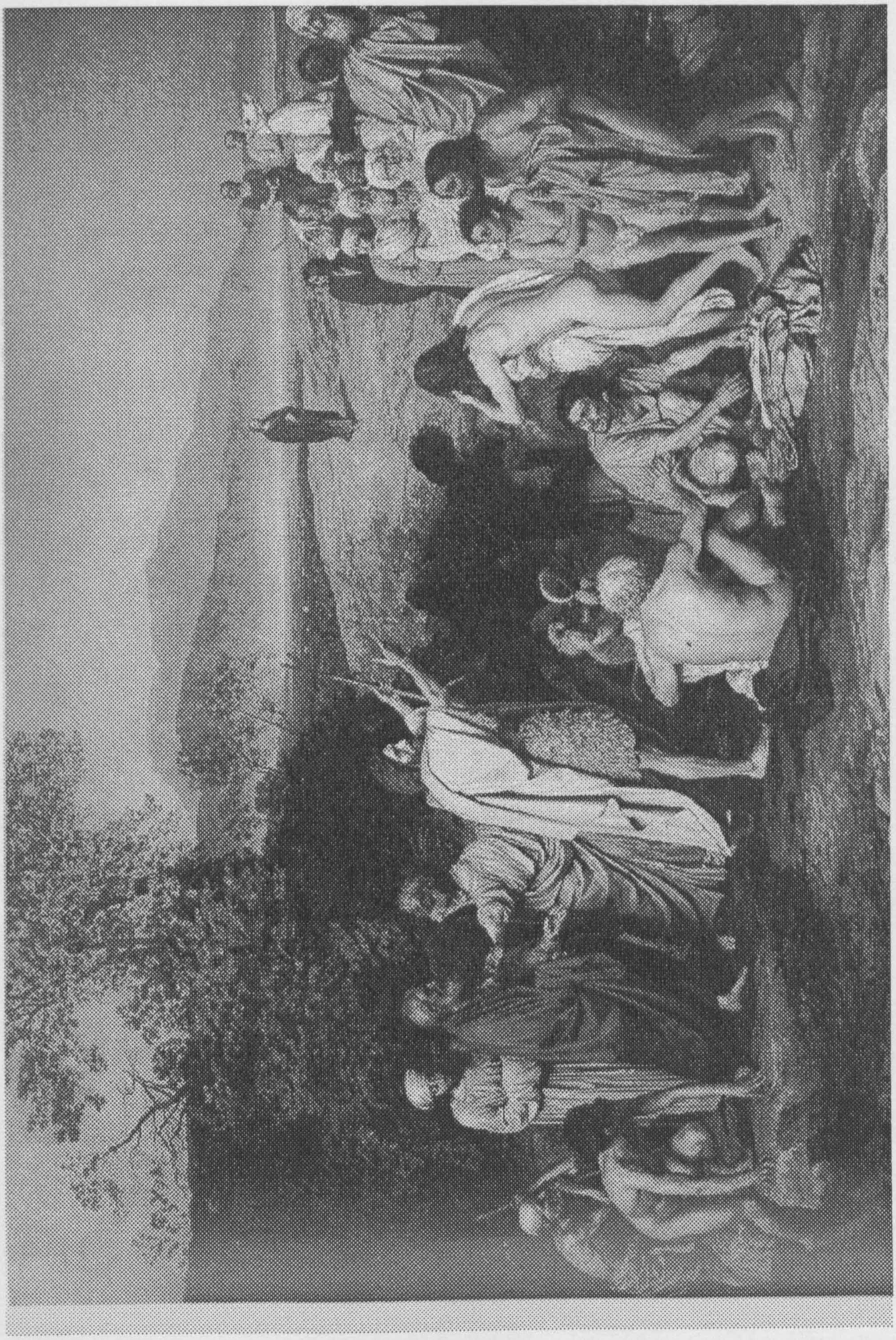

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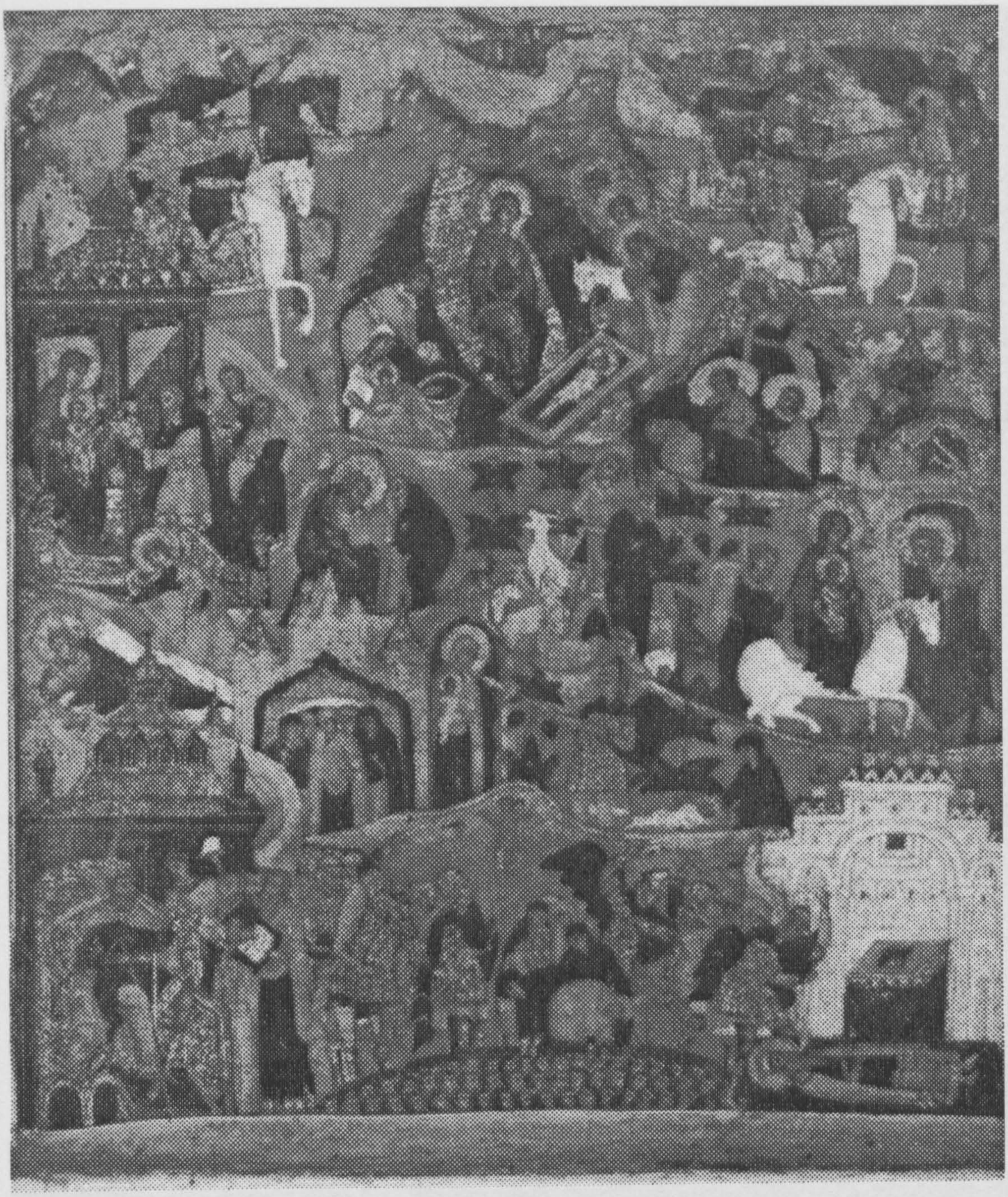

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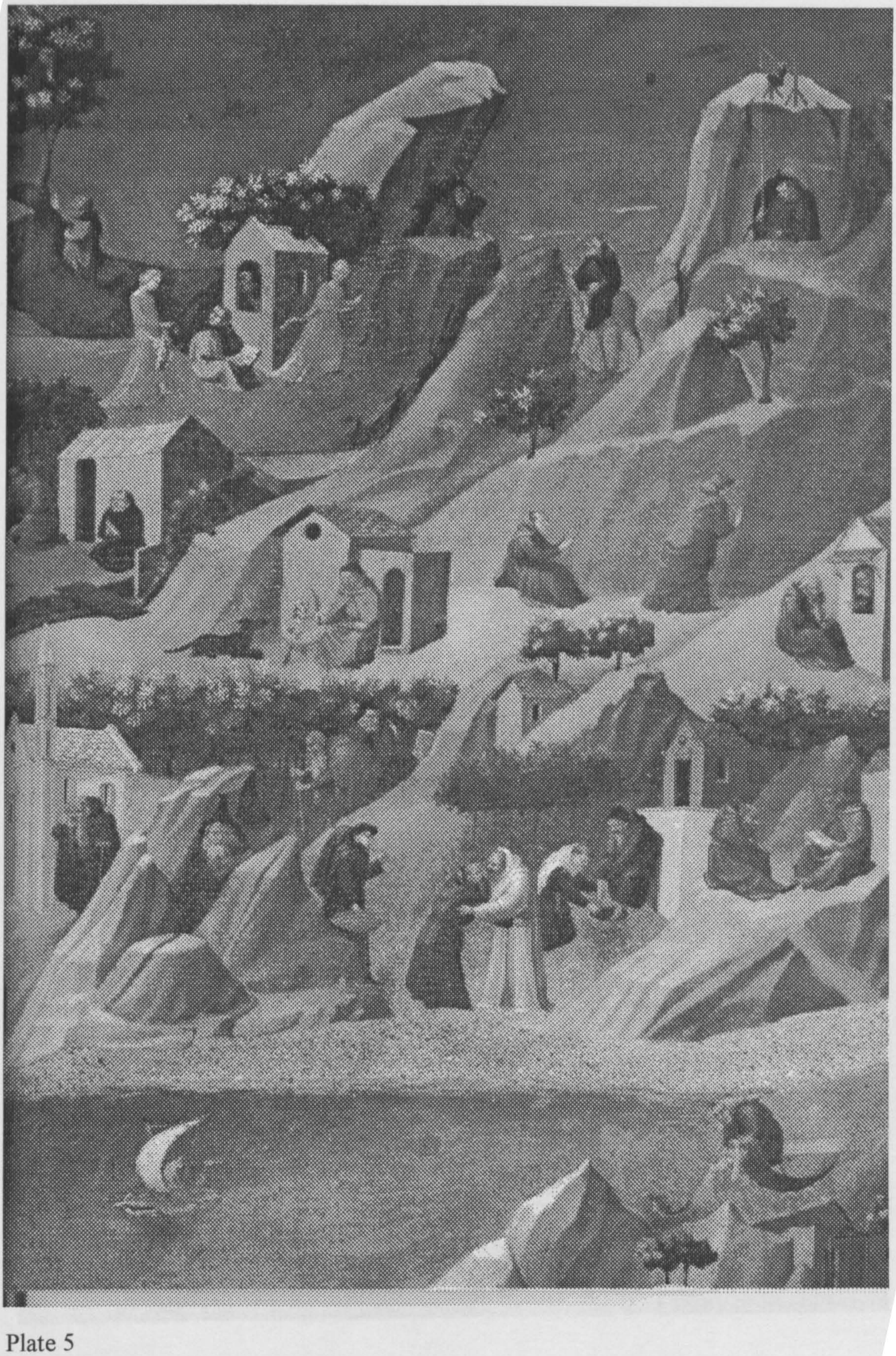

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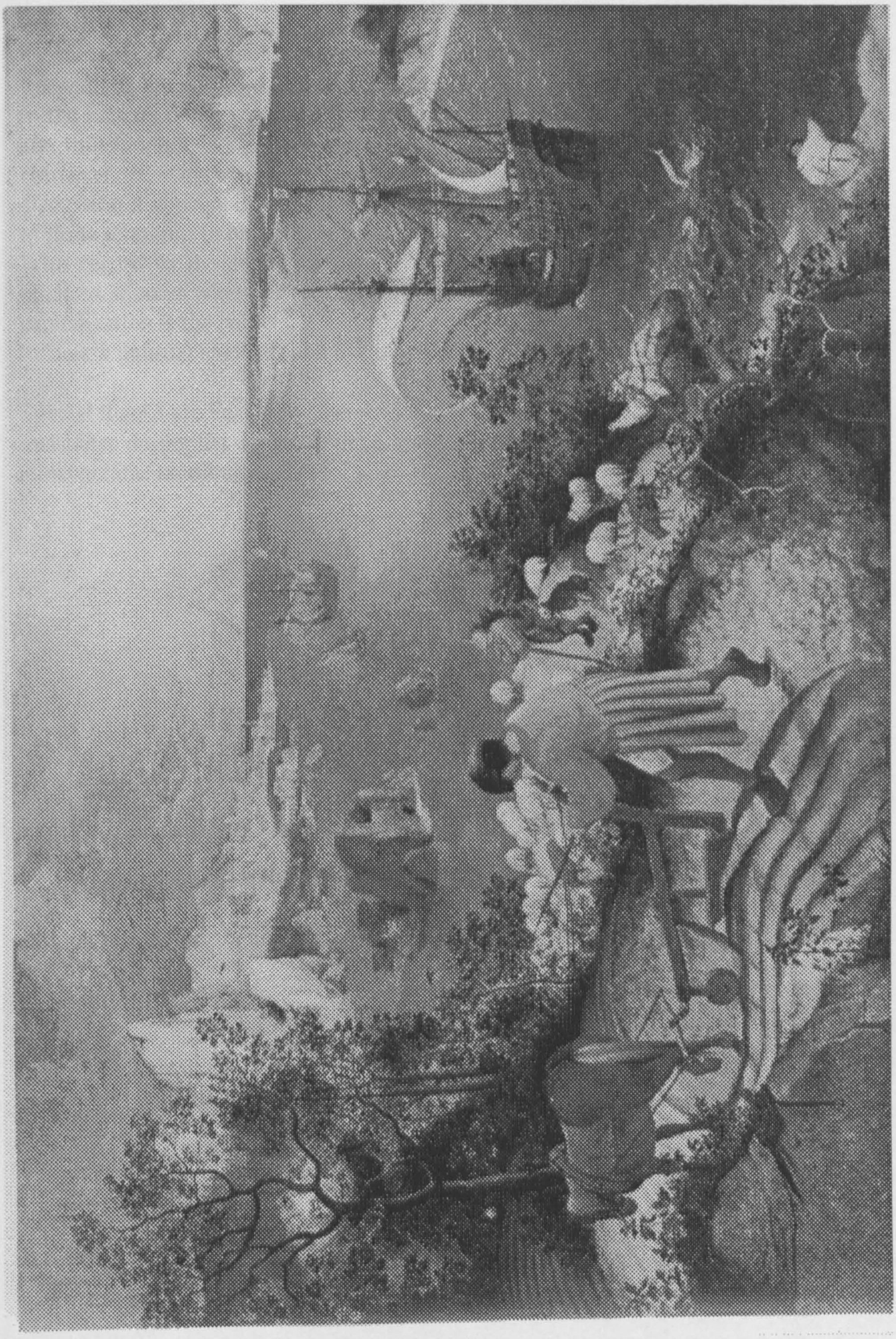

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Preface

Quotations in Russian have not been translated, and the sources of all other translations are acknowledged in the text. Russian words are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system, without diacritics. Footnoted quotations in Russian are transliterated while quotations in the main body of the text are in Cyrillic. However, if a quotation, or part of a quotation, is repeated in the course of the discussion it appears in italicized, transliterated form. Italic script is also used in order to draw attention to particular expressions.
With regard to the capitalization of the word 'Modernist', when reference is being made to sources where lower case has been used, this form is retained. In other cases capitalization is the rule.
Pil'niak's unusual spellings and use of punctuation have, of course, been retained.

Special thanks are due to my supervisor, Professor Robert Russell, for his support and assistance during the course of the preparation of the text, and to Colin Gardner for his idiosyncratic encouragement.

INTRODUCTION

Aside from a limited number of recently published articles,[1] the majority of projects devoted to the interpretation and analysis of the works of Boris Pil'niak have set themselves distinctly limited parameters. By this I mean that they have tended to restrict themselves to the use of a series of very well established models, the application of which has resulted in a number of standardized types of interpretation, which have continued to have a stifling effect upon the reading and evaluation of some of the most distinctive texts of the immediate post-revolutionary period. Reluctance to abandon these models must be held at least in part responsible for the fact that Pil'niak continues to remain in the shadow of some of his more easily accessible contemporaries. The models that this study engages with are as follows: those based on familiar oppositions such as that between man and nature, reason and instinct, and the simplification of the complex interaction between East and West; the allegorical model; and the inter-media model in relation to the concept of Modernism. By 'inter-media model' I intend the attempt to draw simple parallels between different art forms, primarily between graphic and literary works. The investigation is not concerned with

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[1] Particular attention should be drawn to the following articles by Mary A. Nicholas: 'Russian Modernism and the Female Voice: A Case Study', *Russian Review*, 53 (1994), 530–48; 'Pil'niak on Writing', *SEER*, 71 (1993), 217–33; and 'Boris Pil'niak and Modernism: Redefining the Self', *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 410–21. These articles are of note in that they represent a break with the standard methods of modelling referred to below, as does her doctoral dissertation, which will receive closer attention as the investigation progresses.

questions of the relationship of form and content.[2] Neither is it concerned with any attempt at ascertaining the ideological orientation of Boris Pil'niak, nor the broadly political reception of his work, both of which have been covered adequately elsewhere.[3] With respect to the individual works under discussion, critical observations of a political nature are included when they contribute to the overall development of the argument, or provide useful introductory information.

It is not to be denied that, at the surface level at least, many of Pil'niak's works lend themselves readily to the models referred to above. The title of a work such as *Mashiny i volki* is a case in point; a ready made interpretation of sorts is available in the title. All that is required is the fine combing of the text, and the itemization of its content under the categories of either 'Machine' or 'Wolf'.[4] *Tret'ia stolitsa* represents a similar case, in that its title not only provokes—indeed contains—its standard

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[2] For a Formalist appreciation of Pil'niak see: V. Shklovskii, 'O Pil'niake', *Lef*, 3 (1925), 126–36, also published in *Piat' chelovek znakomykh* (Tiflis: Zakkniga, 1927), pp. 71–91. For a discussion of the question of the applicability of apparent stylistic devices to an assumed authorial intention see Peter Alberg Jensen, *Nature as Code: The Achievement of Boris Pilnjak* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1979).

[3] These aspects have been dealt with succinctly both by Kenneth Brostrom in his doctoral dissertation of 1973, in which he presents a 'synthetic summary of general critical opinion'—Kenneth Norman Brostrom, 'The Works of Boris Pil'njak as Allegory' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973), p. 7—and by Jensen, 1979. Jensen provides extensive bibliographical information as does Gary Browning in *Boris Pilniak: Scythian at a Typewriter* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985). For earlier treatments of the political aspect of Pil'niak's reception see for example Vera T. Reck, *Boris Pil'njak: A Soviet Writer in Conflict with the State* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975); Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920's* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Gleb Struve, *Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin 1917–1953* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971). For a contemporary Marxist perspective see Viach. Polonskii, 'Kriticheskie zametki: shakhmaty bez korolia', *Novyi mir*, 1927.10, 170–93; A. Pinkevich, 'Vstupitel'naia stat'ia', in Boris Pil'niak. *Sobranie sochinenii*, 8 vols (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1929), I, 7–26; Viktor Gofman, 'Mesto Pil'niaka', in *Boris Pil'niak: stat'i i materialy* (Leningrad: Academia, 1928; repr. Letchworth: Prideaux Press, 1973), pp. 7–44.; L. Trotskii, *Literatura i revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Krasnaia nov', 1923), pp. 55–65.

[4] This is the approach adopted by Gary Browning in his article 'Civilization and Nature in Boris Pil'niak's *Machines and Wolves*', *SEEJ*, 20 (1976), 155–66. Here general characteristics are tabulated under one or other of these two possible headings.

interpretation, but, more significantly for this investigation, *constrains* its interpretation. The work is replete with material lending itself well to an approach based on an oppositional model. Such an interpretation, however, does not really constitute an interpretation at all, but rather a restatement, or synopsis, and a simplification, of one facet of the text. Furthermore, in the case of this work, Pil'niak has given certain indications, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, that the text was not to be regarded exclusively in the light of a generalized model of oppositional confrontation. One such indication was the renaming of the work. This point has variously been disregarded, passed over as the whim of a writer notorious for his, reputedly, impulsive behaviour, or, even less generously, dismissed as another of the author's attempts to derive the greatest possible return from each of his texts for the least possible work. The last of these suggestions has as little credibility as those criticisms based on accusations of plagiarism; Pil'niak is so intentionally obvious in his borrowings that a critical claim of attempted deception can carry little credibility. Having said this, it must be admitted that for those critics working in the tradition of conventional source criticism Pil'niak provides an abundance of material. His overt use of innumerable texts and styles, drawn from the most disparate of sources, bewildered them. That sources could so easily be identified, whilst remaining apparently irreconcilable, led critics to conclude that Pil'niak was simply an incorrigible pilferer of other writers' texts, ideas and devices, who did not even really understand what he was doing himself.[5] To offset the adverse effects of at least some of those models referred

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[5] Examples of specific allegations will be given at appropriate places where individual works are discussed. Jensen, however, has extracted the following list of alleged influences and sources from his distillation of the critical reception of the works of Pil'niak up to and including the publication of *Mashiny i volki* in 1924: The Chronicles, folk poetry, Amfiteatrov, Artsybashev, Bakunin, Belyi,

to above and to re-evaluate, by way of examples, the nature of the textual material that has been responsible for engendering Pil'niak's reputation as a plagiarizer, constitutes a significant element of this investigation. The intention is to augment and develop the analysis on the basis of a sympathetic stance toward the basic premise of intertextuality.

Although there are superficial resemblances between source criticism and intertextuality, the intertextual approach differs fundamentally, in that it sets itself different goals to be attained by different methods. The discovery of a source is not to be regarded as an end in itself; once a text has been identified as the source of a textual interpolation or resonance, it should serve primarily as a catalyst to understanding, rather than as a solution or direct answer. Intertextuality raises questions concerning the nature of the knowledge that we are hoping to find. As John Frow has written concerning the stress that intertextuality puts on interpretation rather than on textual archaeology:

> Intertextual analysis is distinguished from source criticism both by this stress on interpretation rather than on the establishment of particular facts, and by a rejection of a unilinear causality (the concept of 'influence') in favour of an account of the work performed upon intertextual material and its functional integration in the later text.[6]

Blok, Bunin, Chekhov, Doroshevits, Dostoevskii, Esenin, Gogol', Guro, Gor'kii, Viacheslav Ivanov, Khlebnikov, Kuprin, Leskov, Maiakovskii, Merezhkovskii, Pushkin, Remizov, Rozanov, Sologub, A. Tolstoi, L.Tolstoi, Turgenev, Zaitsev, Zamiatin, Heraclitus, Hamsun, Hugo, London, Nietzsche, Rousseau, Spengler, Jules Verne; Anarchism, Eurasianism, Expressionism, Impressionism, National-Bolshevism, Populism, Primitivism, Scythianism, Slavophilia, Smena vekh, and Symbolism (Jensen, 1979, pp. 284–85). To this list Browning also adds Aksakov, Andreev, Chaadaev, Vsevolod Ivanov, Ivanov-Razumnik, Korolenko, Serafimovich, and Veresaev (Browning, 1985, p. 90).

[6] John Frow, 'Intertextuality and Ontology', in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. by Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 45–55 (p. 46).

Though the focus of Browning's work is too wide to permit the investigation of individual examples of textual integration, he does—allowing for the confusing use of the word 'context' at the end of the following quotation—subscribe in principle to Frow's encapsulation of the fundamentals of intertextual analysis:

> The question should not be merely whether one can discover in Pilniak's work a parallel, a literary echo, a quotation, or other sources from his own work or others'. Rather, one should ask to what purpose and how successfully the author adapted and integrated these elements into the new text, for Pilniak rarely assimilates earlier material without substantially altering it in language and context.[7]

Jensen too follows this line in principle:

> At the very crux of my endeavour to win understanding for Pilnjak's type of text is its relationship to the utterances of other writers. [...] I am in no doubt that we should adopt an aesthetico-functional rather than a 'copyright' approach.[8]

It is the combination of the *copyright approach* and the predilection for *unilinear causality* that has resulted in the bewilderment of exponents of traditional source criticism in the face of Pil'niak's apparent eclecticism. In its most naive form, source criticism depends upon the wholesale transposition of the meaning associated with the source text directly into the object text. In this way, if, for example, two source texts associated with incompatible meanings, or messages, are represented within the same object text, then source criticism registers an irreconcilable contradiction within that object text. If this procedure is followed in the case of a text by Pil'niak, then the

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[7] Browning, 1985, p. 91.
[8] Jensen, 1979, p. 285.

succession of references drawn from variously motivated source texts can only be seen as a barrage of contradictions. That the question of *functional integration* is thus ignored will be illustrated in succeeding chapters.

There are real dangers involved in the more traditional approach which this investigation strives to avoid. Firstly, the merit of the object text is made to be dependant upon the degree to which it corresponds with the message that has been ascribed to the canonical source texts on which it draws. Secondly, standard interpretations of source texts are presented as evidence in this process. And thirdly the process is self-perpetuating and cumulative, resulting in the fossilization of generic models of interpretation. In spite of Jensen's commitment to functional integration, his conclusions are still premised upon a folkloric acceptance of the significance of the 'master' text as a foundation from which to proceed:

> The quotation from 'Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko' makes explicit the parallel between this text and the montage [*Tret'ia stolitsa*]; the correspondences in theme and motif are striking, and Bunin's text forms a broad and very important context within Pilnjak's story, which thus acquires additional perspective. (p. 287)

Because of the *striking correspondences*, the *parallel* is assumed to be *explicit* without further elucidation of the nature of the *very important context* and the *additional perspective*. Unilinear causality is resurgent.

The pragmatic, and valid, counter argument against intertextual analysis is that a comprehensive intertextual analysis is ultimately impossible, because, in order to be able to begin at all, somewhere a point of departure must be accepted *bona fide*. This is indeed so. Nevertheless, as analyses in subsequent chapters will show, acceptance of

the principles of intertextual analysis itself serves as a point of departure from which to fracture the process of canonical perpetuation, and this can be achieved at any point along the chain of linear causality.

An illustrative example of the repercussions of limited source criticism has been highlighted in an article dealing with the question of Pil'niak's indebtedness to Andrei Belyi by Vladimir Alexandrov.[9] Alexandrov is concerned that, although, or because, this question has become part of the folklore of Pil'niak criticism, it has received only perfunctory and inadequate attention.[10] It is indeed arguable that Pil'niak's indebtedness—a term that is in itself prejudicial—to Belyi never really achieved the status of a *question* as such, which by definition should entail a degree of fluidity, but solidified immediately into an accusation. As Alexandrov points out, the treatment that this aspect of Pil'niak's work has received is disappointingly superficial:

> Thus, in the case of *Golyj god*, Pil'njak's first and best-known novel, Belyj's influence is seen in such features as the novel's confused presentation of time and space, its theme of East versus West, and its complication of syntax and emphasis on rhythm and alliteration (i.e., its 'ornamental prose' style)—all of which are generally perceived as coming from *Peterburg*. There is no denying such a dependence of *Golyj god* on Belyj's

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[9] The question of Pil'niak's indebtedness to Belyi is a staple of Pil'niak criticism which has received constant and, frequently, superficial attention. In his evaluation of *Golyi god* Mirsky considered that 'the principal literary influence discernible in it is that of Belyi's *Petersburg*' (D. S. Mirsky, *Contemporary Russian Literature 1881-1925* (London: Routledge, 1926), p. 309). Some fifty years later Patricia Carden concluded that 'when Pil'niak adopted Belyi's technique [...] for use in *Golyi god*, he wrote as though the outward imitation of the style would produce the inner harmony'. Carden's contribution is also noteworthy for its reiteration of a further tenet of populist criticism: '*Golyi god* attempts to show the chaos of the revolution—or to be more exact the Russian Civil War—by being itself chaotic' (Patricia Carden, 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', *Russian Modernism: Culture and the Avant-Garde 1900–1930*, ed. by George Gibian and H. W. Tjalsma (London: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 61. Both statements are premised upon the divination of authorial intent, and, in the absence of further qualification or adequate explanation, are contradictory, suggesting simultaneously *harmony* and *chaos* as the authorial goals.

[10] Vladimir E. Alexandrov, 'Belyj Subtexts in Pil'njak's *Golyj god*', *SEEJ*, 27 (1983), 81–91.

> masterpiece of course, although one would like to see studies describing it more fully and more exactly. (p. 81)

Alexandrov convincingly demonstrates that by means of a subtly parodistic reworking of the central motif of Belyi's *Serebrianyi golub'* (1910) into the Laitis and Kunts incident, and by virtue of the nature of its integration into the panoramic text of *Golyi god*, Pil'niak has engaged Belyi in a polemic that results in a wholesale rejection of Belyi's metaphysic of Christian apocalypticism coupled with a favourable reworking of his own understanding of the pan-Asiatic question. Evelyn Bristol's summary of Belyi's preoccupation in *Serebrianyi golub'* highlights a thematic parallel with Pil'niak, recalling, in particular, the trauma of the proselytizing Bolshevik, Nekul'ev, faced with peasant intransigence, suspicion and hostility in *Mat' syra-zemlia*. She writes as follows:

> Here he [Belyi] shows the nation as fatally split between its civilized western character and its chaotic eastern nature. Its religious sectarianism threatens to engulf and annihilate its enlightened segment, embodied in the person of a graduate student on vacation in the provinces.[11]

Shared thematic preoccupation is undeniable and the motif of cross-fertilization is common to both *Golyi god* and *Serebrianyi golub'*, but Alexandrov's article shows that a thorough understanding of Belyi's text is not sufficient, and that a thorough understanding of Pil'niak's text is not possible without an appreciation of the process of integration. The presence of these common thematic preoccupations in the work of

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[11] Evelyn Bristol, 'Turn of a Century: Modernism 1895–1925', in *Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, ed. by Charles. A. Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 387–457 (p. 414).

Pil'niak is not in dispute; questions of national identity, technology, nature, and so on, constitute a significant proportion of the raw material of the texts. The primary focus of interest in this investigation however is the individual's recourse to models as tools in the attempt to resolve these questions and thereby locate himself within a stable and comprehensible world. The construction of models, oppositional, allegorical or otherwise, is integral to this process of self-determination.

What this study intends to illustrate by way of an analysis of selected texts is both the arbitrary nature of modelling and its inescapability. Since one is unable to achieve anything other than a superficial understanding of any phenomenon in the world other than oneself, all presentations remain approximations which must be conceptualized into models. Each self, by nature of being an individual inaccessible to others, is bound into a situation wherein, in order to assuage his own isolation he must surrender sovereignty over himself as an individual to an adopted model; he accepts the model, and surrenders himself to it. Through this process the subject integrates with the model in order to cope with his own inaccessibility to others; he avoids confrontation with his own absolute isolation. Though this problem has general applicability, the texts that I have selected are particularly illustrative in that my analyses reveal how they deal in a cumulative way with successive aspects of its development. The analysis of *Tselaia zhizn'* in Chapter 2 exposes the myth of objectivity; Chapter 3, devoted to *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, deals with the limitations of communication; the analysis of *Mat'-machekha* in Chapter 4 explores the problem of isolation resulting from the inadequacies of communication; and Chapter 5 both summarizes and develops the preceding material through an investigation of *Ivan Moskva* as an illustration of the ramifications of the

unchecked development of the condition that underlies the crisis of subjectivity.

The problem of isolation is necessarily inextricably bound up with that of communication; the isolation which the individual suffers results from the impossibility of communication of individual-specific data to 'an other'.[12] The individual can only ever have access to presentations to his own self. Communication is therefore only possible through the surrender of personal sovereignty, through capitulation to the model by which one understands ones context, and communicative language can thus only ever be a system of generalized conceptualizations which is both symptomatic of the isolation of the individual, and ameliorative to that isolation; the illusion of integration achievable through imperfect communication is more comforting than the alternative. Language is therefore central to the crisis of subjectivity, and Chapter 6 is devoted to an appraisal of its crucial role in the light of the preceding chapters.

The models of interpretation discussed above, seen from this perspective, are rather the symptoms of the condition of being than any explanations of it. The charge that the proposition which informs this study is in itself nothing more than a further model must, by virtue of the nature of my own argument, carry weight. In defence, however, it must be said that this new model does not in any way claim the status of a 'key' to Pil'niak's *oeuvre*; neither does it assume oppositional absolutes, or attempt to define the author's intention. Conscious of modelling as a process rather than an answer, this analysis uses selected works to illustrate the nature of a condition of being which, through its inescapability, has a relevance beyond the restrictions imposed by the

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[12] The term 'an other' is used to emphasize the reciprocal nature of isolation.

details of the localized models themselves. The centrality of this problem avoids the restrictions of traditional source criticism, relying, as it does, on more or less overt textual influences and interpolations, and further justifies the adoption of a broadly intertextual strategy.

Michael Riffaterre has defined the *intertext* as 'one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance (as opposed to the discrete meanings of its successive words, phrases and sentences)', contrasting this with *intertextuality* as 'the web of functions that constitutes and regulates the relationships between text and intertext'.[13] This first definition presupposes two separate levels of meaning; one that is discrete to the text, and which is already 'there'; and another which is equally constant but which relies upon knowledge of specific texts, or types of texts, for its activation. Alexander Zholkovsky paraphrases Riffaterre's conception of poetic structure as

> an *expansion* and *conversion* of a given 'hypogram'. The hypogram is envisioned as a stereotype (subtext, gnome, paradigm) that is present in the literary-cultural vocabulary and may or may not be instanced, as far as the analyzed text is concerned, by a specific verbal cliché.[14]

Riffaterre suggests that 'when it activates or mobilizes the intertext, the text leaves little leeway to readers and controls closely their response. It is thus that the text maintains its identity despite changing times, despite the evolution of the sociolect, and

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[13] Michael Riffaterre, 'Compulsory Reader Response' in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. by Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 56–78 (p. 56).

[14] Alexander Zholkovsky, *Text counter Text:Readings in Russian Literary History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 5–6.

despite the ascent of readerships unforeseen by the author' (p. 57). Whether or not one accepts Riffaterre's division of meaning and this degree of permanence as essential components in a process of compulsory reader response, this does not necessarily preclude the expanded argument that the identification and use of intertextual resonances need only be delimited by their relevance to a particular interpretative strategy. In this sense, *intertext* accrues a broader definition, referring instead to the entire matrix of texts assimilated by a reader which are activated by and augment the reading process. *Text* need not in this case be restricted to printed material, or even the oral tradition, but may be expanded to include any system of modelling, or results thereof, including the modelling, and thereby fictionalization, of one's own personal existence. Premised upon this expanded definition, reciprocal use is made in this study of a wide variety of intertextual resources regardless of their temporal and geographical distribution, reflecting the ubiquity of the underlying questions with which the investigation is concerned. Following Zholkovsky, I employ the term *intertext* to refer to any individual aspect of the intertextual matrix as well as to the matrix itself. This procedure is adopted simply to avoid the use of cumbersome terminology. The additional advantage in the adoption of the broadly intertextual strategy is that it renders redundant the, sometimes highly speculative, exercise of attempting to determine exactly which texts an author has had access to.

In the light of what has been said above, the objectives of this investigation can be summarized as follows: to re-evaluate the interpretative models that have resulted in the obtaining critical consensus, and by so doing to relate the works under discussion to the question of the individual struggling with the tension between the process of

homogenization which results from the necessity for integration, and the inescapable isolation which is the determining factor in the definition of individuality. The problem of the extent to which integration at the expense of individuality is both desirable and achievable is central to this discussion.

A primary requirement for the productive development of the stated intentions is the radical re-evaluation of one of the major tenets of the critical consensus:

> Nowhere is there greater consensus concerning any aspect of his [Pil'niak's] work than with his characters, and every observation is a variation upon the same theme. Pil'njak's characters are 'algebraic', 'two-dimensional' and 'depsychologized'; they lack individuality, depth and complexity. They are bearers of ideas, the schematic embodiments of socio-cultural conceptions, or they are literary clichés.[15]

This tenet is to be re-evaluated rather than rejected, on the basis of the contention that *all* character-presentations, whether textual or actual, lack any individuality other than that which derives from the observing subject. In this measure, the process of assimilation of a presentation by an observing subject results in conceptualization which is tantamount, to a greater or lesser degree, to categorization on an increasing scale toward the point of *literary cliché*. This strategy, which will be developed in subsequent chapters, runs contrary to the oppositional model that is implied by Brostrom's distillation of epithets suggestive of a corresponding series—'three-dimensional', 'profound, 'complex'—that are the attributes of 'real' characters. The distinction is implicit in the argument, and naive because it is a simplification and

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[15] Brostrom, 1973, p. 29.

polarization. Its result is that through the easy identification of Pil'niak's characters as members of the *algebraic* category—a schema with which Brostrom concurs—his works have lent themselves comfortably to the allegorical model. This has been the corollary of the above consensus and has assumed similar status. Robert Maguire declares that 'All Pil'njak's works are allegories',[16] and this conclusion is endorsed by Brostrom who paraphrases Maguire's appraisal of Pil'niak's *oeuvre* as the depiction of 'the endless, unresolved dichotomy between instinct and intellect, nature and civilization, chaos and logic'.[17] Brostrom's acceptance of this assumption of authorial intent, once made, is unquestioning: 'Since Pil'njak was an allegorist [...]' (p. 29); 'Pil'njak's use of the allegorical method in composition [...]' (p. 29); 'Pil'njak is an allegorist' (p. 28); 'How are we to interpret these allegories?' (p. 28). The simplistic and circular argument is that if the characters are not described in depth according to the conventions of realism then it is an allegory, and if it is an allegory then the characters have no depth: 'In allegory characters function in a different, more narrowly circumscribed manner than in those works by the great masters of realism, and they should be judged by a different set of criteria' (Brostrom, p.30).

This enthusiasm for allegorical interpretation is nothing new. Attention was drawn to the pitfalls of interpretation that is premised upon acceptance of a *different set of criteria* nearly four centuries ago: 'Nevertheless, in many the like encounters, I do rather think that the fable was first, and the exposition devised, than that the moral was

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[16] Maguire, 1968, p. 115.
[17] Brostrom, 1973, p. 27.

first, and thereupon the fable framed.'[18] How far this has been the case with specific works is one of the preoccupations of this investigation. However, before turning to individual works, it is helpful to look first in more general terms at the question of the search for unity which is the primary motivation for the adoption of models of interpretation. Models of unification, diachronic and synchronic, are the means both of providing cohesion within the individual work, and integration of the work into a broader pattern. Chapter 1 is devoted to a discussion of this question with particular reference to the value of inter-media comparison, and the related issue of the applicability of the generalization 'Modernism' in the critical appraisal of Pil'niak.

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[18] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. by Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 82.

1. MODERNISM AND INTER-MEDIA MODELLING

1. 1. Diachronic and synchronic models

In a recently published investigation into the origins of Russian Modernism, Stephen Hutchings argues the need for an approach recognizing the significance of domestic nineteenth-century literary antecedents in favour of the influence of contemporary movements in Western Europe.[1] Whilst not intending to diminish the extent of the influence of Western Modernism on its Russian counterpart, he is concerned that the perceived primacy of the Western European movement has led to an unjustifiable imbalance. And this imbalance against the domestic prose tradition has been exacerbated by the remarkable achievements of Russian Modernism in other media, particularly painting. Whatever the relationship between Western and domestic Modernist painting, domestic literature is seen to have played a subsidiary and derivative role in relation to both. One of the results of this has been a marked tendency both to describe and assess Modernist prose in terms of its relationship to other art forms. Hutchings intends with his study to begin the process of redressing the balance firstly through countering the assumption that

> since Russian Modernism's most celebrated achievements were in painting, poetry and architecture, any comparison with European trends should proceed by comparing qualities within and between these forms and the historical movements they generated. Implicit in my

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[1] Stephen C. Hutchings, *Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

> approach is the counter-assumption that cultures develop as *organic wholes*, that external influences are, when absorbed, subject to *structural transformation*, not merely cobbled together with native traditions, and that Russian Modernism's salient qualities have therefore to be sought in the monumentalism of its nineteenth century civic culture which was *prose orientated*, and to which the *everyday* theme was crucial. I thus make no apologies for implying through the title of my book that, rather than playing second fiddle to poetry and the visual arts, prose narrative was at the cutting edge of Russian modernist culture. (p. 8)

The alternative approach—the one purposefully avoided by Hutchings—was opted for by Mary Nicholas in her doctoral dissertation of 1989. The following extract both illustrates her intention and summarizes the content and method of her investigation:

> Pilniak's modernist prose can best be approached by partially circumventing previous literary histories and investigating concurrent developments in the pictorial arts instead. This methodology is appropriate precisely because modernism itself relies on such comparisons between the verbal and visual arts. The approach is particularly useful when dealing with Pilniak, whose work depends on the creation of enduring visual images. An understanding of perspective borrowed from the visual arts allows Pilniak to express his uniquely modern attitude toward the fragmentary material that makes up his prose. Concern with the relativity of this perspective leads Pilniak to explore the role of reader expectations in reception of the text. This question, in turn, raises the issue of the author's control of his material and relates, finally, to the problem of mimesis in the work of art. In a universe in which the writer is uncertain of his ability to communicate, Pilniak views the concrete image from the phenomenal world as a point of stasis and shared knowledge.[2]

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[2] Mary Ann Nicholas, 'Boris Pilniak's Modernist Prose: Reader, Writer, and Image' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1989), p. v.

This passage raises a number of problems. Firstly, there is the question of the viability of a method hingeing upon the contrast of two radically different art forms, which will be dealt with in more detail below.[3] Secondly, there is the danger that simply on the assumption that Pil'niak is a Modernist, he and his work may be forced into a particular mould resulting in a stilted interpretation of the texts. Thirdly, there is a discrepancy between the notions of ever-changing perspectives coupled with fallibility of communication on one hand, and static, concrete images from the phenomenal world on the other. And fourthly, on the basis of the above, a series of questions present themselves concerning the nature of the interrelationship of author, perspective, reception, and a *uniquely modern attitude* which remain unaddressed. Many of these issues will be developed as this discussion progresses.

1. 2. The hegemony of Modernism

Although Nicholas highlights Cubism in particular as a school whose methodology and motivations may cast light upon the work of Pil'niak, more generally and as an indication of the Modernist framework she identifies the shared interests of the period as follows: 'These modernist concerns include more pronounced attention to the artistic medium itself, concern over the nature of our knowledge of reality, investigation into the relativity of perspective, worry about the indeterminacy of the text, and doubt about the communicative function of any work of art' (p. 13). Although the last of these is unquestionably of particular relevance to Modernism in

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[3] Notably, Aristotle is responsible for what must be one of the earliest recorded attempts at inter-media metaphorization: 'We maintain, therefore, that the first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of a tragedy is the plot; and that the characters come second—compare the parallel in painting, where the most beautiful colours laid on without order will not give one the same pleasure as a simple black-and-white sketch of a portrait.' (Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 2320.

general, and Pil'niak in particular, the others, especially the epistemological question, are the stuff of creativity. There is a danger of allowing Modernism to usurp an unwarranted, privileged position in the history of creativity by giving it hegemony over a series of concerns that by definition inform the creative process. It is this that has motivated that brand of literary archaeology which attempts to identify the roots of, for example, Modernism in the most historically remote period possible; any 'good' writer, is one who foresaw and demonstrated a number of the preoccupations that were later to gain currency under the heading of Modernism. Those writers were of course *there* all the time, before the yardstick of Modernism was devised with which to measure them. The proclivity for exclusivity is marked:

> Central to the shared modernist aesthetic is a pronounced interest in exploring the relationship between art and life. Art is no longer merely a reflection of life, separate from the phenomenal world it presumes to describe, but now asserts itself simultaneously as a part of that world. (p. 14)

Though shared preoccupations, including the exploration of the interaction between art and life, can certainly be identified in the matrix of motivations which inspired artists of the broadly Modernist period, this does not provide sufficient grounds for the relegation of pre-Modernist art to the status of *merely a reflection of life*. It is difficult to conceive of art as ever having been so, in that it reflects and augments the current understanding—the *Weltanschauung*—of the life of a particular time and place, and in so doing is part of that world. The development of even, for example, landscape painting 'points to the flexibility of the human mind, for artists are always altering their

ideas about their environment to suit the philosophical and psychological needs of the day'.[4] That is to say, there can be no question of landscape, or the products of any other genre or school, supplying simply a backdrop against which the development of ideas is played out, because the backdrop is itself inextricably bound up with contemporary thought. Art has always played an integral role in the understanding of the life of the society that has produced it, and this continues to be the case, not only during the periods of obvious 'distortion', associated with, for example, conventional icon painting or the Modernist school, but also at the height of 'objective' Realism. The case for synchronic exclusivity is less convincing than the label 'Modernism' might suggest.

1. 3. Intermedia metaphorization

The identification as a first principle of a very general common denominator as the determining factor in a synchronically defined category is liable to promote the discovery of inter-media correlations within that category. And there is the temptation, when dealing in comparisons between artefacts in essentially different media, to slip into excessively metaphorical modes of expression. Simply, what can be achieved in painting cannot be achieved in prose, and vice versa; the process of production and reception is so entirely different that circumspection is advisable in any analysis that adopts comparison as a point of departure. In addition, this method encourages the tunnel vision, that Hutchings has circumvented, which can result from investigating a work exclusively in terms of the criteria that define the category to which that work has been assigned. Whilst excluding equally valid parallels available beyond the

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[4] Bo Jeffares, *Landscape Painting* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), p. 5.

parameters of the category, a positive result is ensured due to the elasticity of metaphorical comparison.

For example, the question of *fragmentariness* that has become a staple in the analysis of Modernist, and allegedly Modernist, works has engendered a number of visual similes in order to model texts. The critic P. Komarov in a review of the collection *Smertel'noe manit* characterized Pil'niak's texts as a succession of seemingly unimportant details piled up on each other, and kaleidoscopically interchanging characters and themes, each accompanied by its own recurring leitmotif, woven together with lyrical digressions into an organic fabric—*organicheskaia tkan'*.[5] Pil'niak's intention in so doing was supposedly to synthesize the past, the present and the future, thus rendering all contemporary phenomena equally important and unimportant at the same time. V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, in a similar vein, characterized Pil'niak's works as 'пестрые, точно сшитые из разных лоскутьев'.[6] And where Komarov and L'vov-Rogachevskii hoped to convey the nature of Pil'niak's work by using the metaphor of a textile, for A. Rashkovskaia, where *Golyi god* had been 'точная живопись',[7] *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* could be likened to coloured dots dancing before the eyes: 'Пляшут пестрые точки, а когда погаснут (закроешь книгу), в глазах долго резкий свет'.[8]

1. 4. Modernism and the question of *fragmentariness*

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[5] P. Komarov, 'Smertel'noe manit', *Sibirskie ogni*, 1922.5, 184–85 (p. 184).
[6] V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, *Kniga dlia chteniia po istorii noveishei russkoi literatury* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1925), p. 436.
[7] A. Rashkovskaia, 'Nastoiashchii', *Kniga i revoliutsiia*, 1922.20, 16–18 (p. 18).
[8] A. Rashkovskaia, 'Boris Pil'niak. *Smertel'noe manit*', *Kniga i revoliutsiia,* 1923.11, 63.

The examples above are illustrative of a major preoccupation of critical work done on Pil'niak with the texts' apparent reluctance to conform to conventions of narrative integration and sequentiality: 'Nothing is so common as the assertion that his stories and novels, particularly the latter, are fragmentary and chaotic in their composition'.[9] Whatever the success of the attempts at communicating their reading experiences made by Komarov, L'vov-Rogachevskii, and Rashkovskaia, they are linked by the urge to freeze the fluidity of a written text by way of comparison with more manageable visual imagery; in a visual image all the surface information is simultaneously available. Rashkovskaia's attempt is particularly noteworthy, because although informed by this same intention, it strains to avoid the stasis of fixed visual imagery.

Nicholas's approach, following the same vein and hingeing largely on Cubist preoccupations, can be summarized as follows: since Cubism relies on the presentation of an object from a variety of viewpoints at the same time, then the painter is rejecting the validity of supremacy of any single point of view and the work is fragmentary; if a text can be considered fragmentary it is informed by the same Modernist concerns as Cubism. A number of problems present themselves. The most fundamental of these is how is it even possible to apply *fragmentary* to two media which are so essentially different? This is especially the case if *fragmentary* is taken to apply to the question of causal relations or sequentiality within narrative. It seems a fragmentary narrative is one in which it is difficult to grasp the *fabula*. Yet, the preoccupation at this time of schools of painting relying on multi-perspectivity, such as Cubism, is predominantly not with narrative, but with static objects. And thus causal relations are not

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[9] Brostrom, 1973, p. 17.

undermined in the way that viewpoint is. Causal relations may be in dispute in the world of the surrealist, but here authorial viewpoint is emphasized by a preoccupation with the supremacy of the individual subconscious.

1. 5. Fragmentariness and sequentiality: literature and painting

There is a further difficulty in compounding the devices of altered authorial viewpoint and apparent breakdowns in sequentiality under the label 'fragmentary'. *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, recalling Henry James, may well be 'baggy', but its roots in psychological realism and its adherence to the conventions of sequentiality, are what save it from being fragmentary; it is, on the other hand, polyphonic. The absence of the evidence of psychological realism and conventional sequentiality in Pil'niak, which is part of the folklore of Pil'niak criticism, may well be seen as fragmentariness, but this apparent fragmentariness is insufficient grounds for the wholesale transposition of the tenets of popular Modernism onto works that appear to exhibit these features, and the drawing of conclusions such as: 'If his [Pil'niak's] point of view shifts and changes, it is because he rejects the notion of a single meaning to reality.'[10] This may well be true, but the significance of this conclusion is that it has been drawn about Pil'niak on the basis of simplified definitions: Modernism is fragmentary; Pil'niak is a Modernist; Pil'niak is fragmentary. In the analysis that is to follow it will be shown that the quality of fragmentariness identified in the work of Pil'niak is largely the result of the adoption of this point of view.

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[10] Nicholas, 1989, p. 15.

Gary Browning has examined the parallel between Dostoevskii and Pil'niak, and defined and argued the case for polyphony in the latter's *Golyi god*: 'For Pilnyak also, polyphony (the presentation of divergent voices without a clear indication of which one is "true", that is, oriented to the author's consciousness) is operative'.[11] Browning identifies the significant difference between Dostoevskii and Pil'niak in the isolation of the latter's voices:

> In Pilnyak's polyphony the voices coexist, but contrary to Dostoevsky's, they rarely interact. They are separate entities which do not enter into dialogical polemics. [...] Characters and ideologies are to be viewed in implicit relation to each other like thematically related but discrete panels in a hinged ikonographic triptych. (p. 161)

Browning draws attention to his simile, pointing out that Pil'niak calls Chapters Five and Six of *Golyi god* triptychs, and the observation is apposite to the present discussion. The questions of shifting viewpoint and sequentiality, or causal relations are central to the works that I shall be looking at, and are too complex to be explained in terms of isolated similes drawn from selected schools of painting. In order to illustrate the argument it is equally possible to look beyond the boundaries of Modernism to a time before the realistic conventions that held sway until the end of the nineteenth century had become embedded.

A *fragmentary* painting may well, whilst showing evidence of obvious realignments of physical, authorial viewpoint, be narratively explicit. And furthermore, rather than

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[11] Gary L. Browning, 'Polyphony and the Accretive Refrain in Boris Pilnyak's *Naked Year*', *Russian Literature Triquaterly*, no. 16 (1979), 154–70 (p. 155).

undermining an ideology, fragmentariness may in fact be designed to bolster the ideology that engendered it. This does not mean, however, that I am arguing the case for fragmentation in Pil'niak as evidence of support for a particular point of view. Rather, that I intend to re-evaluate the notion of *fragmentariness* as a feature identifiable with a particular type of interpretation. The significant factor here is the reader's attempt to synthesize the separate elements into a whole on the basis of the available models. Nicholas is aware of this process to a certain degree: 'If Pilniak's form is fragmentary, it is because he asks the reader to help him supply cohesion and shape to the text'.[12] And: 'The reader is charged with synthesizing the material the artist presents in dissected form. [...] The reader combines the material supplied by the author in a process that resembles the author's initial use of his own raw material' (p. 19). Her faith in the restorative abilities of readers seems overly optimistic, given the imponderability of the extent to which the results of the author's constructive process might resemble the result of the reader's *re*constructive process. The quotation serves to emphasize that *all* works of literature comprise material in dissected form, and that all reading is a process of synthesis. In other words, all texts are fragmentary, and their position on the scale of fagmentariness depends on the receptor's ability to synthesize them on the basis of the tools and information available to him. This is done is by establishing relations between elements of the text, and filling in the gaps on the basis of cognitive models, in the same way as the informed observer does when confronted with, for example, a complex icon.

1. 6. Pictorial examples

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[12] Nicholas, 1989, p. 15.

1. 6. 1. Unknown artist, *The Holy Bishop Nicholas the Miracle Worker of Myra*, 16th century (Plate 1)

This icon consists of a central image of St. Nicholas surrounded by twelve scenes selected from his life, topped by a depiction of Nicholas as Bishop amongst the Apostles.[13] The topmost scene not only illustrates Nicholas's elevated position amongst the church hierarchy, but also emphasizes the completion of his life's journey, leading him to heavenly glory. From left to right the scenes are as follows: as a new-born baby he amazes his parents by standing up unaided in the bath; his baptism; the healing when a child of a woman with a withered arm; his school education; his appearance to the Emperor Constantine in a dream on behalf of three prisoners wrongly condemned to death; his exorcism of demons from a well by felling with his sword a tree that served as a pagan shrine; saving three more citizens also wrongly condemned to death; his appearance to sailors in distress in response to their prayers; the posthumous saving of a drowning man; the, also posthumous, rescue and return to its parents of a kidnapped child; his death; and finally the transportation of his remains.[14] The painting consists of a number of separate scenes linked together into a cohesive work by a common theme; it is episodic and favours the diegetic over the mimetic, sacrificing mimesis for clarity. For example, both St Nicholas, and the executioner as a representation of authority, are significantly larger than the reprieved lowly citizens, indicating their relative importance, while man-made features such as buildings and the boat are simplified and de-emphasized in accordance with their

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[13] The illustration on Plate 1 is reproduced from Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, trans. by G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982), p. 122.
[14] For this account I am indebted to Ouspensky and Lossky, 1992, pp. 120–21.

profane status; they serve as stylized props. The same auxiliary function is accorded to landscape, and the tree growing on the mountain within striking distance of Nicholas is half his size. It is because of these features—this fragmentariness—that the composition is narratively explicit.

1. 6. 2. Alexander Ivanov, *The Appearance of Christ to the People*, 1837–58 (Plate 2)

An alternative to the above is demonstrated by Ivanov's Realistic, mimetic picture painted in the middle of the nineteenth century, *The Appearance of Christ to the People* (Plate 2).[15] The figure of Christ is the smallest in the picture, dwarfed both by the Pharisees descending the hill, with their backs to him, but also by the old man with the staff attempting to get out of the pond.

1. 6. 3. Unknown artist *The Nativity of Christ* 15th century (Plate 3)

A further possibility is exemplified in another 15th Century icon from the Novgorod school *The Nativity of Christ* (Plate 3).[16] This consists not of individual scenes such as the icon of St Nicholas, but, like Ivanov's painting, is a single composition. Where, however, Ivanov's composition is realistic, representative, mimetic and cohesive, *The Nativity* is stylized, diegetic, narrative and, apparently, fragmentary. In the words of Ouspensky and Lossky the two fundamental aspects of this icon are as follows:

> First of all, it discloses the very essence of the event, the immutable fact of the Incarnation of God; it places us before a visible testimony of the fundamental dogma of Christian faith, underlining by its details both the Divinity and the human nature of the Word made flesh. Secondly, the icon of the Nativity shows us the effect of

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[15] Reproduced from D. V. Sarabianov, *Russian Art from Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), p. 71.
[16] Ouspensky and Lossky, 1982, p. 158.

> this event on the natural life of the world, gives as it were a perspective of all its consequences. (p. 157)

In other words, this icon illustrates the dual nature of the Incarnation and its transfiguring effect upon the whole of creation, illustrated by angels at the top level, the three wise men and a significantly smaller shepherd at the central level. At the base an isolated Joseph is tempted by the Devil in the guise of a shepherd, while the earthly aspect of the child is illustrated by the domestic bath scene on the right. At the centre, nature, in the form of an ox and an ass, pays homage to the child, whose contact with heaven is demonstrated by the rays that penetrate the cave. The central position is given to the Virgin as the catalyst of this transfiguration of creation. The significance of this composition is that it results from, and illustrates, a *fundamental dogma*, and it is this that gives it its cohesion.[17] Relations between images are established on the basis of known models, and whichever model is most vigorously promoted tends to be the one that is turned to first. Both commitment to, and simple awareness of the particular dogma obtaining within the sphere of reception of a text is what allows the reader to be able to pull disparate images together into a coherent pattern. The correspondence thus between the sphere of production and the sphere of reception is indeterminate and infinitely variable.

1. 6. 4. 1. Unknown artist, *The Nativity of Christ* 17th century (Plate 4)

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[17] Without access to the *key* that the dogma supplies, the significance of the imagery would remain obscure. However, it requires little imagination to discover an alternative and equally viable interpretation: an abused mother runs away from her dissolute musician husband, steals some livestock and sets up home in a cave; local people hear of her situation and bring her extra food, through the deprivation of which she hallucinates winged beings; the dispossessed peasant petitions an unsympathetic magistrate for the return of his cattle. The significant point here is that where the first version is authorized and underpinned by dogma, the second, though no less believable than the original, is contrived and, for want of authorization, 'trivial' and unable to achieve the status of model.

Thus even a 'text' as apparently fragmentary and complex as the 17th Century Nativity of Christ (Plate 4)[18] gains cohesion more easily when the prior knowledge—the key—is available.

1. 6. 4. 2 Physical multi-perspectivity and monologic dogma

The fact that such physically multi-perspectival texts are underlined by a monolithic dogma suggests that a shifting physical authorial viewpoint need not imply an inconsistent intellectual orientation. Nicholas's comments, conflating physical and ideological or intellectual perspective, require some consideration:

> The problem of a world in which perspective is both paramount and relative is particularly difficult since it requires the artist to define his own point of view thoroughly while simultaneously undermining the general validity of that single, individual point of view. The modernist is thus faced with the problem of self-definition in terms that will be universally comprehensible.[19]

Perspective is *paramount and relative* for the artist as it is for any observing subject at any place and at any time. Why this should require an artist—modernist or otherwise—to define his point of view, either physical or intellectual, at all, let alone *in terms that will be universally comprehensible*, is not clear. That the observing subject must be in a position to have a point of view is an unavoidable consequence of existing, but the conclusion that by employing the device of multiple viewpoints Pil'niak, as a Modernist, *necessarily* intends to undermine not only his own authorial viewpoint, but *all* possible viewpoints is based on a very broad understanding of the Modernist model.

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[18] Ouspensky and Lossky, 1982, p. 161.
[19] Nicholas, 1989, p. 16.

Through the identification of superficial textual features, and on an analogy drawn with Cubism, Pil'niak is then drawn into that model. The conclusion may or may not have validity, but the route by which it is reached is one of coercion, and subordination of the individual text to the authorized model. If the multi-perspectivity of the Cubists can be linked to the *fragmentariness* of Pil'niak, then how is the fragmented, episodic narrative of the two versions of the Nativity of Christ (Plates 3 and 4) to be treated in relation to these two? The examples of icon painting I have discussed above counterbalance that form of anthropocentrism that was to gain currency, particularly as a result of the Renaissance, and hold sway in Western culture until the twentieth century. But this does not, of course, imply that Modernism heralded a return to pre-Renaissance anti-anthropocentrism. Inter-media analogies, whether diachronic or synchronic, are equally metaphorical, and the representation of an awareness of the relativity of individual perspective has no one single significance above all others. An understanding of this constitutes an important initial step in an appreciation of Pil'niak's textual method.

1. 6. 5. 1. Fra Angelica, *The Thebiad* (Plate 5)

In this connection, the detail from *The Thebiad* (Plate 5)[20] graphically illustrates an aspect of Pil'niak's textual method particularly noticeable in *Golyi god*, but also evident in the works to be discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Five. In this illustration, though there is little indication of the purposeful breaking down of three-dimensional objects into two-dimensional planes, there is clear evidence of the shifting platform of the artist. The artist has changed position in order to paint each individual group of

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[20] Reproduced from Jeffares, 1979, p. 7.

figures. Or, what amounts to the same thing, he has painted each group individually, and then associated them into the picture without adjusting the perspective. An observer is effectively relocated by switching his gaze between groups. This has the effect, by forcing the observer into discrete dimensions of assessment, of undermining his authority, and thereby control, whilst emphasizing both his subjectivity and that of the members of each group. He is made aware that if he has to change his position each time in order to accommodate himself to successive discrete frameworks, then each one of them must do the same. No single group or individual, be it the fisherman, or the monk having his lunch, has hegemony over the others, and neither does the observer. Yet each one is the observing subject of his own dimension as we are the subject of our own. This fragment of a larger work is comprised of a number of Ivans and Mar'ias, a series of Mr Smiths, each one the hero, the organizing centre of their own dimension. The result is to undermine the *authority* of the mind of man. According to the pre-Renaissance model, 'man' is undermined in the universal sense, in favour of God. In the absence of God, man is undermined in the individual sense in favour of 'an other'. Both interpretations seem equally viable.

1. 6. 5. 2. Pictorial narrative, simultaneity and Modernist drama

As has been shown above, a painting that appears fragmentary may be more narratively explicit than a cohesive composition. It is a commonplace that in times of widespread illiteracy and for the dissemination of the authorized view, a primary purpose of illustration was to convey beliefs by means of a narrative message to those who could not read. A characterizing feature of such works is the inclusion of all the necessary elements, jumbled up, but with more important events, people, depicted larger than

others. The composite nature of this type of didactic painting has a parallel in the concept of *simultaneity* which was to play a significant role in Modernist drama:

> Simultaneity would mean that several actions would take place at once; nothing need be reported as having taken place off-stage; old techniques [...] would go, so would logical arguments explaining cause and effect, since they are never fully present in real life.[21]

Although more 'fragmentary' in one sense of the word, a composite image constitutes a more accessible narrative. If, in a picture, one's eye is drawn to the larger objects, it is not inconceivable that a repeated leitmotif in a fragmentary literary text should attract the attention of the reader in a similar way. Why should not the features in such texts be dwelt upon, in the same way as the features in a non-perspectival composite painting,in order to understand the picture as a whole?

1. 6. 6. Pieter Bruegel, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (Plate 6)

On the other hand, in a work such as Bruegel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (Plate 6),[22] in which all the elements are in proportion and are the 'right' size in relation to each other—in terms of perspective—there is little narrative impact. Pursuing the faulty analogy, supposedly realistic literary texts often with highly developed narrative structures concentrate so heavily upon single characters and individual aspects that they may, in one sense, be considered to be out of proportion and out of perspective. *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* is 'in perspective' and 'in proportion', but contains little useful narrative. Icarus plummeting into the sea is hardly

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[21] Judy Rawson, 'Italian Futurism', in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890–1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 243–58 (pp. 250–51).
[22] Reproduced from Jeffares, 1979, p. 39.

noticeable, and indeed goes unnoticed by the significantly larger ploughman, the day-dreaming peasant, the engrossed fisherman on the bank and the numerous mariners that presumably populate the many vessels contained within the picture frame. In fact, the attitude of these non-observers is meaningful; they have no knowledge or awareness of the event, it means nothing to them, they are looking in other directions. Just as with Plates 3 and 4, one must know the story already; here too, in order to understand the sense of the illustration—that is to say, to be able produce the canonical interpretation—a great deal of prior knowledge is required. Where a non-mimetic painting without a consistent viewpoint may be premised upon a monolithic, monologic doctrine, a mimetic example may be open to wider interpretation because it concentrates on *showing* rather than *telling*.

1. 7. Mimesis and diegesis

1. 7. 1. Genre and the Western canon

According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, drama is to be valued for its mimetic purity over the diegetic inferiority of epic narrative.[23] Where drama is *representative* and concerned with the depiction of visible events—a replay of actions as if they were present—narrative is more obviously *imitative*. In a recent study dealing particularly with Western criticism's stance toward Chinese literature it has been argued that this hierarchical pedigree has had a limiting effect upon the ability of Western observers to evaluate narrative, without measuring it against a dramatic yardstick:

> The Western, Aristotelian formula of narrative as drama has been so pervasive that Western or Western trained critics have censured traditional Chinese fiction for

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[23] 'It is clear that, since it [tragedy] attains the poetic effect better than the epic, it will be the higher form of art ' (Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 2340.)

> failing to measure up to Western narrative standards, singling out such 'defects' as episodic construction, the absence of a consistent point of view, and loose plots.[24]

This comment is equally relevant to the reception of works such as *Golyi god*, *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, and *Mat'-machekha*, and goes some way to explaining the critical unease with which these texts have been handled. Narrative is ideally expected to be as like drama as possible, and respectability is achieved by nearness to the canon. Whilst detractors condemn such texts for their remoteness from the mimetic fold, supporters hope either to gain them access by redefining *mimesis*, or attempt to rehabilitate them through circumventing the literature-specific problem by aligning them with a visual medium where the yardstick is less easily applicable.

1. 7. 2. Genre and the Russian canon

Further light has been shed on this question by Andrew Wachtel in his assessment of the nature of the interaction between fictionality and historicity in Russian literature.[25] Wachtel convincingly argues for a peculiar attitude of Russians to their own history and destiny, evidenced, for example, in Peter 1's process of acceleration, Lenin's anomalous disrespect for Marx in terms of Russia's opting out of economic determinism, and more recently, the attempt to excise seventy-five years of mistaken history since the Revolution. Russia, it seems, is not bound by the rules of historical sequentiality, variously standing outside of it, or making incursions in order to catch up, overtake, or redirect its course. And this obsession with Russia's unique extra-

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[24] Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 20.
[25] Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

historical role is reflected in the literature by means of an intergeneric interplay less acceptable in the literature of the West. A recurring feature of Russian literary history, he argues, has been the production of a type of text which, though both fictitious and based in history, cannot be properly accommodated into the genre of the historical novel. Wachtel cites Karamzin's *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo*, Tolstoi's *Voina i mir*, Dostoevskii's *Brat'ia Karamazovy* and Solzhenitsyn's *Krasnoe koleso* as examples of texts characterized by what is described as *intergeneric dialogue*; the interweaving of history, meditations upon history, and fictional exposition. It is not simply a question of rooting fictitious events in a 'factual' ground in order to imbue them with greater credibility, but the establishing of a dialogue between genres which otherwise might be considered distinct. However, following the Aristotelian differentiation between drama and narrative as generically distinct levels of deceptive imitation, a similar generic distinction has by analogy developed between textual history and fiction. Both are deceptions by virtue of being written, but on a mimetic scale written history is the less pernicious deception. And further, realistic, representative painting, analogous to drama, which comes high on the mimetic scale, can be considered distinct from less realistic, diegetic painting which is mimetically inferior. The requirement for generic distinction is thus established and perpetuated.

1. 8. The relevance to Pil'niak and the applicability of pictorial analogies

The discussion above is significant for the appreciation of Pil'niak's method in three ways: firstly, works such as *Mat'-machekha*, criticized for their publicistic nature and quasi-philosophical meditations, can now be integrated into a tradition of intergeneric dialogue; secondly, Pil'niak's textual fragmentariness can be seen to have other than exclusively Modernist antecedents; and thirdly, the tension between the metaphorical

applicability of widely different styles of painting dissolves. It also lends weight to the argument that, rather than opting for an approach based on a largely Aristotelian prehistory, it may be more fruitful to endorse a model which, following Bakhtin:

> regroups literary discourses into two kinds: on one side a centralizing, centripetal, and authoritative force in language and literature is at work; on the other a decentering, centrifugal, and subversive force. The Western central tradition has on the whole been determined to guarantee unity, homogeneity, and ready made truths and to smooth out the rough edges of the subversive, carnivalistic, and critical elements in literary and ideological discourse.[26]

Dispensing with the narrowly mimetic scale then, is there any value in drawing upon the world of graphic art in order to cast light upon the work of Pil'niak? And if so, which example should be chosen? *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* because it is a 'truthful' historical rendition and significance is given to the world of individuals against a backdrop of events?; icon painting because discrete events can be narratively held together in the same frame?; Cubism because successive viewpoints are rendered on one plane? In a significant sense these three painterly styles have more in common with each other than with any literary text, and any useful common denominator should therefore apply across the board. Rather than dwelling on the differences between these stylistically diverse representations, the first step must be to establish a common ground linking them together, in order then to go on and assess whether this ground has any use in an appreciation of the texts to be discussed. A comparison should be made at the most basic level of perception. With this proviso it must be concluded that

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[26] Lu, 1994, p. 22.

there is essentially no difference between the three examples and all are equally applicable in this investigation because all rely upon control from the central 'I', be it author or observer, operating within a centrally defined but shared environment. However, coming full circle, it is Cubism, at first sight the most destructive and subversive, that illustrates the point most effectively. For this style demonstrates the egocentric power of the artist. Continually shifting his position in relation to the object, the artist approaches it from every angle, controlling it from every direction, he assimilates and synthesizes successive facets, attempting to bring them all under the control of the centralizing self. Fragmentariness, it is clear, is only one side of the equation, which in isolation has very little significance other than as a fluid label with general applicability; the opposite side of the equation is control. The following chapter is concerned with the inextricability of observation and control at the most fundamental level, and takes as its starting point what is regarded as one of Pil'niak's simpler texts, *Tselaia zhizn'*.

2. OBSERVATION AND CONTROL

2. 1. *Tselaia zhizn'*: the text

The work to be discussed in this section first appeared in *Russkaia mysl'*, 1916.4,with its original title *Nad ovragom*. It also featured in the collection *Byl'e* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1920) which included, amongst other works, *Smertel'noe manit* and *Naslednikі*. It subsequently appeared unchanged but with its new title *Tselaia zhizn'* in the collection *Smertel'noe manit* (Moscow: Grzhebin, 1922), retaining this title in all further editions. The text that I shall be referring to is from *Sochineniia*, 3 vols (Moscow: Lada M., 1994), I, 394–411.

Tselaia zhizn' reports in a relatively unembellished and, ostensibly, detached manner the life cycle of two birds. Although the breed is not specified, the birds are described in detail. They are large, heavy birds with dense, greyish yellow and brown plumage. They have short, broad, strong wings, and large taloned feet covered in black down. On their short, thick necks sit square heads with yellow, predatorily hooked beaks, and round, austere, sinister—*tiazhelo gliadiashchie*—eyes The female is smaller than the male. On the basis of this information Jensen reasonably concludes that they are owls, although in the text they are simply referred to as *samets* and *samka*. The male wins access to the female by virtue of defeating his predecessor. They breed successfully for a number of years after which she abandons him for a younger and fitter specimen. He engages his rival in battle, loses, dies and is scavenged by a wolf.

2. 2. Critical reception

2. 2. 1. Voronskii

On the basis of his reading of *Nad ovragom*, *God ikh zhizni*, and *Proselki* from the collection *Byl'e*, Voronskii drew the following conclusion concerning Pil'niak's understanding of the fundamental correspondence between human and animal life: 'Жизнь человеческая—такая же. Сущность ее—в зверином, в древних инстинктах, в ощущениях голода, в потребности любви и рождения'.[1]

Tracing a common strain through these texts, Voronskii arrived at an evaluation of Pil'niak as a *physiological* writer who saw man and animal as essentially interchangeable: 'Пильняк—писатель «физиологический». Люди у него похожи на зверей, звери как люди' (p. 253). In support of this contention he highlights Pil'niak's emphasis on the fundamental ties that bind man to the non-human, natural world, his sensitivity to the constant pull of nature, and the resultant feelings of dislocation and longing should this bond be interfered with:

> К этой звериной, из века данной жизни тянется человек, о ней он тоскует как о потерянном рае—и грехопадения и недовольство, и нестроения его начинаются с момента, когда силой вещей и обстоятельств он почему-либо отрывается от этой жизни. (p. 253)

In support of this argument he cites the following three cases: firstly, the simple, industrious peasant Koloturov from *Golyi god* who, precipitated into an alien world of administration and bureaucracy by events beyond his control, longs for his wife and fireside; secondly, the intellectual Irina, also from *Golyi god*, who abandons a life of erudition in order to run off with a sectarian horse-thief, lead a *muzhitskii* life, and find

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[1] Voronskii, A., 'Literaturnye siluety: Boris Pil'niak', *Krasnaia nov'*, 1922.4, 252–69 (p. 252).

happiness in subjugation; and thirdly, from *Nasledniki*, the descendants of the Rastorov family living out their petty and pointless lives in the ancestral home because: 'Пришла революция и поставила их вне жизни, вырвала их с корнями' (p. 253). However, these three examples are not adequately linked by the argument in support of which they are advanced. They are qualitatively at variance with one another to such an extent that they do not constitute corroboration. There is simple longing for hearth and home, there is intellectually romanticized longing, and there is irrevocable loss of security in *Nasledniki*, prompting an understandable nostalgia for the past when life was easier; the consequence of the dislocation of a class which had been deprived of its future. Furthermore, in *Nasledniki* there is no reference to any severed association between the Rastorovs and nature. Voronskii's failure to marshall sufficient evidence in support of his thesis suggests that the thesis itself, if not fundamentally flawed, may represent a serious over-simplification of Pil'niak's representation of the position of man in nature. This over-simplification, the repercussions of which persist in the critical literature, derives largely from a particular type of reading of texts such as *Tselaia zhizn'*. It was on the basis of his reading of this text that Voronskii drew the conclusion that *Zhizn' chelovecheskaia—takaia zhe*. In order to understand what prompted Voronskii to draw this conclusion, it is necessary to understand the nature of the text itself, and the position of such texts within the interpretative tradition (See **2. 3**).

2. 2. 2. Jensen

Jensen's interpretation of this text echoes that of Voronskii: 'There are no human beings in "Celaja žizn'", but in the owls' life together there are recognizable human features which bring out the meaning of the story as a universal parable'.[2] What is lacking from Jensen's analysis are explanations of both the nature and derivation of these *recognizable human features*, and of the *meaning* of the parable.

2. 3. The question of allegory

2. 3. 1. Allegorization of texts

Voronskii assumed that the tale was an allegory revealing Pil'niak's understanding of the essence of human nature as interchangeable with the essence of the entirety of nature, itself represented by the life cycle of these two birds. Perhaps it is due to the fact that this interpretation is so obvious that Jensen has not mentioned it; it must be a parable, and the fact that it is a parable makes the meaning so clear that it does not warrant further discussion. But there is in fact little to substantiate this assumption. The nature of allegorization as one of the most remote forms of interpretation lies in its recourse to an aspect of a belief system so firmly entrenched in reader consciousness that it can be readily grafted onto a text from without in order to make sense of it, simultaneously serving as interpretation and cumulative validation of interpretation. No text can be essentially an allegory, but allegorical criticism as an interpretive strategy can never fail, because there is no need, or means to demonstrate any connection between the text and the finished interpretation. Between the text and the critic is interposed an interpretive prism allowing the maximum degree of refraction in any direction. This allows for a tenuous interchangeability of terminology generated by

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[2] Jensen, 1979, pp. 108–09.

conclusions which are beyond substantiation. When Voronskii reads the text as evidence of Pil'niak's view that human life is the same as animal life, because its bestial essence is to be found in ancient instincts, the sensations of hunger and the need of love and childbearing, *liubov'* is separated from the question of procreation, as though it were essential both to human and animal life. This is difficult to reconcile with the female's abandonment of the male in *Tselaia zhizn'* when he had passed his breeding prime. There is no mention of *liubov'* in the text, and by the introduction of the expression *potrebnost' liubvi* he is anthropomorphizing the animals, and characterizing humans as essentially animal, only on the basis of an assumption he has made about Pil'niak's intention. It may be argued that *potrebnost' liubvi* is a euphemism for the gratification of sexual urges, but, if so, the fact that the euphemism is used at all is further evidence of anthropomorphization.

2. 3. 2. Metaphorical imposition

This approach to interpretation by virtue of its flexibility encourages the proliferation of dubious metaphorical impositions, and the subsumption of significant details into general categories. By concentrating on the proposition that human and non-human life share common characteristics, the significance of a counterbalancing proposition, that it is the essential differences that are most important, is ignored. A further example of metaphorical imposition with its consequences of generalization and subsumption is Voronskii's analogy between the longing for nature and for a paradise lost. If the analogy of longing extends to the objects of longing, which it must do if the comparison is to have any weight, then the following objection must be raised: there is seldom any doubt in Pil'niak's texts about the subjective harshness of nature in its raw state. It is not only Pil'niak's characters that are aware of this, but also Voronskii

himself: 'И природа у него звериная, буйная, жестокая, безжалостная, древняя, исконная, почти всегда лишенная мягких, ласковых тонов.'[3] The concepts that he is using to characterize Pil'niak's descriptions of nature were not only inapplicable in the Garden of Eden but moreover are concepts with variable flexibility of subjectivity applicable only to the human condition: *zhestokost'* and *zhalost'* can have no significance within the framework of instinctual and mechanistically causal nature. Neither, for that matter, can *drevnost'* or *iskonnost'* have any significance beyond the perspective within the human dimension of assessment from which nature is viewed. Voronskii contributes to the anthropomorphization of nature, whilst analogically linking it to a paradise expressly defined by the non-applicability of profane sorrows and delights. The problem lies in the fact that the metaphor derives from two firmly entrenched and interlinked grids of assessment: the biblical, and the Romantic, both of which are staples for the allegorical appetite, but which place interpretive limitations on the analysis of Pil'niak's depiction of nature.

2. 3. 3. Animal metaphorization and didacticism

Reading in the light of a complex history of animal literature which, domestically, can trace its roots through, amongst others, Tolstoi, Saltykov-Shchedrin, and Krylov, and more generally has antecedents in Aesop and the Christian tradition, there is a tendency to see animal stories as about anything other than animals. An assumption is made that texts in which animals predominate are essentially didactic rather than investigative. Such texts may be divided into two broad categories. Firstly, animals may undergo a process of anthropomorphization as a result of which they are animals in name only.

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[3] Voronskii, 1922, p. 254.

This is the case, for example, with Krylov's fables, or Tolstoi's animal tales, where animals by speaking, thinking, and reflecting are able to perform mentally in exactly the same way as humans, and are simply the vehicle through which to satirize human folly or convey a moral or ethical position with no possible relevance outside the sphere of human activity. Related to this is the technique of usurping the eyes of an animal as a method of alienation, famously used by Tolstoi in *Kholstomer*. Secondly, animal texts may be parables in which, not displaying human attributes, the animals have a symbolic function. A popular example is the biblical parable of the lost sheep. In this case the animals are not anthropomorphized in any way. The foundation of the parable is the investigative behavioural report. Any of these, including the last, may be read as an allegorical expression of truths or generalizations about human existence. There is a proclivity to assume that, be it allegorical, symbolic or parabolic, the text must be didactic in some non-representational way. There is, however, another possibilty: these birds are not symbols; they are birds. The accommodation of this alternative possibility refocuses the analysis away from the speculative attempt to determine the nature of didactic, authorial intent, and onto an appraisal of the manner in which the author handles the material itself. What is important here is the role of the author in forming a text out of the life-cycle of two birds. An analysis of this short work serves as a useful introduction to interpretative problems that can be traced through later, post-Revolutionary works.

2. 4. 1. *Tselaia zhizn'*: analysis

Chapter One opens with a description of what appears to be untouched nature in its primordial condition. However, very early on there is evidence that man is not to be entirely excluded from the picture: 'Тут редко бывал человек'.[4] Man's presence has been felt in this primordial forest, although not for some time: 'Чертополохи, цикории, рябники, полыни не срывались годами' (p. 394). Although there are points of contact, evidencing an area of overlap between man and nature, man's existence is concentrated elsewhere and these incursions are presented as intrusions. Furthermore, the fact that the plants have not been cleared for a matter of years is an early textual reference to man's linear conception of time, before any mention of cyclicality has been made. There is the implication, however, that in spite of the clearance of these plants by man, the forest will inexorably return to its original state after his departure, and there is therefore the sense that man's intrusions represent a step, if not back in time, then into a situation where time has an alternative relevance; the relevance of cyclicality which, simplistically, has allegorical appeal. Following this intrusion, there is a return to the description of nature, emphasizing its apparent chaos. The two birds are then introduced by means of the detailed description given above. However, within the same paragraph the description of the female takes a new direction: 'Ее ноги казались тоньше и красивее, и была тяжелая и грубая грациозность в движениях, в изгибах ее шеи, в наклоне головы. Самец был суров' (p. 395). With the use of expressions such as *krasivee*, *gratsioznost'*, *surov*, the description momentarily hinges on a judgemental comparison between the female and the male. It is much more obviously rooted in the subjectivity of the author,

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[4] *Tselaia zhizn'*, p. 394.

and recalls his use of the expression *tiazhelo gliadiashchimi glazami* as a projection of human malevolence into the eyes of an ostensibly mechanistically motivated being. But as a counterbalance to this there is a return to detachedness, and a further description of the birds' environment, or context: 'Гнездо поместилось между корней. Под ним с трех сторон падал отвес. Над ним сталось небо и протягивалось несколько изломанных древесин корней' (p. 395). Descriptions of nature in this chapter are characterized by their imagery of both decay and permanence: 'Грозами, водою, временем корчевались деревья, падали тут же, застилая землю, гнили, и от них шел густой, сладкий запах тлеющей сосны' (p. 394).

Chapter Two is concerned with a description of the first signs of the end of winter prefiguring the revivification of nature. The process is characterized by appropriate imagery of reawakening: 'проснулся ключ', and 'Волки покидали стай, и самки родили щенят' (p. 395). Emphasis is placed on the fundamentally mechanistic responses of the male:

> Раньше он летал или сидел, ухал или молчал, летел быстро или медленно, потому что кругом и внутри него были причины: когда он был голоден, он летел, чтобы найти зайца, убить его и съесть,—когда сильно слепило солнце или резок был ветер, он скрывался от них—когда видел крадущегося волка, отлетал от него, чтобы спастись. (p. 395)

However something awakens within him, and not knowing why—'не ведая зачем' (p. 396)—he goes in search of a mate. Having found a potential breeding partner amongst a crowd of suitors he attempts to win her by attacking them. But the sense of the sentence oscillates on the scale of subjectivity: 'Он, не зная почему так должно быть, бросился туда, почувствовал чрезмерную силу в себе и

великую ненависть к тем остальным самцам' (p. 396). It begs the question, how can hatred—*nenavist'*—as an emotion, play any part in the responses to stimuli that are mechanistic? On the other hand, whilst the male is experiencing hatred, the female, whose original partner is suffering a bloody defeat, is experiencing nothing whatever: 'Самка была безразлична и к нему и ко всем' (p. 396). Furthermore, having won the battle and gained access to the acquiescing female, the male becomes virginally bashful: 'Он стал нерешительным, смущенный счастьем' (p. 397). Bravado helps him to overcome this momentary confusion, and the hatred which he experienced earlier is now replaced with joy:

> Самец бросился к ней, хватая клювом ее перья, хлопая по земле тяжелыми своими крыльями, став дерзкими, приказывающими,—и в его жилах потекла такая прекрасная мука, такая крепкая радость, что он ослеп. [...] Самка была покорной. (p. 397)

Once again, whilst the male is experiencing a whole range of emotions, the female remains detached. And yet she is *pokornaia*; a quality incompatible with the *bezrazlichnost'* which characterizes her mechanistic responses to stimuli. That is to say, there is no possibility of her being either *nepokornaia* or *pokornaia*; other than in a metaphorical sense.

Between the dramatic episodes dealing with the two birds are interspersed descriptions of the context in which they are located. For example, immediately after the battle between the two males: 'Сосны обстали поляну. Земля была засыпана хвоей. Синело, скованное звездами, ночное небо' (p. 396). And the chapter concludes with: 'На востоке уже ложилась красная лента восхода, и снега в лощинах

стали лиловыми' (p. 397). These descriptions are characterised by their greater degree of impersonality, built around descriptive, passive, impersonal, reflexive constructions, and prefigure the technique that was to be the hallmark of later works such as *Tret'ia stolitsa* of locating events on, rather than in, a broad canvas through the use of leitmotifs.

In Chapter Three Pil'niak is confronted with the problem of making sense of the effects of a long and cold night upon these two mechanistically motivated birds. He turns to speculating upon what their thoughts might be: 'Если бы птицы умели думать, они больше всего хотели бы утра' (p. 397). But this is tantamount to saying that this is what would be happening if the birds were essentially different. It would mean that the birds could conceive of linear time, which would debar them from a purely primordial cyclical existence. It is in reality a projection of how the writer expects he would feel in the same situation. On the other hand, the sensation of hunger is easier to portray because it relies on more immediate physical stimuli: 'Еще за час до рассвета [...] птицы начинали чувствовать голод. Во рту был неприятный желчный привкус' (p. 397). A further discrepancy arises by virtue of the fact that although both birds can mechanistically feel, but not think, it is given only to the male to emote. He is therefore able to derive enjoyment from what he feels, since he 'чувствовал, как тепло, после еды, бегает в нем кровь, переливается в кишках, доставляя наслаждение' (p. 398).

Chapter Four is concerned with the onset of spring and its repercussions for the two birds; once again there is intrusion at the points of contact between what the birds are actually doing and the author's attempt to explain it.

Он ликовал большой, прекрасной страстью. Он садился рядом с самкой, гладил кловом перья. Самка была доверчива и бессильна в нежности. На своем языке, языке инстинкта, самка говорила самцу:
—Да можно.
И самец бросался к ней, изнемогая блаженством страсти. И она отдавалась ему. (p. 399)

By this time the author has projected the quality of tenderness onto the birds, and an instinctive response is verbalized and couched in terms of human submissive, sexual acquiescence. This process of the anthropomorphization of instinct is taken further in Chapter Five:

Потом же, когда ночью приходил к ней самец, она говорила:
—Нет. Довольно.
Говорила, инстинктом своим чувствуя, что довольно, ибо пришла другая пора—пора рождения детей.
И самец, смущенный, виноватый тем, что не предугадал веления самки, веления инстинкта, вложенного в самку, уходил от нее, чтобы прийти через год. (pp. 399–400)

And by this time the male is not only confused, or embarrassed, as he was earlier, but even feels guilty for not having been able to predict the instinctive demands of his mate. The corollary of this must be that he is not acting on the basis of instinct at all, but on the basis of reflection.

Chapter Six is concerned with the flowering of spring and the nurturing of the fledglings. Yet once again, when Pil'niak tries to relate this process to the individual male by projecting a speculation on the pride of fatherhood onto him, there is an uneasy tension. This is unassuaged by the deliberate use of an impersonal construction which, conversely betrays the untenability of his position. To compensate for this, the sentence

which follows attempts to reiterate the primality of instinct.

> Самец не умел думать и едва ли чувствовал, но чувствовалось в нем, что он горд, у своего прямого дела, которое вершит с великой радостью.
> И вся жизнь его была заполнена инстинктом, переносящим всю волю его и жизнеощущение на птенцов. (p. 400)

Chapter Seven, as a summary of the male's life so far, allows Pil'niak to return to generalization and in so doing re-emphasize the role of instinct. It gives the author the chance to stand back, to return the bird its anonymity and see it as part of the context rather than an object defined against it.

> Он жил зимы, чтобы жить. Весны и лето он жил, чтобы родить. Он не умел думать. Он делал это потому, что так велел тот инстинкт, который правил им. Зимами он жил, чтобы есть, чтобы не умереть. [...] Веснами—он родил. (p. 401)

The seven lines which make up Chapter Eight are devoted to autumnal images and the departure of the young: 'Старики с молодыми прощались навсегда, и прощались уже безразлично' (p. 401). Even so there is evidence of qualitative assessment. Though the fledgings and their parents may be indifferent, the author is not—*Nochi byli tosklivy*. If the birds are indifferent then they can make no judgement. And as no night can be essentially *tosklivyi* without subjective intervention, then this represents a clear and partisan authorial comment.

Chapter Nine consisting of one short sentence discovers the author entirely. 'Так было тридцать лет их жизни' (p. 402). By numerically qualifying the passage of time, Pil'niak has shown the impossibility of attempting to describe the life cycle of the

birds in their own terms. The division of linear time into discrete units, presupposes the concept of cumulative time which is beyond the grasp of 'feeling'. But, more importantly, cyclicality too implies a passage through discrete units in order to return to the point of departure. And a mechanistically, instinctively determined life could not register this either. Both the cyclical and linear options are the preserve of the observer, and represent tools available in the process of understanding. It is the ideological and philosophical baggage that has accrued to each model that causes the apparent cognitive dissonance.

The change of state shown in the death of the male which is the subject matter of the tenth and final chapter is a demonstration to the reader of the impermanence inherent in the linearity of time. It transpires that an injury sustained during the fight in which he won his mate has, over the years, caused him increasing pain:

> [...] а ночами не мог уснуть от большой и нудной боли по всему крылу. И это было очень страшно, ибо раньше он не чувствовал своего крыла, а теперь оно стало важным и мучительным. (p. 402)

The consciousness of pain as an indicator of self-awareness, though recalling such notable antecedents as Dostoevskii's *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* and Andreev's *Ben-Tovit*, is less common in a bird. One day on returning from a hunting expedition the male finds that the female has left him. He goes in search of her and finds her in the company of a younger and fitter male. 'И старик почувствовал, что все, данное ему в жизни, кончено' (p. 402). The method of expression here is immaterial. Whether he *senses*, *feels*, or *thinks* it, he is actually aware of the fact that his life has run its course. Nevertheless, he hesitantly and weakly engages his rival in battle, and is violently

defeated. During this drama the female is, as before, unmoved: 'Самка же, как много лет назад, безразлично следило за схваткой' (p. 402). Vanquished, he flies away to die:

> И было попятно, что жизнью счеты его кончепо. Он жил, чтобы есть, чтобы родить. Теперь ему оставалось—умереть. Верно, он чувствовал это инстинктом, ибо два дня сидел тихо и недвижно на обрыве, втянув голову в шею. А потом спокойно и незаметно для себя умер. (p. 402)

2. 4. 2. Summary: Subjectivity, linearity and cyclicality

In summary, Chapter One serves as an introduction, and chapters Two to Eight plot the course of the seasons from late winter to late autumn, against which background are detailed the activities of the two birds. Chapters Nine and Ten step beyond the parameters of simple annual development by quantifying the passage of successive annual cycles and truncating the development of the *hero*. There is constant oscillation throughout the text back and forth between the impersonal context and the particularity of the individuals. What Pil'niak is unable to do is treat the object of his attention in the same way as he treats the context. Because of the impersonal background, and the subjective personalization of the protagonists, they themselves are qualitatively different than their surroundings. Two models are simultaneously applicable: a cyclical model for the context, and a linear model for the objects highlighted against the context. But neither is cyclicality inherent in the context nor linearity inherent in the life of the *samets*. Both are inherent in the observing subject. In terms of the interplay of being and time, where the *samets* may simply 'be', the subjective author can only 'be' *in time*. Everything he observes and attempts to

represent must therefore be in time as well.

2. 4. 3. Anthropomorphization and linearity

In *Tselaia zhizn'* the birds accrue an inescapable degree of anthropomorphization simply by being focused upon by a human subject. This is the cause of both their loss of anonymity, and their adoption into the linearity that inhers in the sense of a subject's personal, temporally limited existence. By extracting an element out of the context and focusing on it, the author removes it from the cyclical model and transfers it into the linear model by personalizing it through reference to himself. Thus the object becomes more closely and reciprocally associated with the observer. It is for this reason that the *hero* of the piece, the *samets* begins to assume characteristics more nearly associated with the observing subject than does the female who remains *bezrazlichna*. This is why there is constant oscillation back and forth between the impersonal context and the particularity of the individuals. The tension is caused by the impossibility of treating the object of attention in the same way as the context in which it is represented. The problem is aptly illustrated by the use of the impersonal construction in Chapter Six to describe a personal quality—*chuvstvovalos' v nem, chto on gord.* If this sensation of pride *could be felt*, or *was to be felt*, then by whom? Ultimately, by ourselves and the author.

2. 4. 4. The controlling subject

Where allegory and parable are simply an attempt to understand ourselves by use of or reference to animals in a symbolic sense, or as a cover, Pil'niak's problem lies in the fact that his is first and foremost an attempt to understand the life of animals which is inescapably rooted in a field of reference exclusive to man. Though he may be trying to

understand the entirety of natural life and his own particular existence within it, through looking at the life of a bird in a forest, his only access to understanding is founded upon his own knowledge of himself and of his position at the centre of all contexts. What was assumed to be an attempt to make sense of the human world by reference to animals begins to look more like an attempt to make sense of the animal world by reference to humans.

What has been said above cannot, of course, preclude the possibility of the tale either being read as or intended as an allegory, but what the discussion does achieve is the identification in embryonic form of a feature that was to develop and play a significant role in much of Pil'niak's later work, including *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, *Mat'-machekha* and *Ivan Moskva*; it is less interesting as a simple allegory or parable, than as a demonstration of the inescapability of the position of controlling authority that the subject must inevitably occupy within the world.

A text, therefore, which may have presumed to be, or have been assumed to be detached, can be nothing of the sort. Whether a text exhibits the overt authorial interpolations characteristic of Pil'niak in the post-Revolutionary period up to the late 1920s, or whether it is characterized by authorial modesty and the ability to lull the reader into false sense of objectivity, is simply a matter of degree. It is not a question of identifying authorial interventions when and where they occur, but of accepting as a point of departure that *Tselaia zhizn'*, like all texts, *is* an authorial intervention; and no less so, simply because it is about unspecified birds, than *Mat'-machekha*, which features, amongst other fictitious characters, the author himself.

Pil'niak deliberately avoided categorizing these birds by genus or species, in what looks

like an attempt to isolate them from the sphere of control which is the preserve of man. Similarly, in the text he attempted to isolate them by locating them in a primordial forest. However, when man enters the arena he exerts control, by bringing organization to the chaos of thistles and wormwood. The avoidance of categorization is no more than a device to produce the impression of detachedness. The author, simply by coming into the forest, has begun to organize it on his own terms.

2. 5. The ramifications of Voronskii's model

2. 5. 1. *Smertel'noe manit*

The conclusions that proliferate from Voronskii's assumption that Pil'niak is motivated by an understanding of the interchangeability of human and non-human facets of being are both speculative and inconsistent. The corollary of his allegation that 'в сущности и природа, и эта звериная жизнь у Пильняка скорбны'[5] is that for Pil'niak this *skorb'* constitutes the essence of all life. And Voronskii hopes to demonstrate this with the following argument:

> В рассказе «Смертельное манит» мать говорит «смертельное манит, манит полая вода к себе, манит земля к себе, с высоты, с церковной колоколыьи, манит под поезд и с поезда, манит кровь». Это лежит «в природе вещей», в существе жизни. Такой же скорбью, идущей от самого существа жизни, от корней ее обвеяны страницы «Голого года», где дана смерть старика Архипова. (p. 254)

But this generalization is so broad that it ignores some fundamental, essential differences. It fails to recognise a distinction between an illogical attraction to wilful self-destruction as expressed by the mother in *Smertel'noe manit* on the one hand, and the

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[5] Voronskii, 1922, p. 254.

logical decision to terminate one's own life in order to avoid the pain and indignity of a cancerous death as expressed by Arkhipov on the other. One is the result of an apparently inexplicable and irresistible urge, and is against one's own interests, and the other is planned and deliberate, firmly in one's own best interests, and requires a high degree of calculation. Furthermore, it ignores the fact that neither of these is available to animals.[6] Both courses of action are specifically human, and though they lead to the same result their motivations are diametrically opposed. If these options lay in the nature of things, then they must be available to animals, and if they are not available to animals, they cannot lie in the nature of things and must be exclusively human, in which case they have no part to play in a discussion of what *does* lie in the nature of things. All that does lie at the centre of Pil'niak's conception of the nature of things, according to Voronskii, is an undefined *skorb'*. Although this on its own would be enough to attribute an essentially pessimistic Schopenhauerian philosophy to Pil'niak, it is incompatible with Voronskii's earlier analogy conferring on nature in Pil'niak the status of a paradise lost.

2. 5. 2. Control and the will

The mother's list of paths to self-destruction includes both elemental components in water, air, and earth, and also the man-made train, and her words prefigure the suicide by fire, and the fatal attraction of the industrial flywheel in *Mashiny i volki*. But to metaphorize the flywheel or the train would be to return to the arbitrariness of allegory, and as all technology is a product of the harnessing of elemental power there

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[6] It is arguable that Pil'niak's method of dealing with his subject matter in *Tselaia zhizn'* implies that the male bird actually does commit suicide, in so far as he engages his rival in battle certain in the knowledge that he will be defeated. This lends further weight to the argument of anthropomorphization.

seems little point in attempting to draw a distinction between self-destruction through natural or man-made means. If there is no distinction between the two, then one possible argument might be that it is simply the pervasive *skorb'* which is responsible. But as shown above, this argument is too general to be of any real use, and not applicable to nature in the absence of a human subject. If both natural and man-made phenomena appear to fatally attract, it seems more likely that the answer to the problem lies not in the object itself, but in the subject. Simply, the attraction to self-destruction is not a result of anything esssential to the water, the train, or the height of the bell-tower, to be discovered by metaphorization, but of something essential to the mind of the subject. I suggest that it has more to do with the ability of the subject to establish and maintain a network of causal relations into which he can integrate both the phenomena he sees around him and his own self. The instability of the interdependence between the network that results from the central subject's ability to exert by force of will an organizing influence on the information received, and the subject himself who in turn depends upon that system is illustrated by the behaviour that results from its destabilization. Destabilization is the result of the failure of the will to maintain faith in a system, inductively based and therefore ultimately beyond proof. The phenomenon of *Smertel'noe manit* is not so much that of acting against one's will, but acting in the absence of will. Thus what appears as an attraction to self-destruction is not the result of any metaphysical, external force, or a Schopenhauerian natural Will, but what is left when the will of the subject, for whatever reason, fails and is no longer strong enough to maintain control of, to organize, or make sense of the conditions.

2. 5. 3. Man and nature: the essential difference

This is not to say that instinctual urges do not play a role in Pil'niak's depiction of human behaviour; on the contrary, they play a significant role. But it is to say that in Pil'niak the will plays no role in animal behaviour, which is to maintain that far from being essentially the same, man and the rest of nature are essentially different. The significance of the role of man lies in this essential difference, and the role it plays in his perspective on the natural world that is his environment:

> Understanding the world for a man is reducing it to the human, stamping it with his seal. [...] The truism 'All thought is anthropomorphic' has no other meaning. Likewise the mind that aims to understand reality can consider itself satisfied only by reducing it to terms of thought. If man realized that the universe like him can love and suffer, he would be reconciled.[7]

2. 5. 4. The critic Pravdukhin

Voronskii was not the only critic to be drawn by the model that has been discussed above. In an article that appeared in 1922 in *Sibirskie ogni*, and was expressly founded upon his reading of the collection *Byl'e*, V. Pravdukhin concluded that Pil'niak:

> описывает мир в иной, отличной от современности, стихии: как древний летописец он возвращает его в устой звериного уклада, к органическому единству, никогда не ищет резких индивидуальных черт людей и событий, не любит неповторяемости, а именно безмерно влюблен в его стихийную повторяемость.[8]

Furthermore, the collection is written by someone: 'зорко видящий природную основу нашей жизни; отметающий беспощадно все внешние наслоения цивилизации. [...] Люди у него живут, волнуются не в стихии

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[7] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 23.
[8] V. Pravdukhin, 'Pafos sovremennosti i molodye pisateli', *Sibirskie ogni*, 1922.4, 147–60 (p. 158).

цивилизации, исторически-производного—городов, искусства, политики' (p. 158). This generalization does not afford sufficient weight to those works also to be found in the collection which are concerned with subjects that are more remote from primordial nature, such as *Tysiacha let*, or, particularly, *Nasledniki*, which concentrates primarily on the internecine bickering and degeneration of an isolated household. Here, individual family members are dealt with and defined in relation to each other and not directly in relation to a backdrop of untamed nature. It is to be expected that those who live in urban settings, removed from nature, should be less dependent on, and therefore less aware of the passage of, the seasons than those who live in the country. There is the danger that by ignoring this aspect of Pil'niak's work, Pravdukhin risks stating the truism that texts that have rural settings tend to deal with rural issues. Similarly, *povtoriaemost'* is material to *Nad ovragom* because *povtoriaemost'* is integral to continuity through reproduction and this is what the text is about. By concentrating exclusively on one aspect of Pil'niak's work in the abstract, Pravdukhin, like Voronskii, is in danger of slipping into overarching allegorical generalization with its concomitant taxonomical confusion:

> Свою живую веру в жизнь он обретает не в цивилизации [...] а именно в глубоко-народной культуре, в могущественном, стихийном созревании народной души, в рождающемся актуальном мифе народа; успех, корни жизни обретает не во внешней тонкости цивилизованного человека [...] а в глубоко-природной, почти звериной стихии. (p. 158)

This definition equates *gluboko-narodnaia ku'ltura* with the indistiguishability of rural man and nature on one side, to be set off against *tsivilizatsiia* on the other, implying, like Voronskii, that according to Pil'niak, man is only an animal and civilization is a

distortion. This conclusion derives from the compulsion to read nature texts as symbolic and allegorical rather than as descriptive, with the corollary that lack of overt psychology in a non-urban situation implies primitivism. The conclusion that because the fundamentals of life that inform the existence of man are described through reference to animals, then man is himself no more than an animal, is the product of faulty reasoning. The natural basis—*osnova*—of life that Pil'niak identifies is the basis of all life, but that does not mean that all life is essentially indistinguishable. In Pil'niak it is very often the tension deriving from man's status as simultaneously part of, yet distinct from, the body of nature which is the focus of interest. For Pravdukhin, informed by the oppositional model between the two, it was a question that should be either resolved or synthesized, but not simply explored: 'Ощущая здоровое начало жизни, он [Pil'niak] еще не показал его в живом приложении к жизни, не синтезировал зверя и современного человека' (p.159).

2. 5. 5. The example of Zabolotskii

In general, polarization has been preferred to synthesis because of its satisfying manageability in relation to model building. The example of the poet Nikolai Zabolotskii supports this generalizaton. Partly as a result of his attempts to effect a synthesis of man and nature that would avoid simplistic oppositional models in the long poems *Torzhestvo zemledeliia* (1929), *Bezumnyi volk* (1931), and *Derev'ia* (1933), Zabolotskii spent eight years in detention. After his release his poetry accorded more

closely with the official template, and there are good grounds for drawing an analogy with the career of Pil'niak.[9]

2. 5. 6. Pil'niak and female characters

The oppositional model that Voronskii attempted to build relying largely on the concepts of *biologiia* and *fiziologiia* could not help but have ramifications with regard to his appraisal of Pil'niak's treatment of female protagonists. He finds Pil'niak's female characters particularly bestial: 'Здесь исключительно почти выступает физиологическая сторона '.[10] Yet at the same time he considers Pil'niak to have much in common with Artsybashev, with the qualification that the former is more rustic—*po-derevenski*—in his approach. This is perplexing, given that Artsybashev, in marked contrast to Pil'niak, is noticeably concerned with the psychological aspects of sex and gender relations.[11] The explanation for the association made between these two is to be found in the fact that both writers deal with sex in a way that was offensive to the patriarchal Christian sensitivity which, in spite of some spectacular exceptions and the rhetoric to the contrary, informed post-Revolutionary morality. Voronskii was particularly troubled by Pil'niak's use of female characters as vehicles through which to raise gender issues. He makes quite clear that he cannot see the point in raising such issues, and would rather have them ignored altogether, finding sex

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[9] For a detailed analysis of the life and work of Nikolai Zabolotskii see Darra Goldstein, *Nikolai Zabolotsky: Play for Mortal Stakes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). The reception of Zabolotskii and his work closely reflects that of Pil'niak, in that their careers lend themselves readily to bisection on the basis of a model of pre- and post-recantation. The works of the pre-recantation period of both writers are very much concerned with man's position in nature, whilst subsequently their output is characterized by the immediacy of the problem of personal survival coupled with the personal need for recognition in a threatening environment.

[10] Voronskii, 1922, p. 255.

[11] See, for example, his treatment of sexual revenge in the novel *Zhenshchina stoiashchaia posredi* (Mikhail Artsybashev, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, 3 vols (Moscow: Terra, 1994), III, 7–140), or sadism in *Schast'e* (III, 430–37).

largely irrelevant to the business of the day.[12] For Voronskii, questions of female sexuality are, through the euphemism of *fiziologiia*, subsumed into the category of bestial response. By reference to his own model of Pil'niak's belief in the essentially instinctual core of mankind, he neatly redefines a question of independence as one of dependence; female sexuality is not an expression of independence but of dependence upon the instinctual core. With regard to the text of *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* Voronskii is disturbed by Kseniia's declarations of sexual independence, and affirms his belief in the essentially sinful nature of female sexuality, by splitting it off from both femininity and humanity:

> Женщины у Пильняка, за некоторыми исключениями, все на один лад скроены. Вполне понятно,—если к ним подходить с «социологией» Ксении Ордыниной и видеть в них рабу, мать и любовницу, а не женщину с ее женственно-человечным. (p. 253)

This evaluation sets the tenor for the critical reception of the short story *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, which is the object of attention in the following chapter.

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[12] Voronskii, 1922, p. 255.

3. ARTICULATION AND COMMUNICATION

3. 1. *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*: the text

Ivan-da-Mar'ia appeared in the collection *Smertel'noe manit*, and also in the same year as a separate book edition: *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* (Berlin, St Petersburg, Moscow: Grzhebin 1922). It is to this edition that I refer at all times unless expressly stated to the contrary. It reappeared in the 1929 *Sobranie sochinenii* under its new title *Chertopolokh*, with some small revisions primarily in chapter 4, and one particularly significant alteration which will be discused in some detail.[1]

3. 2. Critical reception

3. 2. 1. The changing critical climate

By the time of the publication of the collection *Smertel'noe manit* in 1922, the decline in concern with the text itself compared to how far it could be shown to evidence the political and ideological orientation of the author was well advanced. It was not surprising then that criticism had begun to assume a progressively formulaic character, basing its conclusions upon categorization and generalization. This process was assisted by polarization into schools attracting various degrees of critical favour. With the concomitant growing unacceptability of non-alignment, stylistically progressive writers were bound to find themselves being propelled toward the Formalist camp as a means of demonstrating reciprocal infection and, thus, to their mutual discredit.

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[1] Boris Pil'niak, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 8 vols (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1929), IV, 39–108.

3. 2. 2. Aseev

By way of an example of this tendency, Nikolai Aseev, in his review of this collection, identifies the primary feature of Pil'niak's prose as a 'попытка к внешнему, формальному обновлению стилистических приемов'.[2] Furthermore, he qualifies this remark by asserting that not only is Pil'niak unoriginal, owing a primary debt to Andrei Belyi, but, in addition, his adoption of formal devices does not suffice to mask the further manifold influences of, among others, Chekhov, A. Tolstoi, Sologub, and Pasternak. In this, Aseev is representative of a critical trend towards the identification of sources, without attempting to explicate their significance, premised upon the assumption that Pil'niak was attempting to camouflage his influences. Stylistic and thematic similarities or parallels for Aseev can have one of only two possible explanations: plagiarism or parody; there is no other alternative. He is equally concerned by Pil'niak's re-use of his own material; where the use of the material of others must be explained on the above grounds, the use of one's own material is simply laziness. Where the concession of originality is made to Pil'niak, his originality is not permissible: 'нельзя, напр., сказать: «снежные космы встали сплошными дыбами», не по-русски это!' (p. 314). The tenor of such criticism has less to do with textual investigation and more to do with the increasing conservatism and the sway of ideological considerations that obstructed stylistic innovation whilst encouraging accessibility of style and language. Aseev maintains that he is not contesting the subject matter as such—that is to say, the material that serves as the motivation for the text—but the metaphorical mode of expression. And as far as this is

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[2] N. Aseev, 'Boris Pil'niak, *Smertel'noe manit'*, *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 1922.7, 314–16 (p. 314).

concerned, he condemns the proclivity he detects in Pil'niak to flaunt his modes of characterization in the same way in which he flaunts the modernist affectations of his prose style. As an illustration he cites the line that was to ensure the notoriety of *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, and will serve as the point of departure for the analysis that follows below: 'У меня иногда кружится голова, и я чувствую, что вся революция пахнет половыми органами' (p. 315). Although Aseev acknowledges that this textually expressed sentiment should not be attributed directly to Pil'niak because the words have been given to Kseniia, he attaches little significance to this acknowledgement, preferring to equate rhetorical expression with authorial platform, because: 'Быть-можно, *умышленно* заставляет Пильняк *так вырожденчески*-пряно изъясняться бывшую княжну' (p. 315). If, he hypothesizes, Pil'niak were ideologically sound, then the above stylistic criticisms would be insignificant. But he has already undermined Pil'niak ideologically by associating him with Formalism. Aseev intends to further demonstrate Pil'niak's ideological unreliability by dismantling what he sees as the popularly held misconception of the author as a *bytopisatel'* of the Revolution: 'Не изобразителем этого быта а исказителем его является Пильняк,(p. 314). Evidence of this is supplied in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* by the triviality of the peasants' concern for their stomachs and the talk of sausage at the opening of the local congress: 'Только *эти* голоса услышал Б. Пильняк в революции. [...] а вся революция укладывается в анекдот' (p. 316). Aseev is, in spite of what he maintains, criticizing the subject matter in addition to the devices of expression. He is able to do this because he has redefined the scope of material permissible to the *bytopisatel'*, so as to exclude that which is mundane or of immediate significance. Essentially, Aseev is prefiguring Socialist Realism by postulating two levels of *byt*: one

which was ideologically sound and was in the ascendant, and the other which was equatable with Pil'niak's characterization of the Revolution, and was producing increasingly negative responses. The example of Aseev typifies the criticism with which the collection *Smertel'noe manit* was received; allegations of Formalism, accusations of plagiarism, revulsion at the mode of expression, and charges of trivialization tended to divert attention away from the text

3. 2. 3. Komarov

On the charge of plagiarism however, P. Komarov writing in the same year was at pains to emphasize the purely external influence—*vneshnee vliianie*—of Belyi, as well as that of Maiakovskii.[3] For Komarov, Pil'niak's use of stylistic devices such as typographical inconsistencies was not simply a modernist affectation, but served both for emphasis and to alternately decelerate and accelerate the reading process. In the same way Komarov explained the fragmentariness of *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* as evidence of the author's genuine involvement in the joys and sufferings of the moment; such sincerity precludes the repression of the lyrical manifestation of the author's feelings in the name of an objectivity which a broader temporal perspective would demand. For Komarov this approach not only excuses Pil'niak from systematically dealing with contemporary practical problems—the *zhguchie voprosy*—but makes it impossible. Komarov effectively endorses the work, registering in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* a genuine belief in the future, and accepting the preoccupation with chaotic and sometimes nightmarish details of the moment as an admission of their unavoidability in the overall process.

3. 2. 4. Rashkovskaia

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[3] P. Komarov, 'Boris Pil'niak. *Smertel'noe manit*', *Sibirskie ogni*, 1922.5, 183–84.

In her review of *Golyi god* Rashkovskaia had eulogized Pil'niak for his commensurate command of language, his description, his dialogue, his sensitivity to dialect and psychological peculiarities, his characterization through use of leitmotif and language, and even his masterly use of the instrumental case. Detecting in his work a clear link with the classics, she considered him responsible through *Byl'e* and *Golyi god* for the revitalization of the literary lineage traceable from Gogol' through to Belyi.[4] Though *Golyi god* could not be called a novel, and there was no plot, there was structural unity—*arkhitekturnyi zamysel*—supplied both by the author's careful choice and organization of material, and by the central organizing function of the Ordynin house. This feature established the work in the tradition of the *semeinyi roman* of the nineteenth century. Pil'niak's work, with its psychological and philosophical tendencies, ran counter to what she identified as the dominant contemporary anti-philosophical direction, both in poetry and prose, characterized by its emphasis on plot. For her there is no hero amongst the multitude of characters who pass through the text: 'Но среди всех,—кто герой романа? Нет героя—но центр—все—масса. (Так много говорят о «коллективном», только Пильняк сумел показать этого коллективного героя.)' (p. 18). However, what concerns Rashkovskaia in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, apart from the evidence of mannerism that was not present in the *Byl'e* texts, and which hinders its comprehension, is what she sees as the abandon with which Pil'niak's slides from the particular to the general:

> Слишком легко превращает он Арышу Рытову в «всяческих» Арыш Рытовых и Ивана Альфонсовича в Иванов Алфонсовичей. [...] Мы в праве требовать не аллегорических и

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[4] A Rashkovskaia, 'Nastoiashchii', *Kniga i revoliutsiia*, 1922.20, 16–18.

> схематических Иванов, а Иванов живых, которые жили бы вне страниц книги.[5]

In place of the sea of individuals which she praised in *Goly god*, Rashkovskaia detects a tendency toward homogenization into representative types. The ramifications of this allegation with particular reference to *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* will be discussed in the following section; however at this stage it is important to notice the distrust that Rashkovskaia feels toward the allegorization and schematization of the individuals that comprise the masses. In *Golyi god* there were no heroes, but, equally, no ciphers; there were the masses, and the individuals. And however it might be that Pil'niak sustained this *kollektivnyi geroi*, Rashkovskaia feels that the balance has slipped in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* by virtue of the apparent degeneration of *the* Ivan Al'fonsovich into *an* Ivan Al'fonsovich; of flesh-and-blood Ivan into conceptual Ivan.

3. 2. 5. Braun

In a remarkable exemplification of the trend towards formulaic criticism indicated above, Iakov Braun contends that Pil'niak's entire *oeuvre* is epitomized by and can be explained on the basis of one work: *Pri dveriakh* from the collection *Smertel'noe manit*. 'В этом—весь Пильняк. В этом изюминка идеологии «эстетики», лирики, романтики, этики'.[6] On the basis of the behaviour of the mercenary writer Kamynin from *Pri dveriakh*, who has secured himself a supply of cod-liver oil, potatoes and methylated spirit, Braun concludes: 'Все герои Пильняка идеологически распадаются на две категории; одни ни во что не верят, другие-же верят только в три пуда рыбьего жира, картошку, денатур,

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[5] A Rashkovskaia, 'Boris Pil'niak. *Smertel'noe manit*', *Kniga i revoliutsiia*, 1923.11, p. 63.
[6] Ia. Braun, 'Nigilisty i tsiniki', *Sibirskie ogni*, 2 (1923), 225–33 (p. 226).

хлеб, сапоги, похоть, деторождение, инстинкт' (p. 226). The question of child-bearing is not actually raised in *Pri dveriakh*, and yet Braun inextricably links it with methylated spirit, licentiousness, and, in reference presumably to the engineer in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, functional boots.[7] Braun has divided Pil'niak's protagonists into two broad categories; those who believe in nothing, the *nihilists*, including Doctor Fedorov, Ol'ga Andreevna Veral'skaia (*Pri dveriakh*), Kseniia Ippolitovna Enisherlova (*Snega*), Boris and Gleb Ordynin (*Golyi god*), Prince Konstantin (*Tysiacha let*) and General Lezhnev (*Nasledniki*); and the others, *tsiniki-materialisty*, exemplified by Nataliia Ordynina (*Golyi god*) all the *kozhanye kurtki* in general, the hungry peasants at the meeting in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, and 'бабы, отдающиеся продотрядчикам за хлебушко'[8] (*Golyi god*), all bribe-takers, and 'вообще—все Иван-да-Марьи' (p. 227). Braun's wholesale disposal of the *kozhanye kurtki* is premised upon his appraisal of Pil'niak's portrayal of individual characters who are also Bolsheviks; there is Arkhipov, who 'прописывает самоубийство отцу' (*Golyi god*), Kseniia from *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* who 'предается половым оргиям и наслаждается расстрелами',[9] and Laitis who takes part in 'мистически-эротические фокусы' with Olen'ka Kunts (*Golyi god*); and all of them 'пьют, кутят, и развратничают'.[10] As if these divisions are not broad enough, Braun proposes that, whether the talk is of *nigilisty*, rooted in the past,

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[7] This observation also recalls Natal'ia Ordynina: 'samoe tsennoe—khleb i sapogi, chto-li, dorozhe—vsekh teorii', from *Golyi god* in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1994, I, 6–160 (p. 62).

[8] Significantly, it is the women and not the *prodotriadchiki* who exploit them that Braun sees as *tsiniki-materialisty*.

[9] There is actually no textual evidence to support this allegation. On the contrary, Kseniia is responsible for breaking up one such potential orgy, and her enjoyment of the execution of Cherep is an isolated case with special significance discussed below.

[10] Braun, 1923, p. 230.

or contemporary *tsiniki*, the two classes might just as well be merged: '*Ибо завтра, по Пильняку, собственно и означает вчера*;' [original italics] (p. 228).

Braun contrives to invent categories on the basis of individual traits distorted through isolation from their contexts, to subsume other characters into those categories, and on the basis of these fabricated categories to accuse Pil'niak of over-simplification. As crude as Braun is, his example serves to illustrate, in a distorted manner, a facet of the question raised above by Rashkovskaia. For Rashkovskaia, in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* Pil'niak too easily converts—*prevrashchaet*—the individual into a conceptual type; for Braun, in Pil'niak, there *is no* individual, but simply a conceptual type, and in a significant sense this is true of all character presentations. The difference between Braun's and my own position is that whereas I base my strategy upon the general and unavoidable applicability of this proposition, for Braun it is a selective allegation implying an alternative possibility.

A further example underlines Braun's position and expresses his concurrence with Voronskii on the question of Pil'niak's female characters and the correlation of humans and animals: 'Зверино-упрощены его женщины. [...] Все его героини—либо матери, либо проститутки' (p. 228). And, as if the mothers are not bad enough, these 'однообразные самки-проститутки, все эти Ксении Ордынины [...] мечтают о садических ласках, о бесконечно хороводящем сладострастии' (p. 228). And for all of them, Braun asserts, referring to the notorious lines from *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* as evidence, everything is permeated with sex. How could one avoid the conclusion, he asks, that Pil'niak's own convictions are encapsulated in the rhetorical question: 'чем Пильняковский человек ушел от зверя?' (p. 229). Somehow the

conflation of the desire to bear children on one hand, and a propensity to enjoy sex on the other have come to serve as evidence for the allegation that for Pil'niak there is no difference between humans and animals. And Braun compounds the problem by assigning an exclusively human characteristic to these very same protagonists: 'Садической жестокостью дышат все герои, все их рассуждения и реплики' (p. 229). This inconsistency, confusing 'nature' with facets of 'human nature' projected into generalizations, has proven stubbornly persistent, in spite of the contradictory nature of the evidence that it has motivated. Braun, for example, draws attention to the specifically *physical* pleasure experienced by Kseniia as she executes her former lover in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*. Whatever the nature of this pleasure, the fact that it is called into existence in the way that it is confirms that Kseniia is distinctly human. Finally, having invented the categories, applied them to Pil'niak's characters, and rejected them, he redefines them and accuses Pil'niak of not belonging to either: 'Пильняк—идеолог межеумочных социальных групп, почему и мечется между Ордынинами и Иван-да-Марьями, между буржуазными нигилистами и примитивными материалистами. Пильняк ни тут, ни там, или, ежели угодно, и тут и там' (p. 231). The one-time *nigilisty* and *tsiniki* that had been subsumed into the class of sadistic animals, re-emerge as *bourgeois* nihilists represented by the Ordynins, and primitive materialists, as depicted in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*. As their creator, the author is by analogy sucked into the taxonomical maelstrom. By virtue of either belonging or not belonging to any of these amorphous categories, Pil'niak is condemned, and Braun's final conclusion is that Pil'niak is a hopeless eclectic—*beznadezhnyi eklektik* (p. 231).

Braun, like many other commentators both before and after, sought to itemize the influences and identify the sources which Pil'niak had allegedly plagiarized.[11] With regard to *fallicheskaia lirika i filosofiia*, it was Nietzsche and Rozanov who were responsible; content and style were derived from Blok and Remizov, whilst animal-like characterization of the Wolf Larsen type had been copied from Jack London. Zamiatin had been cannibalized for provincialisms, Artsybashev and Dostoevskii for religious mysticism and cruelty, and the influence of Smerdiakov and the Karamazovs was to be detected in all his heroes. Primarily, however, he was guilty of imitation of the style of Belyi in terms of his arrangement of material, lyrical digressions and rhythmic prose; and in addition to this he owed a large debt to Esenin's *khuliganstvo* and Maiakovskii's primitivism. None of these avenues was actually investigated by Braun and their citation thus serves little purpose. The methodology hinges primarily upon the association of author with author and only secondarily upon the association of text with text. In order to remedy this imbalance, it is necessary to readjust the focus away from authors' names, and onto the words that make up the text.

3. 3. *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*: analysis

3. 3. 1. Intertextual resonance: Chekhov

In Russian literature, as in all literatures, there are words and expressions which have accrued particular intertextual significance. Indirect references may thus open up or imply whole new substrata of meaning that may at first sight appear to be at odds with

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[11] That this was already a well-established critical approach to Pil'niak is demonstrated by N. A. Kovarskii's observation: 'Podrazhatel'nost' proizvedenii Pil'niaka otmechalas' uzhe ne odnazhdy. Kharakterno pri etom, chto v chislo predshestvennikov ego zachislialis' pisateli samykh razlichnykh shkol i napravlenii ' (N. A. Kovarskii, 'Svidetel'skoe pokazanie', *Stat'i i materialy: Boris Pil'niak*, ed. by B. V. Kazanskii and Iu. N. Tynianov (Leningrad: Academia, 1928), p. 96.

the surface texture of the object text. As has been said, intertextual references do not necessarily imply parallels or analogous interpretations, but may alternatively supply the contrast or reflection that prompts a new level of understanding. *Vishnevyi*, for example, is a word that, though inextricably associated with Chekhov, similarly recalls Olesha.[12] Yet where Chekhov is concerned with the destruction of a cherry orchard, Olesha takes the first step toward its potential regeneration. But it is not the symbolic or allegorical value of an image that is of concern here. To tap into the dramatic world of Chekhov is to tap into a world of undercurrents and inarticulacy. What is the significance, for example, of Sonia's words and the accompanying stage direction in her night-time scene alone with Astrov?

> Я люблю по ночам закусывать. В буфете, кажется, что-то есть. [...] Вот берите сыр.
>
> *Оба стоят у буфета и едят.*[13]

It is unlikely that the words she is using reflect in any direct way the thoughts that she is attempting to process. In fact, from what has been seen and heard already there is no doubt that her thoughts regarding Astrov are far more complex. Whatever their exact nature, or whether Sonia is herself even aware of their exact nature, is the subject for critical speculation, and contributes to the enduring appeal of writers such as Chekhov, who repeatedly subvert monologic certainty. What is illustrated here is that, for the reader, as for Astrov, the nature of Sonia's thoughts is ultimately unknowable because

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[12] It also resonates with the cherry biscuits that Kseniia offers Troparov in the scene that provides the anti-climax to their relationship, which is, in turn, a refraction of the relationship between Astrov and Sonia.

[13] A. P. Chekhov, *Sochineniia v vosemnadtsati tomakh*, 18 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), VIII, 63–116 (p. 83).

their transmission relies on an imperfect medium—language. It is inarticulacy and the unknowable nature of an other's thoughts that Chekhov demonstrates so effectively with this short scene by the sideboard. This represents the flaccid manifestation of Sonia's inner desperation as the quintessence of mundane expression. It might at first sight seem perverse to link Chekhov's virginal Sonia with the sexually explicit Kseniia Ordynina. However, there is a common denominator evidenced in the notorious scene depicting her meeting with the writer Troparov, which caused Braun and others such consternation. In order to appreciate the value of this common denominator, it is necessary first to return to the opening of the text.

3. 3. 2. The process of fictionalizaton

Chapter I of *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* begins with the words: 'Vot ee pis'mo.'[14] At this stage the reader is unaware of the identity of the writer, and the identity of the potential recipient is withheld. There follows an attempt to define the nature of the relationship between sincerity—*iskrennost'*—and dissimulation—*litsemerie*. This proves unsatisfactory, and is abandoned: '—все это слишком грубо и неточно' (p. 5). It is followed by a meditation on the quality of indifference; but again this is rejected as inapplicable: 'Но это не для вас' (p. 5). There then follows a short fictionalized account of unrequited love from the point of view of a male: 'Жил был один человек' (p. 5). But this too is rejected because: 'Это тоже эксперимент. И тоже не для вас' (p. 6). A fresh approach is tried out from the female point of view: 'Жила-была девушка-мещаночка на окраине города в маленьком домике с вишневым садом' (p. 6). But the writer is unable to complete the story because her hand grows tired. It is

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[14] *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* (Moscow: Grzhebin, 1922), p. 5.

dawn, she has apparently been struggling to write all night, and: 'Я не ложилась спать, потому что любить нельзя...'(p. 6).

This letter represents first and foremost an attempt by its writer to understand and systemize her own thoughts and feelings. The subject of these thoughts and feelings is the nature of her relationship with other human beings, and probably with the unknown, potential addressee in particular. Her inability to concretize these thoughts and feelings into written form shows that the attempt at systemization has not been successful. By neglecting at this stage to define either writer or addressee, Pil'niak highlights the questions of rationalization and communication by putting the reader through a similar process. The reader is not made aware of the identities of these two characters until much later in the text, by which time he has been able to process sufficient information to be able to establish consistent and viable relations; to systemize the information. This, of course, is an ongoing process; as more information is assimilated the reader continually modifies the system, thereby hoping to strengthen it, adjusting it until such time as, ideally, it can accommodate all further incoming data. By way of contrast, in the revised version, *Chertopolokh*, the opening line has been amended to 'Вот письмо Ксении Ордыниной', and previously indeterminate feminine pronouns have been correspondingly affected. Presumably this alteration was a concession toward regularization of the text in line with the more acceptable conventions concerning the introduction of heroes and heroines in Realistic novels. But by privileging the reader in this way in the later version, the original indeterminacy of the opening passage is, to some degree, closed down. There is less onus on the reader to either experiment with known models or develop new ones in order to find a way through the text; to mirror the course that the unknown writer of the letter is

following in order to make sense of her own experiences and impressions. She attempts to use those models that are available to her; namely, definitions and fictions. Having made two aborted attempts at generalizations, the writer opts for overt fictionalization. At first she turns to the scenario of the isolated and pining poet, presumably a fictionalization of the potential recipient of the letter, and then to the scenario of the industrious girl and the cherry orchard, presumably a fictionalization of herself. This latter has unmistakably Chekhovian overtones. Both scenarios constitute standard models lifted from the fictional canon.

3. 3. 3. Fictions within fictions

There is thus a fractal fictional progression; these scenarios are fictions within a letter; the letter is a fiction within a text; and the text is the fiction of the author. Each stage constitutes a further step through a sequence of attempts to make sense of one level on the basis of another. The fact that the letter contains two separate fictionalizations and the object of the second is himself a writer demonstrates that it is a proliferating and unavoidable process. The reader is in like manner left in no doubt as to the fictional status of this work by virtue of the manner in which it is intentionally and openly intertextually positioned. It unashamedly advertises the fact that it, like all texts, is premised upon the reader's knowledge of other texts. This does not mean to say that the reader need have knowledge of all, or even any, of the texts that Pil'niak specifically draws attention to, but rather that fiction is an interrelated system of generalizations: 'Ваня на курьих ножках—Жуковский. Гусар и попойка—Лермонтов. При чем же здесь Спиридонов из Мелкого Беса?' (p. 10) And: '—по-Пушкински терзал Полунин край стола, диван и комнату от двери в угол,—по-Лермонтовски мчал на стуле Горев,—по-Карамазовски

дремал Альфонсович, с папиросой меж усов и с пеплом на жилете' (p. 19). In addition to this, specific works are also mentioned: 'В усадьбе все попрежнему бунинский Суходол' (p. 53). And this fictional status is underlined by the appearance in the work of the author himself: 'Это пишу я, автор' (p. 10). The level of interconnectedness is further complicated by the author's assertion that he is acquainted with one of the characters—'Знавал я в давности ветеринарного фельдшера, Карла Карловича' (p. 10)—whose cat behaves in a very similar way to the father of yet another fictional character. The level of authorial involvement is such that it allows the writer to address another of the fictional characters directly: 'Слушайте, Тропаров, вы веруете в Бога?' (p. 44) And this is no rhetorical question, for Troparov replies: 'Нет, но тут в церкви одиноче как-то' (p. 44).

The interpolation of *eto pishu ia* and the network of connections that are thus established, rather than giving any extra-textual credibility to Karl Karlovich, give intra-textual credibility to the *ia*. In this way the author begins to create a system, in the form of a text, to map out the phenomena that confront him, and, in order to integrate himself into that system, he fictionalizes himself as part of the text. The 'I' must be part of the system, or model, which it creates; there can be no 'I' without a (con)text, and no (con)text without an 'I'. By building himself into the text the author is mirroring the fictionalizations of the anonymous letter-writer he has created. Not only is the process of writing shown to be an accessory to system-building and self-fictionalization, but by extension writing is exposed as the concretization of the conceptualization of experience. In other words it is the cosmetic and superficial manifestation of a process of fictionalization of experience and self from an individual

platform within a set of circumstances, so that one's understanding of one's own context is always equatable to an unwritten text.

3. 3. 4. Perpetual remodelling

This is more than an illustration of a general preoccupation with the unreliability of viewpoint. It demonstrates the progressive process of remodelling that the individual is inescapably bound to if he or she is to maintain integration. It thus depends on the adaptability and will of the organizing centre. The problem for this egocentre is to build a system which is viable; one that equally accommodates all external phenomena, and the self. This is the problem that confronts the reading egocentre attempting to come to terms with the textual data. In the original version it is revealed what *she* is doing and what *she* is thinking before it is revealed who *she* is. The reader is put into the position of having to work out for himself who she is on the basis of what she is thinking. The extra-literary process is reversed. In the world outside of concrete literary texts, where 'readers' cannot be privileged to this kind of authorial concession, conclusions as to what others think must be drawn initially on the basis of the accommodation into models of information concerning their function, and secondarily on their attempts to convey the contents of their minds. It is that much easier to process others on the basis of superficial information, that the least meaningful information—their names—becomes the most necessary. Similarly, when *they* leave headquarters—они вышли из штаба (p. 14)—it is only known that *they* comprises *she* and another unspecified person. The identity of the potential recipient of the unfinished letter is still withheld. The reader is forced to theorize and readjust the theory as experiential, empirically revealed information is collected. This is integral to varying degrees to all acts of reading, but in this case the reader is particularly

burdened. Information is accrued in a piecemeal manner, and gradually it becomes clear that the letter is addressed to a writer called Dmitrii Gavrilovich Troparov, that she is Comrade Ordynina, head of the *Zhenotdel* of the *Cheka* and that the other half of *oni* is her lover, Chief of Staff, Comrade Cherep.

3. 3. 5. Kseniia's model

It is to Cherep that she reveals her theory of sexual relations: she endorses and understands the reaction of men, who having been intimate with other women, are nevertheless distressed if they discover that their own wife-to-be is not a virgin. This is because ninety-nine percent of women surrendering for the first time to a man surrender themselves body and soul. On the other hand the man, knowing that he is doing something shameful, will only offer his body and his contempt, preserving his soul intact—'запрятав глубоко душу' (p. 14). It is exclusively to his wife that he will offer both his body and his soul, intending thereby to create something sacred and, by so doing, exculpating himself for his previous baseness. It is therefore unbearable for him to discover that his wife has nothing for him, as she has already given away the counterpart of what he intends to present to her. Kseniia maintains that she is not of that ninety-nine percent. The inference is that she too, like a man, has retained her soul to exchange when the time is right.

3. 3. 6. Biographical details

At this juncture typographically indented supplementary information is given under the heading *Kurrikulium vite Ordyninoi*. There is no question here of stepping outside of the text, or authorial incursions made into the text; the authorial voice has already written itself into the text, and has as much right to be there as anyone else. Through this interpolation is conveyed the identity of this female protagonist; she is Kseniia

Evgrafovna Ordynina, a former princess brought up on a remote family estate and educated at the *Moskovskii Nikolaevskii Institut* for young noblewomen. Her conduct there was exemplary, and she was noted for her tendency to romanticism, a certain eccentricity and audacious truthfulness—*derzkaia pravdivost'*.

3. 3. 7. 1. *Irlandskii dog*: personal reality

Having provided this extra information, the text reverts to Kseniia. As she lies in bed at night in anticipation of the arrival of Cherep, the expectation stimulates in her such a heightened sensitivity, that the delineation of reality becomes indefinite. The following line appears twice on the same page: 'И каждый шорох судорогой пробегал по спине и на яву шли сны' (p. 16). This repetition, and the problem of conveying these dreams—'Вот эти сны. Как их передать?' (p. 16)—illustrates how, at this level of profundity of personal experience, language, which functions adequately because of its generality in certain circumstances as the means of transmitting an approximation of shared concepts, has reached the extreme limit of its usefulness. It is no longer therefore necessary to decide whether what follows is 'reality' or 'dream'—Pil'niak takes pains to avoid specifying whether Kseniia is technically speaking awake or asleep. What is significant is that the passage represents an aspect of her personal experience:

> И тогда из дальних комнат послышались шаги, странные, костяные. Не было сил двинуться, и горячею кровью заныли шаги в коленях, в груди,—заблудшая шершавая собака, блудившая по городу в ночи и забредшая в дом всюду отпертый, подошла к кровати и лизнула холодным языком горящее колено Ксении. (p. 16)

Resisting the temptation of vulgar Freudianism—*Cherep* and *kostianye*—and,

moralistic judgementalism—*dom vsiudu otpertyi*—what remains is a situation marked by the intensity of personal, individual experience where language begins to lose its viability as a means of transmission by virtue of the isolation of the subject from collective reality. Kseniia is jolted out of this supra-reality by the shrilly prosaic ringing of the telephone. Apart from the fact that the ringing of a bell is an obvious device for the interruption of a stream of consciousness, it is also significant in that the telephone gives the illusion of direct and unilinear communication. Its ringing fractures a personal reality for Kseniia in the same way that the ringing of a dinner gong does for the Gentleman from San Francisco (to be discussed in Chapter 4). The sounds of these bells, as well as being simply disturbing noises in their own right, also have a semiotic function because they are, in addition, part of a communicative network. Their semiotic function is, as it must be, framework specific, and they thus provide the conduits for returning their hearers to that framework. In this case the bell initiates communicaton with the Cheka, and Kseniia reassumes the efficiency and dedication which mark her out in her professional life. Here, where reality is mundane and collective language is at its most stable and directly referential, even the neologistic epithets applied to Kseniia—*zaankechennaia, zakomandirovannaia, zamitingovannaia*—are remarkable for their accessibility.

3. 3. 7. 2. *Irlandskii dog*: collective reality

It is in her official capacity that Kseniia delivers a speech at the area meeting of workers and peasants. This is the meeting which caused Braun so much consternation because of the peasants' concern with sausage. Here too there is canine imagery: 'И хотя и не видно его, все же лежит где-то, скребется и дышит старый, огромный, в чесотке, ирландский дог' (p. 58). Whether this is a 'real' dog, or

the same dog, is a question as inappropriate as whether it is the 'real' author who is speaking to Troparov above. All three are equally fictitious, and what is of greater significance is the nature and function of the image within its context. The unashamedly fictitious nature of the dog is underlined by the fact that although not visible it is characterized by specific features. Previously too, the anonymous dog was invisible, but then its features were less prosaically specified; now it demonstrates its presence by breathing and scratching. Against this background of mange and sausage, Kseniia gives a speech, the impression of which is conveyed by a distillation of party rhetoric: 'Интернационал! Антанта! Всемирный капитализм! Всемирная революция! Кулак малых государств. Малая Антанта. Белые, зеленые, красные: красная армия, зеленые банды и белая сволочь!' (p. 58) These words and phrases are used with a highly conceptual and narrowly context-based significance; they are relevant only to a particular and essentially collective situation. In another situation this would be the first level of meaning to be lost; *krasnaia* and *zelenye* would be colours, and *kulak* a part of the body; *kapitalizm* is a word whose meaning is profoundly conceptual and collective. It is not surprising then that the peasants are more concerned with their stomachs and the threat to their livestock posed by local wolf-packs. Kseniia's descent from the podium is less than triumphant: '«Это бууудет последний и решительный бой.» И товарищу Ордыниной сходить: не с Памира, а с кафедры' (p. 58).

3. 3. 7. 3. Communicative language and catalytic image

Although it is a question of abstract party rhetoric on the one hand and the mundane concerns of the peasants on the other, what links the two is the applicability of language within each collective context; in both contexts it functions because its

referents are collectively available. *Irlandskii dog*, like *kapitalizm*, has a meaning in the world of sausages and soviets, that is to say, it contributes to and carries meaning in that context. In the context of the personal experience of Kseniia lying in bed, at night, awaiting the arrival of her lover, the dog has a catalytic significance, acting as a vehicle through which to transmit personal experience. It is not the dog as such which is important, but the contrast between the ways in which it is used. If an allegiance to Realism has prompted the conclusion that this is simply the same flesh-and-blood dog that wanders freely through the text, then a problem arises with its third, aborted, appearance. Kseniia is again lying in bed awaiting Cherep. Pil'niak repeats the very same phrases in order to evoke the same level of expectation and stimulation as on the previous occasion. But this time something happens: 'Вот эти сны. Как их передать...—Каждый шорох судорогой пробегала по спине [...] Но этой ночью не было никакого собачьего навождения, телефон же прозвучал резко' (p. 61). The impression is given that had the phone not rung, the mysterious visitor would certainly have arrived. By making it ring, and interrupting Kseniia's personal, supra-linguistic experience, Pil'niak demonstrates that the dog is first and foremost a catalytic device within his text, and its status as a dog is irrelevant.

3. 3. 8. *Vsia revoliutsiia—propakhla*——:a breakdown in communication

What is relevant is the clash of the two spheres; the first of collective concerns where communication is well within the capabilities of language, and the second where language is inadequate. And this clash is most graphically illustrated, significantly, towards the end of Chapter 3. Here a Chekhovian anti-climax is played out in the meeting alone between Kseniia and Troparov. They have met once before in the inhibiting presence of Troparov's son, where communication was limited to hesitant

banalities. Now, however, Kseniia is desperate to divulge her innermost concerns to the man who represents both the object of her desires and, thereby, the keystone of her theoretical system. She is ready for him—'совсем не заанкеченная, незакомандированная, незамитингованная' (p. 70)—and has prepared, for his benefit, tea and home-made cherry tarts, recalling both Chekhov and her own childhood home with adjoining cherry orchard. He enters the room and: 'Ни часы, ни сердце не разорвались' (p. 71). Something has gone wrong. However, she hesitantly attempts to start a conversation: 'Я кипятила себе чаю. Вот лепешки'. The first attempt to describe her thoughts is aborted: 'Это очень не точно'. She tries again, and stumbles: '—...Берите лепешки...'. Another attempt is made but this too is inadequate—'не точно'. A final desperate attempt is made, in order to appreciate the significance of which it is necessary to quote the passage in full:

> У меня иногда кружится голова и я чувствую, что вся революция,—вся революция—пропахла— — — —
> —... Возьмите лепешек...
> Почему не разорвались ни часы, ни сердце?—Когда все тело разорвано, раздвоено—половыми органами?—Вот кровь горячая, красная,—каждая кровинка от руки с платком у губ, от изломанной брови, чистейшая, идет—креститься страстной неделей. А лепешки—на столе, на салфетке и под салфеткой, на маленьком столике. (p. 71)

Before proceeding it must be noted that this passage reveals certain inconsistencies in respect of what has been reported by other analysts. As detailed above, Aseev reports: 'У меня иногда кружится голова, и я чувствую, что вся революция пахнет половыми органами', whilst Voronskii has: 'И я чувствую, что вся

революция—вся революция—пахнет половыми органами.'[15] In the passage quoted above taken from the separate book edition of *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* there is a significant gap and apparent change of voice between *propakhla* and *polovymi organami*. This suggests that a combination of disorientating imagery, moral enthusiasm, or simply distance from the text may have led Voronskii and Aseev, amongst others, to reassemble the text in their own way. The fact that *propakhla* under normal circumstances would be followed by the instrumental case, whilst *razorvano* and *razdvoeno* referring simply to *telo* need not be, might also suggest a careless reading and explain the similarity between Aseev's and Voronskii's versions. There is the possibility arising from the dual publication of *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* in 1922, that the version that appeared in the collection *Smertel'noe manit* is not consistent with the separate book edition.[16] However this seems unlikely given that both were published by Grzhebin and there was little problem at this time with censorship. What is more, Jensen, quoting and referring expressly to the same separate book edition, also follows Voronskii and Aseev: '*Ivan-da-Mar'ia* was published at about the same time in a separate edition and in the collection *Smertel'noe manit*. [...] It was severely criticised among other things for the notorious statement that the Revolution "smells of genitals"'.[17] Brostrom follows suit explaining that Pil'niak 'never escaped the notoriety caused by the chekistka Ordynina's comment in Ivan-da-Mar'ja that the revolution "smells of sexual organs" (paxnet polovymi organami)'.[18]

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[15] A. Voronskii, 'Literaturnye siluety: Boris Pil'niak', *Krasnaia nov'*, 1922.4, 252–69 (p. 255).
[16] Unfortunately I have been unable to gain access to a copy of the collection *Smertel'noe manit* in order to prove this point categorically, but, given both Jensen's and Brostrom's comments below it seems most likely that my conclusion is well-founded.
[17] Jensen, 1979, p. 181, footnote 34.
[18] Brostrom, *The Novels of Boris Pil'njak as Allegory*, p. 32.

It seems, therefore, that words are being put into Kseniia's mouth. Whatever she was about to say, or what the reader might have expected her to say, the force of this passage lies in the fact that what she actually said was *voz'mite lepeshek*. Like Sonia, the complexity of her individual experience is beyond the capabilities of language as an essentially conceptual and collective medium. In her confusion she oscillates between the banality of the cherry tarts—an anchor in the mundane world of phatic expressibility—and the inexpressibility of personal experience. In desperation she turns finally to the least conceptualizable of all the senses: smell. Smell cannot be referred to in any other way than in terms of that which it smells of. There is no room for metaphor, onomatopoeia, or any other mediatory device, and it is for this reason that it is the most evocative, personal and indefinable of the senses. But even this attempt at expression is aborted; *propakhla* does not refer to *polovymi organami*. It is an interrupted and unfinished attempt. It now becomes clear that the rhetorical question posed in the extract under discussion, is why did she feel nothing in her heart when her whole body was cleaved, split by her genital organs? With this graphic physical image Pil'niak shows that for Kseniia, the physical part of the equation that has formed her system has not been counterbalanced in the way that the system predicted.[19] The problem of explaining why the Revolution should smell of genital organs is made redundant because it is exposed as arising from a particular type of reader reaction to an emotive expression; nobody said it did. It must be stressed that all questions of interpretation arise as a result of readers' responses, and this is where the significance of this episode lies. Through the juxtaposition of the words *polovye organy* and

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[19] In the 1929 edition the removal of the words *polovymi organami* has considerably weakened the passage.

revoliutsiia, both of which, even in isolation, are laden with emotive significance, a particular reactive response is easily elicited. The subsequent acceptance and codification of this response must cast doubt upon the accessibility of meaning. Meaning arises as a response to an event, textual or otherwise. Weight is lent to this argument when it is remembered that the word *revoliutsiia* is only one, albeit the last, in a list of examples. If the meaning of the association between the smell of genital organs and the Revolution were to require explanation as metaphor or symbol, then the same must be said for the association between the smell of genital organs and the table, which also figures in the list. Kseniia turns to the table, amongst other items, as a feature of her immediate environment, as she does to the Revolution as the general context which determines her dimension of assessment. The significance of the device is its dependence on smell as the least conceptualizable of the senses, and as a further vehicle, like the dog above, for the experiential use of language to convey a climax of internal confusion. There is as little need to discover metaphorical or symbolic associations here as there is to discover metaphorical or symbolic significance in the cherry tarts, or the cheese in Sonia's sideboard.

3. 3. 9. Expectations and executions

What is of momentous importance for Kseniia is that Troparov was supposed to complete the system that she had evolved. When he first entered the room he was the vehicle of her expectations, and she saw him in a correspondingly favourable light: 'А Тропаров [...] вошел двумя головами выше чем череп.'[20] But the system is shown to be invalid, because it does not conform to experience, and was based on

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[20] *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, p. 71.

inappropriate models. And this interpretation is borne out in her subsequent letter to Troparov. Although the letter is directed to him, she distances herself from him by referring to him, recalling the fictionalizations of the initial letter, in the third person: 'Он был вчера у меня, и я думала, что у меня разорвется сердце. Это еще с Николаевского института, когда глупая девчонка полюбила необыкновенные рассказы' (p. 76). But, having rejected these stories, she begins again: 'Жил был один человек [...]' (p. 76). And in the course of this fictionalized account of her relationship with Cherep, in which he is *on*, and she is *zhenshchina*, it is revealed that Cherep has since been arrested and she has personally executed him:

> И вдруг женщина вспомнила все, что было, как ее ограбили. Ей показалось, что сердце ее разорвется от боли и от наслаждения мести, [...] Потом этой же ночью в каменном погребе женщина продырявила два черепа: того человека [Cherep] и другого [another prisoner], и рука ее дрогнула лишь тогда, когда она дырявила череп второго. (p. 77)

Cherep was not guilty of anything in Kseniia's eyes until such time as her model was shown to be invalid. When that happened, even though he was in no way responsible for it, her new re-evaluation of what had occurred, provided her with the justification for exacting and enjoying her revenge.

3. 3. 10. Personal relationships: subject or object

An additional perspective on Kseniia's course of action throughout the text, and her attempts to justify it, is afforded by Sartre's understanding of the interaction between subject and object in personal relationships. This is dealt with in some detail by T. L. S.

Sprigge in his book *Theories of Existence*,[21] though a more manageable summary is supplied in an earlier work by Alasdair MacIntyre. Sartre constructs a

> psychology in which love between people is always deformed into mastering or being mastered. He is able to do this because he sees an ultimate distinction between my being a subject (what I necessarily am for myself) and my being an object (what I necessarily am for others). [...] If, therefore, I make someone else an object of my regard, I necessarily treat him as something that is now an object for me; in so doing I impose myself on him. I manifest not love but sadism. If, to correct this, I try to make myself an object of the other's regard I equally destroy the possibility of love, for now I substitute masochism.[22]

Irina's elopement with Mark the sectarian in *Golyi god* reveals an intuitive awareness and acceptance of this process, and an endorsement of the object role as the more honourable; it is better to bear pain than to inflict it. Kseniia displays the contrary reaction as a result of her revelation, demonstratively assuming the role of subject. Cherep becomes the object, and her fictionalization of all these events into a text within a letter demonstrates that the players have ceased to be individuals and are becoming anonymous ciphers within a new model. This is the process both of fictionalization and of fiction itself, and sheds new light upon Rashkovskaia's allegation, above, that Pil'niak too easily transforms Arysha Rytova into any—*vsiakaia*—Arysha Rytova. This is what Kseniia does in her letters, it is what constitutes the process of system building, and it is why there is an inescapable element of *vsiakii* in any mediated fictional representation. It is not so much a question of Pil'niak acting

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[21] T. L. S. Sprigge, 'Sartrean Existentialism', in *Theories of Existence* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp.128–52.
[22] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Existentialism', *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, ed. by D. J. O. Connor (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964), p. 520.

with abandon, but of his demonstrating the ease and levity with which this process of depersonalization is performed and its unavoidability in the process of text building. Furthermore, it is integral to the production and maintenance of the ego-system which determines and endorses the moral and ethical values, and parameters of conduct of its egocentre. It is this question, combined with a further eleboration on the theme of the isolation that results from the fallibility of communication, which constitutes the subject matter of the following chapter.

4. ISOLATION

4. 1. *Mat'-machekha*: the text

The text of the work that is to serve as the basis for the continuing elaboration on the theme of the isolation of the individual, the foundations of which were laid in the previous chapter, first appeared in June 1923 in *Krug* (vol. I) under its original title *Tret'ia stolitsa*, and also in the collection *Nikola-na-Posad'iakh* (Moscow: Krug) in the same year. When it reappeared in the *Sobranie sochinenii* of 1929 it was renamed *Mat'-machekha.*[1] It differed from the original only in respect of its title and the inclusion of a small number of minor insertions.[2] It is to this that reference will be made. Where other commentaries refer to the earlier editions, the former title will of course be retained, but it is important to remember that, for the purposes of this investigation, the differences between the two texts are sufficiently negligible to render them immaterial. What is significant is not so much the minor alterations within the text, but the retitling of the work itself.

4. 2. The title

By giving it its new name, Pil'niak realigned this text botanically not only with *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, but also with the collection *Byl'e*. With the notable exception of *Rasskaz o Petre*, the majority of the works that comprise that collection deal primarily with low-profile individuals and the way in which they interact with each other, be it on a small

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[1] Boris Pil'niak, *Sobraniie sochinenii*, 1929, IV, 109–227.
[2] For an itemization of these minor differences see Jensen, 1979, p. 194, footnote 44.

stage or against a panoramic backdrop. *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* is a particularly illustrative example. By substituting 'Mat'-machekha' for 'Tret'ia stolitsa' Pil'niak realigns his text, diverting attention away from purely macro-historical aspects that appear to dominate the work, and refocusing on the concerns of individuals, which played such a prominent part in the earlier works. Although there is no detraction from the importance of the large scale events with which the text is concerned—there are no substantial alterations to its content—the renaming indicates a concern that attention may be so comprehensively captured by the panoramic view that over-simplification may result and details may be overlooked. Not only may the reader neglect to pay sufficient attention to the individual characters themselves, but, may fail to appreciate their status as textual individuals at all. The polyphonic legacy of Chapter 3 of *Golyi god*, with its sections *Glazami Andreia*, *Glazami Natal'i* and *Glazami Iriny*, will have been lost, and the individual will be in danger of becoming a cipher against a background of oppositions and allegories. Or, in other words, the text is in danger of being subsumed into the model that is used to interpret it. The brief examination of the critical work that has been done on this text that follows as part of this analysis demonstrates that this is what has happened despite the change of title. This alteration, which might have been expected to represent a signpost indicating an alternative direction, has had no effect, and the text, which has received scant attention in general, has received no treatment at all beyond the parameters of the generalized East and West debate.

4. 3. *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*

4. 3. 1. The intertextual significance of Bunin's *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*

The hegemony that the East–West model has exerted has been augmented by

conclusions drawn as to the significance of the insertion into Pil'niak's text of the extract from Bunin's *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*. That the first concern of source criticism—the identification of sources—is, as has been noted above, made largely redundant by Pil'niak's own idiosyncrasies of interpolation should be evidence enough to suggest that the significance of these interpolations lies elsewhere. Full advantage should be taken of any intertextual signpost that is provided, bearing in mind, in addition to the question of the functional significance of integration into the new text, that the canonical interpretation associated with the original text is itself not beyond question. It is this second point that must be addressed before the question of integration can be approached.

The intertextual signpost that is of primary concern here is the large extract taken from *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko* beginning three words in from the start of the final paragraph on page 309 in the collected works of Bunin from 1966, to just over half way down page 311.[3] The extract is inserted, with excisions, into the section 'Rossiia—Evropa: dva mira?—' of *Mat'-machekha* and runs, indented, from the final paragraph at the bottom of page 193 to the top of 196. All references to the Gentleman and his family have been removed and replaced by ellipses, thereby drawing attention to these excisions. In so doing Pil'niak has reduced the content of the extract to a series of descriptions of procedures and elemental phenomena; human activity has been depersonalized, or stereotypicalized by the use of the third person plural. As a result the passage is concerned exclusively with inanimacies and generalizations. The

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[3] I.A.Bunin, *Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh*, 9 vols (Moscow: khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966), IV, pp. 308–28.

process of making anonymous which Bunin initiated has been pushed to its logical conclusion by the removal of all references to individuals.

By means of the incorporation of this edited version into his own work, Pil'niak initiates an engagement with a fundamental question that pivots upon the impossibility of talking about individuals other than through generalized models of understanding on one side, and the impossibility of reducing any individual to a generalization that the awareness of this first impossibility implies, on the other. Although it may be possible to talk in purely general terms, the introduction of an individual, no matter how ill-defined, undermines the quality of anonymity. In order to write about the repercussions of a death, for whatever purposes, Bunin required a representation of a human being. The human being was specified as a gentleman, with an origin, and a family. He thus accrued individuality, and in so doing, proportionately lost his claim to anonymity and restricted his potential for integration into generalizations. This line of reasoning leads onto a path tangential to that associated with the accepted critical appraisal of *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*. Before exploring this path it is necessary first to survey the one from which it deviates.

4. 3. 2. The standard interpretaton of *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*

4. 3. 2. 1. Connolly

What may with justification be accepted as the standard interpretation of *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko* has revolved around an appraisal of the Gentleman as a vehicle through which is expressed Bunin's indictment of the hermetic, philistine mode of existence that constitutes the *malaise* of the contemporary world. As Julian Connolly put it in his 1982 study: 'Throughout the tale Bunin exposes in relentless detail modern society's fatal preoccupation with the self and its profound indifference not only to other

human beings but to nature and God as well.'[4]And furthermore: 'To convey a society in which egocentricity, hypocrisy, and self-indulgence reign supreme, Bunin has marshalled all his gifts as a prose artist' (p. 85).

4. 3. 2. 2. Henry

A similar conclusion was arrived at in 1962 by Peter Henry in his introduction to a collection of short stories which included *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*:

> The elaborate efforts that are made for the entertainment of these 'lords of the world', the organised hypocrisy and servility with which they are screened from the realities of life – and death, the absence of real standards of merit beyond the prestige of money and social rank, are described with an almost oppressive objectivity tinged with cynical malice.[5]

And moving from the general to the particular, he turns to the Gentleman himself, asking:

> How far had he really been alive? He had no identity, not even a name; he was devoid of any thoughts and never uttered more than an order to a servant and the 'uzhasno!' he repeated, without knowing why, before his death. His whole life had been justified by his material possessions. (p. 22)

4. 3. 2. 3. Woodward

For James Woodward, Bunin's primary concern is man's isolation from nature: 'The figure of the American capitalist interests him solely as a particularly vivid illustration of the extent of this divorce and of its consequences.'[6] He sees the Gentleman himself

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[4] Julian. W. Connolly, *Ivan Bunin* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1982), p. 85.
[5] Peter Henry, 'Introduction', in I. A. Bunin, *Rasskazy* (Hendon: Bradda, 1962), p. 21.
[6] James B. Woodward, *Ivan Bunin: A study of his fiction* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 127.

as 'merely a magnified symbol'(p. 127), subsequently describing the work as a 'study of an unrepentant materialist'(p. 132). He further notes that:

> the gentleman undergoes no change whatsoever. He is the same in his violent struggle against death as he is at the beginning—a creature devoid of any significant inner life whose sole claims to attention are a yellowish Mongoloid complexion, a clipped silver moustache, an imposing set of large teeth with gold fillings, and a bald head that resembles old ivory. What, we may ask, could convey his insignificance more effectively than the restriction of his portrait to these expressive details of his external appearance? The silence that shrouds the rest of his personality and his inability to articulate anything save monosyllabic directions to waiters and servants are more eloquent than any paragraph of explicit information. Like the coldly objective mode of narration, the silence is itself an important element of characterization that is less indicative of the author's striving for maximum generalization than the protagonist's yawning inner void. (p. 132)

4. 3. 2. 4. Kryzytski

Serge Kryzytski, writing in 1971, takes note of the comparison that has often been made between *Smert' Ivana Il'icha* and *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko.* While acknowledging that there is a fundamental difference between these two, in that the Gentleman, ostensibly, never contemplates his own death, he detects, quoting Mirsky, the same message in both works: 'True enough, the "message" of Bunin's story, as D. S. Mirsky judiciously remarks, "is quite in keeping with the teaching of Tolstoi: the vanity of civilization and the presence of death the only reality".'[7] Kryzytski's use of quotation marks around the word *message* is refreshing in that it hints at a more thoughtful attitude towards simple models, but he does go on to identify a *motif* which

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[7] Serge Kryzytski, *The Works of Ivan Bunin* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p. 150.

prefigured Woodward's analysis: 'The leading motif in "The Gentleman from San Francisco" is an ever recurring theme in all of Bunin's works: man's vulnerability in the face of forces of nature and death'.[8] He also concurs with the standard interpretation of Bunin's allusion to the atrocities of the Roman tyrant Tiberius, the ruins of whose house have become a tourist attraction. This, he suggests 'may be intended to give "The Gentleman from San Francisco" an eternal, timeless quality' (p. 159). This is plainly an unsatisfactory explanation of what is in fact a significant interpolation, which will be returned to later.

4. 3. 2. 5. Summary and observations

The commentators that have been discussed above concur on the basic idea that *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko* represents a study of philistine materialism as a function of the dislocation between man and nature. That this constitutes an important element in the text is not in dispute. It is however only one aspect of the story, corresponding to that model of interpretation that has been applied, and answering to the message that the model is designed to identify. This interpretation has gained momentum with each successive repetition. In this way, *messages*, can serve as obstructions to further interpretation. The *message* or *motif* identified by Mirsky and Kryzytski—*man's vulnerability in the face of nature and death*—and—*the vanity of civilization and the presence of death the only reality*—as a literary theme, is banal. It is difficult to conceive of an analysis of *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisco* that could overlook this preoccupation, and it is thus hardly an interpretation at all, but simply a restatement of the most prominent aspect of the text. It is an aspect that has proven so pervasive that,

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[8] Kryzytski, p. 156.

under its influence, troublesome textual features risk being manipulated into the *message*, or ignored altogether. Two brief examples should serve as an illustration of the above, both of which are concerned with the question of man and nature. Firstly, Bunin's text plainly and graphically describes how the liner repeatedly defies and overcomes nature at its most elemental, whilst the passengers remain almost entirely oblivious to it, somewhat complicating the issue of man's vulnerability to nature. And secondly, demonstrating the superficiality of his apparent suspicion of *messages*, and again prefiguring Woodward's point of view, Kryzytski reads the Gentleman as 'a sinner, a man without heart, but with the instincts of an animal' (p. 157). This encapsulation contains a fundamental contradiction, recalling Voronskii's earlier confusion, above, with respect to Pil'niak's understanding of the position of man in relation to nature; exclusively instinctive behaviour as the preserve of animals precludes the possibility of a 'heart' or of 'sin'. In this connection he concludes that 'in order to underline the presence of animal nature in human beings, Bunin stresses the amount of time the passengers spend eating and drinking' (p. 157). But this would surely be a sign of man's realignment with nature, by virtue of an essentially animal core, not of his dislocation from it. However, not all animals, by any means, spend large amounts of time eating and drinking, and none dresses for dinner; and, furthermore, clothes play a significant role in the life and death of the Gentleman from San-Francisco, as my reading will show. The significance of this last example is that it represents a contradiction arising from the model, the resolution of which is fundamental to further investigation. By virtue of the fact that he dies, the Gentleman must either reasonably be a human being or an animal; he cannot be regarded as simply a cipher, for reasons that I shall investigate below.

4. 3. 3. The Gentleman: a reappraisal

The amount of evidence available relating to the human side of the Gentleman is sparse. Conversely, the amount of time Bunin expends on the accumulation of trivial details and, at times, heavy-handed exposure of hypocrisy is considerable. It is a little surprising that expenditure of critical effort is proportionately represented on this basis. The one or two moments of access that we are afforded by Bunin to his hero are worthy of closer study.

On the evening of his death the Gentleman catches sight of his multi-reflected image in a series of mirrors. While Peter Henry relates the incident but does not comment on it, Connolly and Woodward pass over it without a mention. Kryzytski too takes note of the fact that:

> the gentleman utters only a few words to waiters, the manager and his daughter. Nor are his thoughts, with only one exception, revealed. Only once, looking in the mirror and noticing his ageing appearance, he mutters: 'Oh, its dreadful! It's dreadful' (p.159).

But he also neglects to elaborate on what, as the only expressed and intimate detail that we are privileged to share, must be significant, preferring to interpret it simply as the Gentleman's concern that he is getting on in years. More seriously he passes over the fact that if the Gentleman utters these words 'не думая'[9] then this does not constitute an exception at all.

A further passage, referred to by Kryzytski, but again passed over, represents the most obvious indication of a sub-current beneath the flood of trivia which has captivated

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[9] *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*, p. 320.

many commentators: 'И все тело, извиваясь, задирая ковер каблуками, поползло на пол, отчаянно борясь с кем-то' (p. 321). Kryzytski suggests the following translation of this passage: 'he kept struggling with someone and kicking up the carpet with his heels.' This attempt however distorts the sense by losing the emphasis. 'His', or '*The* whole body, writhing, the heels digging into the carpet, slid across the floor, desperately struggling with someone', is closer to the original. This passage begs the question, with whom was he struggling? How can his body, *telo* be fighting with someone, *s kem-to*, unless his body does not essentially represent his self? And further significance is given to the nature of the wording of this incident, if it is recalled that the event that immediately precedes his death is the sudden meeting with himself in front of a mirror. As a key passage this requires closer scrutiny and will therefore be given in full:

> —Ужасно О, это ужасно!—пробормотал он, опуская крепкую лысую голову и не стараясь понять, не думая, что именно ужасно; потом привычно и внимательно оглядел свои короткие, с подагрическими затвердениями в суставах пальцы, их крупные и выпуклые ногти миндального цвета и повторил с убеждением:— Это ужасно...[10]

The first point to take note of here is the use of the verb *probormotat'*. If the Gentleman had suddenly, by virtue of the shock of his own appearance, become aware simply of the sorry physical state into which he had degenerated, an ejaculatory expression might have been expected. However, this sudden meeting with himself physically has triggered a response, not of surprise, but rather of resignation. It appears

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[10] Bunin, 1966, IV, p. 320.

to be the expression of something which is constantly with him, but smothered by other preoccupations, like some course of action, or crime in one's past, that one would rather forget, but is constantly, subconsciously plagued with. The use of the exclamation mark with the verb *bormotat'* lends weight to this argument: he became aware at one level of something he had always known at a deeper level. Further contemplation of his physical exterior prompts a repetition of these words, now minus the exclamation mark, but *s ubezhdeniem*. This awareness, once it has penetrated his conscious mind, begins to take more definite shape.

One of the questions that should be asked is, how much control does the Gentleman have over the processes that he has stifled? That he would rather keep them stifled and that they are not the result of conscious activity seems likely: *ne staraias' poniat', ne dumaia*. This slight crack has appeared when he is on his own, and it must be significant that out of the very limited number of words that he utters, the most meaningful remark is made when there is no-one else present to hear it. It is when he is at his weakest without social ritual to sustain him. But just when something seems to be taking shape in his mind, the Gentleman is saved by the most reliable of devices—the bell: 'И тут зычно, точно в языческом храме, загудел по всему дому второй гонг' (p. 320). The bell for dinner brings him back to the less threatening material world. The incident is significant because it represents a superficially physical meeting, with, and recognition of a deeper self. A small, inadvertent step, and not for the first time, as the use of the verb *bormotat'* and *s ubezhdeniem* imply, toward self-doubt; a potential crisis of the subject, averted by the intrusion of the dinner gong. It does however introduce a muted note of optimism that has been absent from

conventional readings of the tale.

Returning to the death throes, what is portrayed, grammatically speaking, is the subject fighting with the object; they are one and the same. And the question is complicated by the inextricable relationship between the Gentleman's conscious mental activity on one hand, and physical activity on the other: 'Он настойчиво боролся со смертью' (p. 322). Previously *his body* struggled with *someone*, and now *he* struggles with *death*. The *someone* and the *he* are arguably synonymous, representing an essence which struggles to prevent the death of the body. In both cases the body is succumbing to death and the essence fights against it. But once the struggle is over: 'Сизое, уже мертвое лицо постепенно стыло, хриплое клокотанье, вырывавшееся из открытого рта, освещенного отблеском золота, слабело. Это хрипел уже не господин из Сан-Франциско,—его больше не было—а кто- то другой' (pp. 322–23). The body, known as the Gentleman from San-Francisco, is dead, yet continues to physically evidence itself aurally, recalling the words of Poe's Mr Valdemar: 'I am dead.'[11] There is no indication of this essence having a metaphysical significance. It too fades away into nothingness. But the two levels of his death are representative of two levels in life; a superficial and an essential.

This thesis of an existence below the conscious physical body is further evidenced by what Bunin tells of the Gentleman's thoughts and feelings during the time immediately preceding his death.

> Что чувствовал, что думал господин из Сан-Франциско в этот столь знаменательный для него

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[11] E. A. Poe, *The Facts in the Case of Mr. Valdemar*, in *Collected Works*, 3 vols, ed. by Thomas Ollive Mabott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978), III, 1228–44 (p. 1240).

> вечер? Он, как всякий испытавший качку, только очень хотел есть, с наслаждением мечтал о первой ложке супа, о первом глотке вина и совершил привычное дело туалета даже в некотором возбуждении, не оставлявшем времени для чувств и размышлений.[12]

The question can be restated: *What emotions was he experiencing, what conceptual abstractions was he processing*? And the answer given by virtue of the *tol'ko* of the following sentence is: none. There was simply the desire to eat, prompted by the rocking of the boat. It is not consistent, as I have argued above, to contend that this realigns the Gentleman with the animal kingdom. Bunin's coupling of *chuvstvo* and *razmyshlenie* with *i*, avoiding *ili*, suggests that the two are inextricably bound up with each other. It must be concluded that the *uzhasno* episode is the product of neither thought nor emotion, but represents a verbal expression of a *mental* process corresponding to the physical desire to eat; something that arises independently but is given meaning by its relationship to the external world. Thus it can be triggered by the rocking of the boat, or the sight of one's image in a mirror. It is the presence of this mental process that constitutes the thread binding the gentleman from San Francisco with Mr Smith of *Mat'-machekha.* In order to discover its nature an analysis of the text is required, preceded by way of an introduction by a brief examination of its critical reception.

4. 4. *Tret'ia stolitsa*: reception

4. 4. 1. Inokov

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[12] Bunin, 1966, IV, p. 319.

After the success of *Golyi god*, the reception of *Tret'ia stolitsa* was relatively less favourable. Aleksandr Inokov found it considerably weaker—*opredelenno slabee*—than *Golyi god* on the grounds that: 'В ней много риторики, много излишней «физиологии», и совсем нет фабулы, мало правдоподобен интеллигент «Емельян Емельянович Разин», убивающий англичанина Смита из «принципиальных побуждений.'[13] Writing only three weeks later he adopted a still harder line, characterizing Pil'niak's work in general as all sex and philosophy: 'Выните «пол» из произведений Пильняка—что в них останется? Останутся бесконечные философствования.'[14] It is through the use of sex and philosophy that 'пытается Пильняк прикрыть полное неумение построить фабулу' (p. 16). He finds *Tret'ia stolitsa* a particularly apposite example of this analysis, being a text which, though not containing a great deal of *pornografiia*, is marked by an an excessive discussion of the 'набившая всем оскомину «проблема пола»' (p. 16).

4. 4. 2. Ratnyi

M. Ratnyi provided a more positive analysis, in which he focused attention on Pil'niak's use of the phrase *kliuch k romantike i istorii*, identifying this as the object of the author's quest in writing this text.[15] Ratnyi suggests that Pil'niak hopes to find this key through a comprehensive investigation into the social configurations of Europe, Russia, and America. To this end in his depiction of Europe in decline, and Russia on the threshold of a new beginning, the author gives a publicistic account of the broad

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[13] Aleksandr Inokov, 'Al'manakh arteli pisatelei *Krug*, Kn. 1', *Literaturnyi ezhenedel'nik*, 1923.16, 7.
[14] Aleksandr Inokov, 'Boris Pil'niak. *Nikola-na-posad'iakh*', *Literaturnyi ezhnedel'nik*, 1923.19, 15–16 (p. 16).
[15] M. Ratnyi, 'O *Tret'ei stolitse* B. Pil'niaka', *Prozhektor*, 1923.3, 21–23.

picture of economic ruin, social dislocation, the Russian emigration, and Soviet *byt*. He presents us with dirty, louse-ridden, mysterious Russia, the child of Peter, preparing to lead the world onto a new path away from a dying Europe. For Ratnyi too, there is no *fabula*, but there is unity, and Pil'niak has given us something new in relation to our conventional understanding of the construction of the *povest'* or *rasskaz*. What Pil'niak has achieved is not simply mannered or affectation, like so much on the contemporary literary scene. However, there is one major reservation. Although the author has correctly perceived all that he decribes, both at home and with Russian eyes—*russkimi glazami*—abroad, the problem remains that he: 'не договаривает. Солнце из России, но кто зажег это солнце и кто выводит его на небосклон,[...] этого Пильняк не видит' (p. 21). And for Ratnyi the reason why Pil'niak does not answer this question is because he does not sense the real reason, preferring to look for an explanation of the remarkable phenomena he describes in Spenglerisms and miracles, being incapable of understanding the reality. The author only ever mentions workers and the unemployed in the context of a dying Europe, never in the Russian context, thus failing to recognise the *dvizhushchaia, organizovannaia, istoricheskaia sila* that motivates the momentous events which he describes. As a typical intellectual, his field of vision does not encompass the proletariat. He therefore accepts the revolution without understanding it. But what particularly troubles Ratnyi is the caveat that Pil'niak attaches to his account: '—все это неверно, неисторично, все это только ключ, отпирающий романтику в истории—'.[16] He rhetorically poses the question, is this remark to be taken seriously?—*seréznyi ili narochityi*? In lieu of

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[16] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 225.

an answer, he contends that Pil'niak has not realised that the will to want—*volia khotet'*—which figures prominently in Smith's speculations, has been brought into being by the revolutionary proletariat; Pil'niak's attempts to explain this by other means are weak and ineffectual. He complains that, in spite of the multitude of characters that appears in the text, 'живого, действующего лица (того, которое «захотело»)—не видно'.[17] Not surprisingly, Ratnyi applauds Pil'niak's use of such devices as the depiction of the insufficiency of morgues, and his treatment of the degradation of sex and the family in Europe, in order to portray the disintegration of the West. It is against this background that he reads Smith's wife as a victim of this disintegration—*zhertva etogo razvala*. In general he finds Pil'niak strong in his portrayal of negativity, citing, as examples, life amongst the émigrés, the ex-governor simultaneously working in three different camps, the prince who features in pornographic post-cards, and the two writers crying over a casket of earth. Conversely, any attempt at positive characters is weak and abstract. With regard to the fate of Emel'ian Razin—*etot obyvatel'– intelligent*—who only after five years sees the Revolution for what it is, sees how the new Jack London-style people are emerging from the Ivans and Marias, but still cannot forgive the world his wife's patched-up boots—*bashmaki*—and physically unable to bear the sight of them, goes insane, imagining that everywhere he sees gun barrels directed at him, Ratnyi considers that 'это безумие—символ на смерть перепуганной революцией интеллигентской вороны, которая куста боится' (p. 23). Has Pil'niak found the key *otpiraiushchii romantiku v istorii?*, Ratnyi asks. Although he, in general,

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[17] Ratnyi, 1923, p. 23.

welcomes the text as one of the first excursions into a new genre dealing not only with individuals but encompassing broad social classes, and not concerning itself with intellectualisms, or minute psychological investigations, the answer is categorically negative. The reason given for this is that Pil'niak neither senses the pulse of history, nor understands the social aspect of its forward movement. The questions raised by Ratnyi, particularly in respect of his treatment of the character Razin, are relevant to an investigation of Smith, and will be examined in more detail as the analysis progresses.

4. 4. 3. Vechernii

Creatively intertwining his own use of imagery with Pil'niak's material, the critic A. Vechernii presents a hybrid view of the emigration in Estonia, Europe, and Russia in the following terms: the emigration is one huge brothel and morgue combined, where a macabre, nightmarish dance of naked, morally destitute prostitutes and officers is in constant progress; Europe, resembling an old English sheepdog bitch covered in sores, is an economic and commercial battleground, witnessing the disintegration of state, religion, the family, labour, and sex; beneath the surface runs an heretical undercurrent of workers and unemployed with their mothers, wives and children, accompanied by dissident artists, poets, and madmen; in Russia, using Pil'niak's metaphor, history has abandoned its chariot and is harnessed to the age-old native, heavy wagon.[18] Vechernii is keen to know if the wagon is about to sink into the mud like the ancient stone figurines that recur in Pil'niak's writing. Similarly, he questions the status of the heretical European undercurrent; is it atrophying, in its death throes, or is it about to bloom? Vechernii is sure that Pil'niak will eventually find the 'right' answer, even

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[18]A. Vechernii, 'Pil'niak na rasput'i', *Krasnye zori*, 1923.4, 145–48.

though as things stand, 'мы уверим, что он не ударится в историческую романтику' (p. 147).[19] In his article he quotes the following extract, which will be returned to in the course of the discussion, but notably offers no analysis or explanation for its inclusion:

> Я, Пильняк, помню день, выпавший мне написания этой повести, весной, в России, в Коломне, у Никола-на-Посадьях,—и помню мои мысли в тот день. Сейчас я думаю о том, что эти мысли мои неисторичны, неверны: это ключ, отпирающий романтику в истории, позволивший мне крикнуть:
> —Место—места действия нет. Россия, Европа, мир, братство.
> —Герои—героев нет, Россия, Европа, мир, Вера, безверие, культура, метели, грозы, образ Богоматери—[20]

This exemplifies a trait that had already become widespread in criticisms of Pil'niak's works: the ability to recognise nodes, or passages as significant, but the inability to say quite why.

4. 4. 4. Pereverzev

V. Pereverzev's response to such passages was to use them as evidence for an exclusively metaphysical interpretation of the work:

> Здесь опыт художественного воплощения революции в ее сущности, революции как космической стихии. В большой повести «Третья столица» Пильняк развивает эту тему в обычной для него метафизически символической манере... Революцию рисует он

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[19] Vechernii, 1923, p. 147.
[20] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 222.

> в виде мистической выюги, полной какой-то космической тайны метели.[21]

4. 4. 5. Zubakhin

B. Zubakhin too picks out notable features without determining the nature of their significance. Though he is aware of the apparent discrepancy between Pil'niak's claim on the frontispiece and the text itself, he is unable to attach any meaning to this feature: 'Но никакой *внешней* мистической силы, никакого *внешнего* романтизма в повести нет, и это настолько очевидно, что автору пришлось оговориться, что это «повесть отнюдь *не* реалистическая».'[22] Similarly he notes, quoting Pil'niak's own words, how Tenzigol'skii, the some-time Rastorov, transforms himself yet again into Salomatin, 'без всякой мистической силы из Тенсиголького став Саломатиным' (p. 29). He notes that not only people but places too undergo transformations, citing the merchant's house which following the Revolution is put to a succession of different uses—at various times the departments of social security, culture, and women's affairs, then barracks, and finally left derelict when it has outlived its usefulness. To this frenetic activity he somewhat opaquely compares the old tower in Domberg occupied by the émigrés and the five-hundred-year-old brothel. But this is the brothel which has endured five hundred years *kak mistika kul'tury*. From one perspective the eventual dereliction of the merchant's house, with its suggestions of transience and impermanence, can be seen to undermine the post-Revolutionary situation. Especially when read in conjunction with the durability of the brothel as a manifestation of the mystery of culture. Both sets of images can be

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[21] V. F. Perverzev, 'Na frontakh tekushchei belletristiki', *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 1923.4, 127–33 (pp. 129–30).

[22] B. M. Zubakhin, 'Boris Pil'niak. *Tret'ia stolitsa*', *Rossiia*, 1923.5, 29–30 (p. 29).

interpreted as alternatively negative or positive, depending on the point of view; and Zubakhin offers no evidence to support his own position.

Even the leitmotif of the *metel'* is simply registered as such: 'I nad vsem etim odichaniem...metel'' (p. 29). It does, however, seem to have some significance for Razin, who:

> желая вырваться из метели уезжает за границу и возвращается—и видит, что он все спутал, все съехало,—но метель всюду и спутала все—Казалось:—«лимонную рощу заметают русские стервы метельные, в сугробах цветут анемоны;—в Вене в малище,—мчит самоед, в Неаполе сел в ратушу—тоже метель,—Исполком: Неаполь впер в Санкт-Петербург; Москва—сплошной здравотдел где сыпной тиф—метелями; метель гудит Нэаполем—Нэаполь воет метелями, цветут апельсины,—весь мир ощетинился—не собаками—нибеллунгами, нибеллунги сгибли в метели,—а метель—Россия...все спутано, не найдешь камертона (p. 29).

Drawing on 'одна из глав называется «фита»—но это «фита» не азбуки русской истории' (p. 29), the guards on their stocky horses outside the Kremlin, the icon of the Virgin freed from her frame, and Semenov the barefoot pointsman attempting to reconcile the Gospels with the ABC of Communism, Zubakhin plucks a series of arresting images from the text without offering any serious attempt at explanation. For Zubakhin, all this, coupled with the seaminess of émigré existence, serves simply as 'теневым фоном для сверкающего, метельного вихря народных волнений, для произрастающей уже кое-где весенней зелени' (p. 30). Having established this, he turns his attention to *Geroev net* and *Mesta deistviia net* concluding that: 'Эти заявления автора указывает на его стремление

отнести свое творение к бессюжетным произведениям' (p. 30). But what will the resulting literary form amount to, he asks, *chistaia lirika?* 'И да и нет. Это—лирика нового человека XX века, который мыслит огромными полотнами, а собеседником и персонажем его лирических встреч является человеческий коллектив, а не отдельная личность или личности' (p. 30). Although, he concedes, a great many characters are to be found in the text, each with their individual fates, he makes the following qualification: 'Но все это персонификация коллектива человечества, его классов, его наций и их сознания, а не отдельные, автором любимые герои' (p. 30).

4. 4. 6. Voronskii

For Voronskii *Tret'ia stolitsa* was not so much a *povest'* as a 'полу-художественный, полу-публицистический трактат',[23] vacillating between individual episodes and tableaux, and broad social, economic perspectives. It was an inclination which could only be welcomed and represented the development of a predilection already evident in *Golyi god* 'к темам общественным, и при том остро-современным' (p. 334). In this text the 'художественная публицистика преобладает над «чистым» художником' (p. 334) and this was to be encouraged, as it would save Pil'niak from his tendency to become mired in petty individual concerns and sensuality: 'Здесь спасение от пустоты' (p. 334). In this work, argues Voronskii, Pil'niak has abandoned his concept of an enslaved pre-Petrine Rus' liberated by the Revolution—'а это, конечно, сплошная романтика и при том реакционная' (p. 334)—and primarily through his depiction of Razin

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[23]A. Voronskii, 'Literaturnye otkliki: Ob al'manakhakhe *Kruga*, *Krasnaia nov'*, (1923.2, 333–38 (p. 333).

'развенчал также пугачевщину и разинщину (интеллигентскую) в революции' (p. 334). Voronskii summarizes *Tret'ia stolitsa* as a text depicting Europe and the world juxtaposed—*protivopostavleny*—with Russia and the East. Through the apparent comfortableness of the West can be seen the spectre of decay and imminent death. At the other pole is Russia, characterized by its determination, its clear goals for the future, its potential, its *vera, smelost'* and *svezhest'* and above all the *will not to see* which unencumbers the *will to create.* And this is precisely what Europe lacks: 'И главное—в Европе нет воли жить, воли творить, хотеть' (p. 335). Whereas in previous works Pil'niak had concerned himself with the juxtaposition of the West and *izbianaia Rus'* in this work, the latter has been superseded by revolutionary Soviet Russia as a measuring stick. Voronskii hears the leitmotif of revolutionary Russia encapsulated in the words with which the peasant concludes his address at the border on the subject of the poverty of Russian peasants compared with the reputed wealth of their American counterparts: 'Ни-о,—товарищи—нам это не страшно, потому что у нас наша власть, мы сами себе хозаева.'[24] Thus, for Voronskii, negative phenomena, ranging from the stealing of spoons to cannibalism, can be discounted as aberrations because: 'Здесь есть воля хотеть, творить, воля не видеть, не замечать убожества и ужаса с тем, чтобы действовать.'[25] But like Ratnyi, Voronskii is concerned by the absence of any expression of unified dissent on the part of the European proletariat as representing a cohesive source of motivation; the working class is a barely noticeable background feature. On the other hand when dealing with such individuals as Salomatin, Trubetskoi, and Mr Smith,

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[24] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 132.
[25] Voronskii, 1923, p. 336

Pil'niak writes 'со всей тщательностью, подбирая мелочь к мелочи,—а о кричащих «Третьий Интернационал» скудно до предельности' (p. 336). And this amounts to what Voronskii considers a 'явно неправильная пропорция, искажение действительности' (p. 336). In the context of Russia, Pil'niak piles up all kinds of material in any order—'Пусть разберется сам читатель '(p. 337)—and yet, he is remarkably sparing 'как только дело касается подлинных, настоящих строителей Новой России' (p. 337). As with the European working class, this is always in the background, upstaged by the cannibalism, the darkness, the filth and the thievery. Although the author has abandoned his romanticized view of pre-Petrine Russia, it nonetheless appears that he has limited himself to a rather tentative step in the right direction; he has thrown off his misconception of the exclusively Russian nature of the Revolution, as expounded in *Golyi god*, yet he still sees it as primarily a Russian phenomenom, with the West in the role of poor relation. This accounts for the Spenglerisms present in the text, and the author's incongruous inability to accept the international fundament of the working class movement: 'Отбросив романтику до-петровской Руси, Пильняк не мог не сделать шаг вперед, признав роль Третьего Интернационала' (p. 337). That he has not yet done so inevitably leads Voronskii into speculation over the orthodoxy of Pil'niak's motivation and the extent to which the author's understanding of the interaction between Russia and the West has been coloured by the influence of Oswald Spengler. This is relevant to the present investigation only in so far as it illustrates the development of a trend in the direction of speculation that was progressively to replace analysis, and contribute to the fossilization of models of interpretation. Turning to Pil'niak's use of the works of other writers, he finds this intolerable: 'К чему все

это?', he asks, seeing it all simply as 'величайшая неряшливость и небрежность к читателю' (p. 338). However, remembering his opening comments, he makes the following qualification: 'В оправдание можно сказать: повесть является художественно-публицистической вещью, в коей такие вставки и заимствования допускаются, так сказать, природой произведения' (p. 338). Voronskii's apparent confusion on this point reflects the phenomenon of genre fixation which Pil'niak exploits in his dedication to Remizov on the frontispiece. By prefixing the text with this device, Pil'niak has already demonstrated his intention to disregard at least some of the constraints imposed by generic convention, in order to challenge the dominance of the model over the text and thereby undermine one of the foundation stones of reading: the need to know *what* is being read, as a prerequisite to *how* to read it. Again, the model assumes greater weight than the text. Unable to make the text fit with any of his known grids of reference, Voronskii concludes that it is a 'повесть переходная к чему-то иному' (p. 338). That is to say, it is not a form in its own right, but by disintegrating previous generic types it represents a step on the way to a new genre.

4. 4. 7. Summary and observations

In addition to the intuitive identification of significant features coupled with a reluctance to offer possible interpretations of them, the attempts at understanding *Tret'ia stolitsa* dealt with above show a significant common feature. Whilst basing their criticisms on social, economic, political and historical considerations, they lament the absence of real, positive characters. However, the definition of *real* and *positive* is specific to the nature of the considerations upon which the criticism is based. Whilst

this is both an understandable and unavoidable consequence of the context into which a work is received, an awareness of the nature of the interplay between text and context can at least serve to expose the model which is an expression of that consequence. There are factors at work having more to do with the maintenance of an entrenched power structure than with contemporary political and ideological rhetoric. An example drawn from the above should serve to illustrate this point.

According to the text, having succumbed to the will of her husband on his return from the trenches, Mrs.Smith subsequently undergoes a process of sexual liberation, takes a series of lovers, and divorces her husband. She reverts to her original surname, and moves to Paris where she lives independently by exploiting men to her own advantage. Ratnyi sees her as a victim of the disintegration of the West. More significantly still, he particularly identifies Mrs. Smith as the victim, passing over, in her favour, the young girl raped by Mr Smith on a farm in France before his return. This second incident was evidently relatively less disturbing than the behaviour of Mrs. Smith, who, usurping the male prerogative, was expediently linked with Western decadence, in the same way as the heroine of Artsybashev's novel mentioned above. It was not surprising therefore that Pil'niak's name had become linked with that of Artsybashev as a means of demonstrating the doubtfulness of his revolutionary commitment.

A similar processes of simplification is detectable in the contribution of Ratnyi who subsumes the prince who features in pornographic postcards, the duplicitous ex-governor, and the two writers emoting over a casket of Russian earth under the same

label: *razval i raslozhenie*.[26] The motivation for the prince's actions and the simple homesickness of the writers do not serve to dissociate them from the double agent, nor from Razin, because together they fail to conform to an inexplicit absolute of positivity. In a confusion of symbol and metaphor, Ratnyi sees Razin's madness as a depersonalizing representation of the death of a desperate intelligentsia. However, his use of the epithet *obyvatel'-intelligent* suggests a second aspect, stifled by his concentration on his own metaphorization of the intelligentsia into a timorous crow, recalling the connotations of *obyvatel'shchina*, which Voronskii had particularly associated with Andrei Belyi.[27] This derogatory expression referred primarily to what was perceived as an unhealthy emphasis on the personal concerns of the unremarkable individual divorced from societal obligations. Belyi himself saw it as an expression of his revulsion at the imitative homogenization and self-subjugation which he found synonymous with any form of ostensibly philanthropic *partiinost'*. To Voronskii this implied the devaluation of the great, collective, motivating principles of the Revolution.

4. 5. *Tret'ia stolitsa/Mat'-machekha*: a reappraisal

4. 5. 1. 1. The intertextual Razin: Gogol' and Dostoevskii

Although a member of the intelligentsia, there is an aspect of the *obyvatel'* in Razin, preoccupied as he is with his wife's boots—*bashmaki*—which recalls Akakii Akakievich Bashmachkin. Both finally break down as a result of an obsession with an item of clothing that has a destabilizing effect on their gender perception. Where

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[26] Ratnyi, 1923, p. 22.

[27] For a more detailed explanation of *obyvatel'shchina* and its place in the contemporary literary panorama as seen through Voronskii's eyes see: A.Voronskii, 'Literaturnye otkliki', *Krasnaia nov'*, 1922.2, 258–75.

Akakii's sexuality is awoken by the anthropomorphic greatcoat, Razin's wife's boots assume synecdochic significance. Both protagonists are stimulated into action after a period of passivity, and both are deprived of something they have grown to feel they have an entitlement to. A situation that was formerly acceptable is no longer so as a result of a catalytic experience. Or, in terms of the *obyvatel'*, it simply no longer seems fair. It is the awareness of deprivation that results in the assertion of the self. Prior to this, both Bashmachkin and Razin were dormant objects within a world, incapable of making the transition to active subject. Where Basmachkin's excursion into subjectivity is tragic because it is abortive and impotent, Razin's assertion is triumphant in that his crime is a product of the ascendancy of the subject. His assertion therefore that he committed the murder simply because Smith was rich while he was unable to stand the sight of his wife's patched boots, is sustainable as a reason of principle.

A notable difference between Bashmachkin and Razin lies in the contrast in motivation. Where the former's motives are testaceously egotistic, the latter, unconcerned with his own person, is obsessed with that of his wife. It is significant that she does not feature in the text as herself, but as his perception of her, as a conduit and reference point through which he conducts a dialogue with the phenomenal world. Whether Razin's sensitivity, and consequent paranoia, is the cause or result of his inability to cope with the phenomenal world is less important for this discussion than the fact that his condition compels him to see the world in an alternative light: 'Не всякому дано видеть, и иные, кто видит,—безумеют.'[28] Such unbearable sensitivity must, according to Razin, and again recalling the opening words of of *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*—

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[28] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 211.

'Я человек больной.'[29]—and the consciousness engendered in the male bird in *Tselaia zhizn'*, be the result of illness: 'Я, должно быть, болен: весь мир, все, русская революция, отовсюду, от столов, из-под нар, из волчка, на меня глядит черный кружок дула ружья, тысячи, миллионы, миллярды дул—на меня, отовсюду. Я все равно мертв.'[30] Illness and sensitivity are thus linked in a Dostoevskian manner: 'Клянусь вам, господа, что слишком сознавать—это болезнь, настоящая, полная болезнь.'[31] And further: 'Страдание—да ведь это единственная причина сознания' (p. 42); suffering is the cause of consciousness, and consciousness is equatable with illness. Razin too has led an underground existence spent 'в моргасном полумраке, в каменном подвале, пыли и копоти'.[32] Here, oblivious to what is going on around him, and unconcerned by his conditions—'Емельян Емельянович не был горек своей жизнью, он был советским [...] работником'(p. 117)—he develops his peculiar philosophy:

> Он создал—графически—формулу, чтоб доказать, что закон—для сохранения закона—надо обходить: он мелом рисовал круг на полу, замкнутый круг закона, и показывал опытно, что, если ходить по этой меловой черте, по закону, подметки стирают мел,—и, чтоб цел остался мел,—закон,—надо его обходить. (p. 117)

At first sight this seems to be pure sophistry; a law can only be maintained by virtue of its transgression. But it is important to note that this is not expounded by Razin as a

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[29] F. M. Dostoevsrii, *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), v, 99–179 (p. 99)
[30] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 221–22.
[31] *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, p. 101.
[32] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 116.

philosophical imperative in a moral or ethical sense, but as a *formula* (p. 117). General applicability is neither stated nor implied. On the other hand, the formulation does imply that in individual cases, support of the law is not precluded by, in fact may even under certain circumstances be inherent in, its transgression. 'Впрочем об этом потом' (p. 117) writes Pil'niak, prefiguring Razin's crime.

4. 5. 1. 2. The madness of Razin

Ratnyi's interpretation of Razin's madness as a symbol of the death of the intellectual frightened by the Revolution excludes the individual, his personal sense of injustice, and his mental state; it excludes everything about him which is not symbolic, and it therefore excludes Razin himself. Given what has been said above, Zubakhin's assertion that Razin wanted to *vyrvat'sia iz meteli.* seems mistaken. Razin was not even aware of the *metel'*, and although the years since the Revolution had, for him, been one long winter—' Эти пять лет в России—ему—были сплошной зимой' (p. 116)—it was only after these five years that he began to notice anything. And by that time he found he had no stable model with which to interpret the world around him: 'В пятый год—он: спутал числа и сроки, он увидел метель—метель над Россией, хотя видел весну, цветущие лимоны' (p. 117). The significance of Zubakhin's quotation now becomes clear. His revelation is paid for at the price of dislocation from cognitive time and space. Without that measure of contextual objectivity he is unable to harmonise with the phenomenal world: 'Метель—чертовщина, все спутано,—не найдешь камертона' (p. 119). And furthermore, once this dislocation from a particular frame of reference has occurred, there is no going back: 'Зубу, вырванному из челюсти,—не стать снова в челюсть' (p. 118). Razin demonstrates just how keenly he himself is aware of this

when through the perpetration of his crime, he puts his formulation into practice. By stepping over the line of chalk he has assumed an untenable supra-ethical position. Unlike Raskol'nikov, Razin's creator offers him no literary escape route. To be alive is to exist within a temporally and spatially based framework of assessment, and there is no other alternative than death. 'Я прошу меня расстрелять. Я все равно мертв' (p. 221).

4. 5. 1. 3. A personal aspect

Like Bunin, Pil'niak, through his avoidace of psychology, is prone to understatement in respect of the personal aspect of protagonists. This can result in proportional emphasis in interpretation. The repeated image of the broken window pane in Razin's cellar, blocked up with an old blanket to keep out the *metel'*, is replete with metaphoric potential. At a more quotidian level it also recalls the son who was responsible for breaking it. He is only mentioned in passing, and, even then, partially in parentheses: '(Этого сынишку вскоре отвезли—навек—на кладбище)' (p. 115). It may have been a common enough experience at the time but no less personally significant for that.

4. 5. 1. 4. Mr Smith and the example of Razin

The complexity of Razin, in spite of his status as a relatively peripheral character, suggests that Mr Smith too, may warrant closer investigation, that he should not be dismissed too lightly, nor disposed of in the manner of the gentleman from San Francisco. The foundations for what was to become the standard interpretation of Mr Smith were already laid as early as 1923 when Voronskii wrote:

> Мистер Смит—современный Петроний Запада, насквозь проникнутый скепсисом бездеятельным, но без изящества,

> безмятежности римского Петрония,—тяжелый, деревянный, по-английски чинный и чопорный, пустой, без улыбки, неповоротливый, безразлично, холодно рефлексирующий.[33]

Voronskii's evaluation of Mr Smith as a contemporary Petronius of the West, shot through with a sceptical passivity, but without the elegance or serenity of Petronius, heavy, wooden, prim and proper, cold and unsmiling, sluggish, coldly and detachedly reflective, might serve to prompt the conclusion that Mr Smith is no more than an educated, English version of James B. Woodward's Gentleman from San Francisco (see above). The critic Pravdukhin reacted in a similar way, referring to Mr Smith as 'этот тысячелетний, живой труп'.[34] And so persistent is this interpretation that more than fifty years later the picture remained largely unchanged: 'Nor is there anything elevating about Mr Smith', declares Jensen in an addendum to his synopsis of Pil'niak's negative portrayal in *Tret'ia stolitsa* of the mental and physical degeneration of the members of a colony of Russian émigrés.[35]

Carol Avins, in an astute analysis of *Tret'ia stolitsa*, wherein she is principally concerned with Pil'niak's contribution to the development of the debate on the interaction of Russia and the West, finds time to comment on an additional facet of Mr Smith's characterization:

> Smith is painted as the typical British capitalist; in Russia on business, he lives in colonialist luxury. But he is not complacent: he is aware of, even obsessed with, his impending death and that of his culture. In letters and

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[33] A. Voronskii, 'Literaturnye otkliki: ob al'manakhakh *Kruga*', *Krasnaia nov'*, 1923.2, 333–38 (p. 335).
[34] V. Pravdukhin, 'Literatura o revoliutsii i revoliutsionnaia literatura', *Sibirskie ogni*, 1923.1–2, 203–24 (p. 208).
[35] Jensen, 1979, p. 198.

> inner monologues he ruminates on the decline of civilization in Europe and its rebirth in Russia.[36]

Though this is not sufficient to dispel Voronskii's image of a coldly reflecting Petronius, it does at least undermine Pravdukhin, suggesting that there may be more to Mr Smith than these limiting evaluations imply.

4. 5. 2. Remizov and the bath-house: bathos

The application of a simple model is, as has been mentioned in the Introduction, encouraged by the nature of the text itself. Having said this, however, it should be pointed out that the exclusive application of this one model has also been discouraged, not only by the change of title, but within the text, as will be shown below. Substantially more encouragement is, understandably, required to reject the known path than to take it. As an illustration, attention should be drawn to the dedication that introduces the work. This constitutes the first indication to the reader of a likely model of interpretation. It reads, retaining the typographical idiosyncrasies, as follows:

> МАТЬ-МАЧЕХА
>
> *Эту мою повесть, отнюдь не реалистическую,*
>
> *я посвящаю*
>
> *АЛЕКСЕЮ МИХАЙЛОВИЧУ*
>
> *Р Е М И З О В У ,*
>
> *мастеру,*
>
> *у которого я был подмастерьем.*

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[36] Carol Avins, *Border Crossings: The West and Russian Identity in Soviet Literature 1917–1934* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), p. 41.

Бор. Пильняк.[37]

The content of this dedication is made up of four specific elements. Firstly, that the text that is to follow is not realistic—*ne realisticheskaia*; secondly, the dedicatee is Remizov; thirdly the author considers the dedicatee the master; and fourthly, the author sees himself as the former apprentice of the master. But how does the reader respond to, or process this information? Given Remizov's popular reputation, and the fact that the expectation of an apprentice is that he or she will continue the trade where the master leaves off, combined with the author's own assertion that the tale is not realistic, the reader may reasonably expect something along the lines of a *skazka*.[38] And even assuming the reader is unfamiliar with the reputation of Aleksei Remizov, and the only information that he or she has access to is that the tale is not going to be realistic, a likely first assumption is that what is to follow, if not a *skazka*, then at least will fall within the bounds of allegorical or symbolic interpretation. With time to reflect, other generic possibilities present themselves—epic, myth, science fiction for example—but the fact remains that whatever the text turns out to be, by virtue of the author's admonition, the possibility of realism should, broadly speaking, be excluded. The

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[37] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 111.

[38] For a contemporary evaluation of Remizov's work. see D. S. Mirsky's account first published in 1926 in *A History of Russian Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 476–84. Particularly in respect of the early stories, which would have been those available to Pil'niak and his readership, Mirsky's opinion is that 'the lyrical element is considerable. They are almost always concerned with the grotesque and the unusual, with a touch of Dostoevskyan weirdness' (p. 480). Leaving the subject matter aside however, Mirsky detected 'a new method of constructing the story. Its movement is not along a line of time, but towards a single point', in *Modern Russian Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), pp. 113–14. In the same article he talked of 'concentric stories' having 'for their centre a human soul' (p. 113). In this sense then a useful comparison with Pil'niak can be drawn, in spite of the initial frustration of reader expectations for which the bathetic opening of *Mat'-machekha* is responsible.

suggested genre perspective encourages the expectation of a text marked by a level of depersonalization and generalization through which individual characteristics, the minutiae of quotidian existence, the mundanity of day-to-day life will be subsumed into larger issues or relegated to a level of relatively lower significance; genre expectations determine the way a text is read. These first expectations are seriously undermined when the text opens with an announcement for the opening of a new public bath-house, apparently lifted straight out of a local newspaper. This, apparently authorially unadulterated, introduction to a text that appeared to be moving in a direction away from realism seems incongruous, and suspicion is aroused that the apprentice may not be simply following in the steps of the master. Rereading of the dedication reveals how Pil'niak's use of *byl* followed by the instrumental case implies that, no longer considering himself an apprentice, he has superseded the master.

4. 5. 3. Intertextual resonances: Marinetti, Apollinaire, Hamsun

The bathetic descent that results from the appearance of the advertisement is yet more disorientating in the original version; from the grand *Tret'ia stolitsa* on the frontispiece, to 'Плата за мытье: для взрослых—50 коп. зол., для детей—25 коп. зол.' on the first page. As well as undermining genre expectations, the inclusion of a mundane newspaper cutting also recalls and parodies Marinetti's characterization of the newspaper as the condensation of one day in the life of the world, thereby establishing a link with European Futurism. It was Apollinaire who in 1912 wrote:

> You read prospectuses, catalogues, advertising posters
> which sing out loud

> That's what poetry is this morning, and for prose we've got the newspapers.[39]

But Pil'niak's use of this device also resonates with the opening passage of Knut Hamsun's novel *Hunger*. Here the narrator's evolving consciousness, as he progresses from a sleeping to a waking state, is plotted through his gradual assimilation of the content of newspapers pasted to his bedroom wall:[40]

> All of this happened while I was walking around starving in Christiania—that strange city no one escapes from until it has left its mark on him...
> I was lying awake in my attic room; a clock struck six somewhere below; it was fairly light already and people were beginning to move up and down the stairs. Over near the door, where my room was papered with old issues of the *Morning Times*, I could make out a message from the Chief of Lighthouses, and just to the left of that an advertisement for fresh bread, showing a big, fat loaf: Fabian Olsen's bakery.[41]

After a further paragraph in which he reflects upon his poverty and failing health, that is to say, reflections which constitute his growing awareness of himself, the fourth paragraph begins:

> It was getting lighter, and I concentrated on the advertisements by the door; I could even read the slim, mocking typeface declaring: 'Shrouds available, Miss Andersen, Main Entrance, to the right'. That satisfied me for a long time. The clock below had struck eight before I got up and dressed. (p. 4)

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[39] I am indebted to Chistopher Butler for this quotation from Apollinaire's *Zone* from 1912 (Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900–1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994), p. 157).
[40] For a fuller discussion of this aspect of Hamsun's novel see Atle Kittang's essay 'Knut Hamsun's "Sult": Psychological Deep Structures and Metapoetic Plot', in *Facets of European Modernism: Essays in honour of James McFarlane*, ed. by Janet Garton (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1985), 295–308.
[41] Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*, trans. by Robert Bly (London: Duckworth, 1993), p. 1.

It is only now that he opens the window and looks out into the larger world of which he is progressively becoming conscious. That is to say, a world in which he is finding his bearings and of which he is attempting to make sense. The first step in this process is to locate himself in his immediate environment. Only later will he open the window, thereby broadening the perspective, and continuing the process of assimilation of the wider world. He moves, and in so doing, guides the reader, from the specific and personal to the general. In addition to this, the intertextual and parasitic aspect of personality is emphasized by the use of public announcements from a local newspaper as catalysts to the reformation of his self. Furthermore, themes central to the text are introduced by this device; hunger, by virtue of the advertisement for bread, and the precariousness of life through the reference to funeral shrouds.

4. 5. 4. The controlling ego

A similar process is called into action by the announcement of the opening of a new bath-house in *Mat'-machekha.* Though the textual panorama may be broad, as the original title indicates, Pil'niak pinpoints a location within that broad panorama. Having provided this location as a point of departure, the perspective rapidly expands. The impression is given of receding rapidly from the original object of attention, through progressively broader bands of generality: 'М е с т о: места действия нет. Россия, Европа, мир, братство.'[42] By the inclusion of *bratstvo* a transition from locational to abstract interpersonal is effected, and the reader is spun centrifugally through progressively broader bands of conceptual generality, only to come hurtling centripetally back to an icon of the Mother of God, and once more out through the

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[42] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 112.

broad category of men in overcoats with upturned collars, to the generality of the class of 'women', qualified only by means of subjective authorial intervention: 'Г е р о и: героев нет. Россия, Европа, мир, вера, безверье,—культура, метели, грозы, образ богоматери. Люди,—мужчины в пальто с поднятыми воротниками, одиночки, конечно;—Женщины:—но женщины моя скорбь,—мне романтику—'(p. 112). This introduction represents an oscillation between the graspable but impersonally mundane, in the form of the bath-house, and the amorphous conceptual, finally coming to rest in the subjective. It is the narrator's own personal view that provides a platform of relative stability. And yet the author is under no illusions as to his subjectivity; in fact, that is exactly what he wants; *mne romantiku*. Though the advertisement for a bath-house prefigures the theme of cleanliness and purity which is to play a significant role in the text, it can only accrue its auxiliary semiotic function through its association with concepts that are the concern of subjects. Without that function, determined by the presence of a fictional subject, its appearance at the opening of Pil'niak's work is disorientating.

4. 5. 5. The casket of earth: symbol or experience?

And the picture is further complicated by Pil'niak's second admonition, made in a later typographically idiosyncratic insertion, against allegorical or symbolic interpretation.

— А где - то
в другом месте,
за тысячи верст и от-
сюда и от России, —
от русской земли,— два
человека, русских два
писателя, — в воскресный
день, в заполдни, — рылись
в вещах,—и они нашли коро-
бочку, где была *р у с с к а я*
з е м л я,—не аллегория, не сим-
вол, — а просто русская наша

земля. (p. 138)[43]

The use of aberrant typography[44] links this passage with the dedication discussed above. Yet where the dedication undermines the status of the work as a realistic text, this interpolation voices a suspicion of allegory and symbol. Against a background of canonical genre distinction, a tension is established between apparently opposing admonitions; against realistic interpretation on the one hand, and against symbolic and allegorical interpretation on the other. The rejection of allegorical or symbolic significance attaching to a casket of Russian soil retained in emigration seems almost perverse. What other significance in the hands of an émigré writer can it possibly have? Is it possible in any way to separate the experiential from the conceptual? To experience this sample of Russian earth simply as such, without the conceptual accretions that go along with it? Whether it is possible or not, this seems to be what Pil'niak is asking the reader to do.

In general terms, how can it be possible to draw a distinction between what something *is* and what it *signifies*? As soon as it can be seen to have a semiotic function, it ceases to be purely experiential and accrues conceptual significance. As it accrues generality, it loses precision, and though it may have its source in reality, that is to say, in an experience, it is no longer *that* experience, no longer *real* but simply a representation of reality, in the same way as a text is a representation of reality in the tradition of Realism. Any *sign* is essentially conceptual in that it represents more than itself, and any representation of an experience is a sign.

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[43] This appears to be based on an incident which took place during Pil'niak's visit to Remizov in Berlin in early 1922. For a fuller account see Jensen, 1979, p. 47.
[44] Elsewhere in the text Pil'niak makes use only of simple indentation.

In summary, Pil'niak's first admonition warns against attempting a realistic interpretation of the text devolved from our understanding of Realism's illusion of reality, and the second, to guard against the subsumption of experience into concept, which underscores allegorical interpretation. Essentially, both represent different points on a sliding scale of representation through distillation. At the realistic end, an ostensibly individual, fictional, character is distilled into a text from selected impressions received from the extra-textual physical world, and likewise allegory and symbolism deal with the restatement or encapsulation of data necessarily drawn from the physical world; no matter that Symbolism may claim access to a metaphysical reality, the symbols and metaphors and their meanings are still premised upon presentations from the phenomenal world as the only one available as a point of departure.

4. 5. 6. The *bogomat'* and semiosis: Hutchings and Eco[45]

Though a detailed examination of the types and definitions of 'allegory' and 'symbol' would serve little purpose, as the point at issue here is the common denominator of conceptuality which they share with Realism, in its original meaning *symbol* may more closely evoke the sense which Pil'niak infers by his suspicion of the term:

> Originally a symbol was a token, the present half of a broken table or coin or medal, that performed its social or semiotic function by recalling the absent half to which it potentially could be reconnected. [...] So, too, it happens today that, when we enter a theatre with our ticket stub, nobody tries to check where the other half is; everyone trusts the semiotic nature of the token, which

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[45] In place of the normal Russian word for 'Mother of God' (*Bogomater'*), Pil'niak uses *bogomat'.'*

> in this case works on the basis of an established and recognized convention.[46]

Arguably, in this original sense the symbol was rather less symbolic than synecdochic.

With time, however, this sense gave way to more abstract meanings:

> But the present half of the broken medal, evoking the ghost of its absent companion and of the original wholeness, encouraged other senses of 'symbol'. The verb *symballein* thus meant to meet, to try an interpretation, to make a conjecture, to solve a riddle, to infer from something imprecise, because incomplete, something else that it suggested, evoked, revealed, but did not conventionally say (p. 9).

Bearing this in mind, the casket of earth can now be seen to function rather more like the torn-off half of a photograph, *recalling* but not *representing* the other. In this sense it assumes greater experiential than conceptual significance. A further aspect of this question has been developed by Stephen Hutchings in his discussion of what he describes as the 'clash between the participatory tradition of the icon and the mediatory rhetoric of the artistic sign'.[47] This clash is premised upon an understanding of a type of consciousness revealed in particular through Orthodoxy, where the essentially participatory and unifying iconic is juxtaposed against the mediating, but obstructive semiotic of the Western mind. He cites the *Domostroi* as evidence of the 'downplaying of daily life's mediatory function':

> Daily life could, indeed, be "made to mean" but by conceiving of it iconically (rather than semiotically)—as a microcosm of life in the tsar's family—a secondary reembodiment of divine law via which each household naturally reenacts the relationship of God to man, tsar to

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[46] Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 9.
[47] Hutchings, 1997, p. 40.

> servant.[...] There is no semiotic replacement by individual household of households in general as part for whole, rather an orientation towards iconic reenactment (pp. 38–39).

The individual family is held through iconic interaction to be unified both with the family of the tsar and with all other individual families, in the same way as in Orthodoxy the painted icon does not statically symbolize but actively unifies man with God by bringing both into the same system of reciprocity. This explanation sheds some light upon Pil'niak's insistence that his sample of earth is *not* a symbol; it is a catalyst to the active unification of all émigrés with each other and with Russia. The distinction between this and regular symbolism may be fine, but it functions as an aid to the understanding not only of this incident, but also of Pil'niak's account of his reaction to the removal of the icon of the Virgin Mary from her ornate, wax-encrusted surround at which he was present, and which will be returned to below.[48] In relation to his discussion of opposing epistemologies above, Hutchings is particularly interested in the role of framing. Though he is primarily concerned with narrative, rather than actual physical framing, this is an area where inter-media analogies have more than a simple metaphorical significance:

> The main area of conflict is that of the frame, since it is as essential to the image's capacity to represent, as it is antithetical to the icon's urge to participate. [...] The notion of *narrative frame* constitutes my primary analytical tool. In narrative the position of exteriority essential to art's framing activity takes the form of a present-time instance of narration [...] from which the events in the plot happen*ed*. The narrating presence's position ahead of the events facilitates the manoeuvres associated with a well-constructed plot. It is also

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[48] *Mat'-machekha*, pp. 224–25.

indissociable from aspects of meaning. In addition to being *of* time (past framed by present), narrative is articulated *through* time. The categories of beginning and ending constituting the internal dramatization of the narrative frame and tracing a path from the furthest position in the narrative past to that closest to the present are vital to narrative semiosis. In order that this path be construed as a sequence capable of functioning semiotically, there must be a structural relationship between beginning and ending marking its framing boundaries.[49]

Hutchings concedes a debt to Todorov on this point, but Umberto Eco's development of the theme in terms of his understanding of 'open' and 'closed' texts is also fruitful. In a series of essays published in *The Role of the Reader* Eco explores the relationship between the reader and so-called 'closed' texts, requiring a low level of participation, and 'open' texts requiring more. [50] The more open the text, the more reader input is required to complete it, so that, broadly speaking, texts can be located on a scale of 'closed' to 'open' depending on the extent of reader participation that they necessitate. Little account is paid however to the context of the reader. If both text and reader are products of the same context, that is to say if the text is produced in a similar framework to the one in which it is to be assessed, so that the reader is familiar with the genre, then Eco's proposition holds good. The 'openness' of a text can not however be a property of the text alone, but a factor related to the proximity of the reader's dimension of assessment with that in which the text was produced. As this is variable and unquantifiable, then so too must be the quality of openness. Bearing this in mind, Hutchings' discussion of framing remains relevant to Pil'niak's description of the

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[49] Hutchings, 1997, pp. 40–41.
[50] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (London: Hutchinson, 1981).

revelation of the icon of the Virgin Mary, in that it raises a problem, though primarily a taxonomical one, in respect of his description of the distinction between the semiotic and the iconic. In its frame the Virgin Mary represents a relatively closed text because as a religious icon its potential for interpretation is restricted; unlike the sample of earth it *is* a symbol: 'Мне—художнику—богомать, конечно, только символ.'[51] At this level it does perform a rigidly controlled semiotic function. Removed from its frame its semiotic function floats more freely in a wider range of potentialities. It is no longer the restricted and symbolic *bogomat'* of the framed religious painting, but, like the clod of earth, allows its observer to establish contact with the life of Russia:

> И это серебро с иконы сняли, и этот образ богоматери без риз мне, отринувшемуся от бога предстал иным, разительным, необычайным, в темных складках платья ожившей матери господней. Матерь божья предстала не в парче серебряной, засаленная воксом, а в нищем одеянии. Образ был написан много сотен лет назад: образ богоматери создала Русь, душа народа, те безымянные иконописцы, которые раскиданы по Суздалям: богомать—мать и защитница всех рождающих и скорбящих. Мне богомать предстала—древнею и новою Россией, подлинною Русью, из веков растущую в века, такою древнею, такою подлинной. Богомать предстала обнаженной, приближенной, пришла, приблизилась, склонилась,—была ключом для Всей Руси. (pp. 224–25)

Whether or not there exists the facility for a particular form of 'iconic' reception and response, there are certainly different levels of participatory response to different signs.

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[51] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 225.

It is significant that it is expressly the named *bogomat'* which is the symbol. In its institutionalized guise the painted representation of a woman is *bogomat'*; without her semiotic props she becomes much more, because the observer is given greater participatory freedom to experience and interpret. For the purposes of this analysis the distinction between essentially participatory iconic and essentially mediatory semiotic can be dispensed with in favour a variable degree of participation along a scale of semiosis from largely hermetic symbolism at one end to creative participation at the other, premised upon the encroachment of conceptualization on the territory of experience. Hutchings, too, allows some overlap between the

> two different epistemological systems, both of which exert influence on East and West (though in differing degrees). One—prominent in, but by no means exclusive to the Catholic and Protestant cultures of western Europe—is reflected in the economy of the sign with its dualistic hierarchies of matter and essence, particular and universal, its espousal of the logic of self-identities and oppositions and its emphasis on absence and mediation. The other—progressively repressed, though far from inactive in the west since Rome's split with Byzantium—is best encapsulated in Orthodox trinitarian thought with its urge to resist the hierarchies of particular and universal, flesh and spirit, its rejection of the deathly effects of self-identity and its orientation towards participation.[52]

Given this qualitative difference, fundamentally speaking, all forms of representation—literary, sculptural, linguistic or otherwise—and the response that this implies, involve conceptualization, and as conceptualization is the corollary of absence, then the filling of that absence by means of an embodiment or representation of the conceptualization

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[52] Hutchings, 1997, pp. 220–21.

is, unavoidably, a broadly semiotic process. Any particular response to any particular sign must be dependent upon the contextual status of sign and 'reader'. Responses will unavoidably vary according to factors such as the relative emphasis on, for example, mysticism or materialism, obtaining in the dimension of assessment in which the reader of that sign is enmeshed. By acknowledging that the transition from perception to representation involves conceptualization, and that realism and symbolism, metaphor, iconography and so on, correspond to different levels on a common scale of conceptualization, the reader is under less pressure to bind the text into a taxonomic straitjacket, and run the risk of excessively restricting its potential through the application of myopic interpretative models.

4. 5. 7. *Tret'ia stolitsa* as allegory

According to Gary Browning's account, *Tret'ia stolitsa* is an 'allegorical cultural confrontation between East and West.'[53] What is not clear from this wording is whether the cultural confrontation between East and West is the allegory—and if so, what of?—or whether the action of *Mat'-machekha* is an allegory of the cultural confrontation between East and West, which is impossible as it is that which constitutes—at the macro-level at least—the subject matter of the text, and supplies the backdrop for the history of Mr Smith. That is to say, it cannot, by definition, be an allegory of what it is about, in which case, if it *is* an allegory, then what of? What this does illustrate again is a genre-fixation with allegory as part of canonical interpretative tradition. In this connection it makes sense to regard the literary canon not so much as a core of authorized texts, as a core of authorized models. Texts that can be most

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[53] Browning, 1985, p. 22.

easily adapted to fit those models simultaneously achieve respectability and reinforce the model. Once a particular model is accepted, it begins to gather momentum. The relative anonymity suggested by Mr Smith's surname, and the assertion that there will be neither sphere of action nor any specified heroes, serve as evidence that can be marshalled in its support. And if it is an allegory, then Mr Smith cannot be 'real', because he must symbolize the Western aspect of this cultural confrontation. He becomes simply the generic, philistine Englishman, equal to that *cipher* which was the Gentleman from San Francisco. Pil'niak's interpolation of the excerpt from that work into his own can be used in evidence to support this contention. But, as has been shown, the distinction between realistic literary constructs and symbolic literary constructs is not as rigid as might be supposed. Given that the Gentleman has been shown to be something more than merely a cipher, then it may be possible that the same is true of Mr Smith.

4. 5. 8. Mr Smith

4. 4. 8. 1. Mr Smith and the Gentleman: a reciprocal analysis

In what follows use is made of the evolving understanding of the Gentleman and Mr Smith in order to perform a reciprocal and mutually accretive analysis of both characters. Similarities and differences will be highlighted as in any comparative study, with the emphasis on comparative evidence as the grounds for conclusions. With regard to Mr Smith himself, the point of departure corresponds to that adopted with the Gentleman: the speculation that concern with his typicality has precipitated him into a literary pigeonhole.

4. 5. 8. 2. A typical Englishman?

The first indication that Mr Smith is more than a literary vehicle created simply to

demonstrate the redundancy of Western culture, epitomized by the English middle class, is that he is not an Englishman at all; he is Scottish, with Edinburgh his home town, when London would have been the likely option. And at this point, it is worth pausing to reflect on Bunin's choice of San Francisco. It is true that in 1915, when *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko* was published, this city would have still been relatively fresh in the public mind after the earthquake of 1906 and this may have prompted Bunin to select it. Certainly, the boom-town days associated with the California Gold Rush of 1849 were long gone by the time Bunin wrote this text in 1915 and California had been a state for over half a century, but even so New York, or Boston, may have conferred a greater degree of anonymity. It may be significant that the Pacific Stock Exchange was located in San Francisco, and the town was undergoing a period of rebuilding and expansion in the wake of the earthquake leading up to the 1915 World's Fair. The location may have suited Bunin as an example of a new and expanding mercantile centre; fertile ground for the growth of conspicuous consumption and philistinism. It was also the furthest west that it was physically possible to go in the U S A, representing a frontier of Western and westward development, both physically and economically. Capitalist civilization had reached its westerly limit, tamed it, and colonized it. But though this justification can be found for Bunin's choice, what of Pil'niak's. No such parallel, other than that of geographical remoteness from the capital, can be drawn between San Francisco and Scotland. The popular image of Scotland in Russia had been to a large extent formed by the various translations, adaptations, and dramatizations of the works of Sir Walter Scott produced in the early nineteenth century by, among others, Zhukovskii, Kozlov, and Shakhovskoi. Prior to this, Scott's work had been available in French translation, and given his significance in

the development of early Russian Romanticism, it is arguable, bearing in mind the distance factor, that the romanticization of Scotland was yet more pronounced in the Russian mind than the English.[54] Mr Smith shares the same birthplace of Edinburgh with Walter Scott, and his Christian name with the outlaw Robert MacGregor, immortalised as the hero of *Rob Roy*. No matter that these connections may be tenuous, what remains is a perception of Scotland as an outpost of dissent; that part of the British Isles most likely, if at all, to produce a Razin or a Pugachev, chosen in preference to the south of England as the accepted home of middle-class conformity.

4. 5. 8. 3. A psychoanalytical perspective

A further aspect of individuality is indicated by the nature of Mr Smith's journey. He sets out from Paris and travels east to Russia. According to the eclectic and simplified East–West model, distilled from a mash of Scythianism, Eurasianism, Slavophilism and Spenglerism, England represents a redundant culture, an atrophying, deformed civilization to be juxtaposed with the coiled vitality of the East. And this is the model that Jensen favours, in a way that recalls what has already been said concerning Bunin:

> In long, swaying periods he gives us a minute description of the soft Pullman world. He obliges us to experience it as the Western World on wheels, a west European microcosmos. With trains as exhibition coaches, with station scenes as illustrative material, and with Mr Smith as a letter-writing commentator "Tret'ja stolica" grows into a montage on the confrontation of the New Russia with Old Europe.[55]

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[54] For a full treatment of this phenomenon see, for example, Michael R. Katz, *The Literary Ballad in Early Nineteenth Century Russian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), and William Edward Brown, *A History of Russian Literature of the Romantic Period*, 4 vols (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1986).

[55] Jensen, 1979, p. 195.

The locational structure of the narrative can be broken down into three sections; the West, the East, and the emigration representing the displaced Russian wing of Western civilization. But, by shifting emphasis away from the symbolic and allegorical to an alternative but related psychoanalytic model, these three stages can be viewed in the following terms: Britain representing the superego, the emigration representing the ego, and Russia representing the id. Although the intricacies of psychoanalytical analysis are beyond the remit of this investigation, this does not preclude intertextual reference to the models of Freudian psychoanalytical analysis as an aid to understanding the text. Seen in this way, the series of locations from Europe to Russia may graphically represent corresponding levels of personality: Western Europe correlating with the conventionality, restraint and institutionalized behavioural mores of the superego, the emigration with ego-centred behaviour and, primitive Russia with the innate drives of the id—sex, fear, desire for pleasure, avoidance of pain. The appropriateness of this model to the accommodation of certain aspects of Mr Smith's behaviour which will be looked at more closely below such as the rape, his underlying anxiety, and certain implied sexual proclivities, suggests a greater degree of profundity than has previously been allowed for.

This schema need not be seen in any broadly symbolic light, but the three locations may be perceived as representing three levels of being. It is not implied that by accomplishing this journey, Mr Smith is in any way regressing, but that the locations, being illustrative of a particular understanding of the West, the emigration, and the East, are correspondingly illustrative of three possible states or conditions. Indeed, Mr Smith does not actually spend any time in the émigré location, and it is Paris as the heartland of Western Europe that is the starting place, not England. His Scottish

origin gains further significance in that he is repressed by the laws of English behaviour, while his roots are in a land which, through a combination of romantic associations, though not without a degree of historical justification, had a reputation for untamability and disrespect for authority. This suggests that, as highly developed as Mr Smith's super-ego may appear to be, there is a fundamental flux beneath the surface, which may be just as fragile as the inwardly reflecting windows of the railway carriage that protect him from the outside world.[56] It is the manifestations of this flux resulting from fractures in the superego that are the primary focus of interest for this analysis, and it is therefore necessary to examine the external evidence of Mr Smith's conduct in order to ascertain whether there are sufficient grounds to warrant some readjustment to the more negative conclusions that have been drawn about him.

4. 5. 8. 4. The personal aspect

An early indication that this is the case is provided by Mr Smith's activities when the train stops at the customs point on the German border. Whilst his American travelling companions pass the time in drinking cognac, Mr Smith goes directly to the telegraph office and dispatches five telegrams. The last three of these, indicating their relative significance, are on business matters, whilst the first is to his mother in Edinburgh, and concerns his ex-wife, and the second is to his ex-wife, Elizabeth Chudley (*Elisavet Chudlei*), in Paris. They deal with what is obviously a deeply personal matter, uppermost in Mr Smith's mind, and, remembering the critical evaluations of Mr Smith discussed above, are strikingly selfless. The first, to his mother, reads: 'Мама, сейчас я переезжаю границу. Прошу вас, простите миссис Елисавет: она не

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[56] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 120.

виновата...'(p. 124). And the second to his ex-wife: 'И еще раз я шлю Вам мое поклонение, Елисавет, и прошу Вас считать себя свободной' (p. 124). That his preoccupation with his ex-wife takes precedence above both his business affairs, and above socializing over cognac is significant. At this juncture, at least, he appears neither as a self-centred egotist, nor as a personification of homogeneity; his compassion separates him from the crowd.

4. 5. 8. 5. Mortality and the exertion of the ego

A more significant incident correlating with the Gentleman's *Uzhasno* episode, in that it relates to a deeper level of being, occurs while Smith is in Moscow. He has just been for an evening stroll before retiring to bed. The passage opens as follows: 'Мистер Смит с вечера перед сном сделал прогулку по городу, спустился по Тверской ко Кремлю, возвращался улицей Герцена и затем прошел бульварным кольцом' (p. 168–69). All seems to be well, and the impression is given of a respectable, archetypal Englishman taking an evening constitutional. But not only is he not even English, but, in addition to this, the passage is unexpectedly undermined. Without even a paragraph break, there is an abrupt syntagmatic cæsura:

> И ночью, должно быть, перед рассветом, в пустынной своей большой комнате—он проснулся в липкой испарине, в страхе, в нехорошем одиночестве, в нехорошей какой-то промозглости. Это повторялось и раньше, когда, в старости уже, сердечные перебои кидали кровь к вискам, а сердце, руки и ноги немели. Сейчас же, проснувшись, Роберт Смит первой мыслью, первым ощущением осознал совершенно ясно, промозгло-одиноко, что он—умрет. (p. 169)

Expectations are abruptly overturned. The smooth exterior may merely be a facade concealing a being very different than the one that is presented to the outside world.

The possibility arises that the initial evaluation of Mr Smith, based on superficial evidence and expectations derived from a particular literary understanding of Smith as a representative of a generic type, may be flawed. There is another Mr Smith constrained beneath the exterior. What is particularly significant is that the realization that he is going to die presents itself not as a result of the physical sensations he is experiencing. As far as he is aware there is no prospect of imminent death; on the contrary: 'у него осталось еще пятнадцать, двадцать лет' (p. 169). The physical sensations can therefore be seen as an effect rather than a cause. And furthermore, Mr Smith *awakens in* a cold sweat, tormented by fear and loneliness. It is not something that takes place after he has woken up as a result of reflection. He awakens in a large, dark, empty room, deprived of any signposts, or landmarks that could function as reference points against which to formulate his consciousness. And in this transitional zone between consciousness and unconsciousness, the boundary between thought and feeling ceases to have significance, because *pervoi mysl'iu, pervym oshchushcheniem osoznal sovershennо iasno* (p. 169). He is in a conscious state, but is deprived of external, perceptible signs as aids to the reconstruction of his protective persona. The anxiety that wakes him is fundamental to his human condition of being. The persona that clothes Mr Smith, has not evolved to protect him from what is without, but from what is within. And this casts doubt upon the allegations of vacuity directed against Mr Smith. It is innate fear and isolation *coupled with* the physical sensations that are the catalyst to his awareness of death. It is not the prospect of death prefigured by physical suffering that leads to awareness, as in *Smert' Ivana Il'icha*, but, conversely, it is hidden causes leading to physical symptoms, together revealing a fear of death. Unfortunately for Mr Smith there is no external

source of illumination; there is no metaphysical cushion to ameliorate his suffering. Where Ivan Il'ich's death is cathartic, Smith's is pointless—for all but Razin. Smith is not even aware of its approach, nor the reason for it. Razin could not bear the sight of his wife's down-at- heel shoes, and the pattern of cause and effect make little sense outside the mind of the perpetrator.

The unconscious anxiety that is fundamental to life is reflected in a conscious, personal fear of death. The former, which the subject hides from himself, manifests itself in the latter, which the subject hides from others. This point is illustrated by reference to Mr Smith's wartime experience of trench life: 'В те годы все европейцы—мужчины знали, что такое: окоп, с единственной, промозглой, затаенной мыслью-ощущением;—«не меня, не меня, не я— —»' (p. 183). In this passage the use of vocabulary itself recalls the *nekhoroshaia promozglost'* of Mr Smith's night-time trauma. Here *promozglyi*, a qualitative adjective reflecting trench life, applies not to the physical conditions themselves, but directly to the thought-sensation. There is thereby not only a reiteration of the common intuitive source of thought and feeling in the hyphenated linking of *mysl'* and *oshchushchenie*, but a further undermining of any distinction between the two by means of a physical qualification.

What is also significant about this passage is the modulation from accusative/genitive to nominative; that is to say from object to subject. The *ne menia* expressing fear for one's own life, is notably replaced by *ne ia*. There is thus a modulation from perception of oneself as object represented within the world, as a potential victim, to subject, as bearer of responsibility for co-ordination of presentations and instigation of actions. The assumption of the role of object absolves one of the responsibilities, and

personal actions are excusable because responsibility for them is surrendered to others, aphoristically speaking: *kto kogo*. Momentarily, in the proximity of death, Smith's perception of himself as *menia* gives way to *ia*. In this sentence, too, there is an oscillation between degrees of generality coming to rest in the subject; through *vse evropeitsy* to *muzhchiny* to *menia* and finally, to *ia*.

4. 5. 8. 6. Triumph of the ego: the rape

On leave from the front, however, once the threat has been removed, there is a return to insulated egotism that correlates with *kto-kogo*: 'И все знали, что такое—отдых в тылу, когда весь мир—мой, и я—бесконечно, (p. 183). Again there is the transition from the generality of *vse* to the particularity of *ia*. But this is not the sense of *ia* arising from proximity of death but from the illusion of immortality that obscures the anxiety of mortality; the world and all it contains is to be subjected to the actions of the ego.[57] It is not for nothing that the next line concerns the mobilization of prostitutes for the use of German soldiers, the use of others as objects for self-gratification. And what follows directly on from this, again without a paragraph break, is the description of Mr Smith's rape of a young girl whose trust he had gained whilst billeted on a farm. Smith's entry into the kitchen on that night, after the girl has opened the door to him, establishes a link with Dostoevskii through a resonance with *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*: 'Он хотел только попросить вина, но на пороге, вдруг блеснула под луной железка-скребка,—он сделал большой шаг и вошел в кухню, (p. 183). Although there is a parallel with Raskol'nikov in the

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[57] The use of the adverb *beskonechno* emphasizes the active nature of the ego, imposing its will on others.

stepping over of a threshold, there is also a significant difference. Where Raskol'nikov deliberates and attempts to justify his action in advance, Smith's crime is not premeditated. It is made clear that it was his intention simply to ask for wine, as he had done once already that day. But the crime is actually precipitated through his attention being suddenly drawn to the threshold, highlighted, for Smith as for us, by the light of the moon. Though the crossing of a threshold has serious repercussions for Smith, as it did for Raskol'nikov, the motivation is different. Smith is prompted to step over the line by becoming aware of its existence. The question of moral or ethical justification which is paramount in Raskol'nikov's case plays no part here. Neither is it exclusively a question of the satisfaction of animal urges, but of the wilful transgression of a threshold in order to satisfy those urges. The threshold does exist for Smith, and so what is accomplished is the gratuitous exercise of the subject's will.

4. 5. 8. 7. Biblical intertexts

On leaving the kitchen, Smith makes no attempt to prevent another soldier, who has been lurking outside, from entering, and the following morning the girl is found dead, the kitchen floor 'затоптан грязными ногами, точно здесь прошел полк'(p. 184). Bound up in self-gratification, Smith could not be aware at that time of what the consequences of his action might turn out to be: '—Роберт Смит—знал ли тогда он, что «Мне отмщение, и Аз воздам»,—что человеческий мир складывается—из человеческих единиц' (p. 184). At that time the world and all within it existed for him alone; there was no room for any other than himself. How the change in Smith came about is not revealed, but what is clear is the evidence for a process of development through experience: 'Мистер Роберт Смит много женщин познал [...] пока не узпал старенькой этой истины,—той, что

человек самое ценное—и любовь: единственное—в этом мире' (p. 184). This rather trite but nonetheless important 'truth' constitutes a synopsis of the immediate context of Pil'niak's quotation from the New Testament. The line is taken from Paul's Epistle to the Romans Chapter 12. 19, and an understanding of the original context facilitates the appreciation of its function within the narrative. The passage is not concerned with imminent divine retribution, but with the negativity of revenge, and of evil in general as an option open to man. Surrounding verses are illustrative of this: 'Никому не воздавайте злом за зло' (12. 17), 'Если возможно с вашей стороны, будьте в мире со всеми людьми' (12. 18), and 'Не будь побежден злом, но побеждай зло добром' (12. 21). Pil'niak is using a biblical intertextual association to demonstrate that rather than a narrowly Christian message, the reference, recalling Kant's categorical imperative, has a far greater extra-religious, ethical significance.

The exposition of this incident is particularly meaningful in the analysis of Smith in that it shows that, following his return from the front and the separation from his wife which has come about as a result of their extra-marital activities, he undergoes a profound change. 'Мистер Смит понял тогда', writes Pil'niak, 'что значит «Мне отмщение, и Аз воздам.»'[58] It demonstrates that Smith is capable of change through experience, and secondly it exposes the guilt that he bears for an action that can never be atoned for. Unlike the beneficiaries of a Christian god, there is no salvation for Smith; there is no redeeming light as there was for Ivan Il'ich, and Smith's condition is immeasurably more pitiable, as it is proportionately less explicit. The only

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[58] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 185.

option available to him—ineffectual as it may seem—is passivity as a means to avoid doing any more harm.

And what makes this New Testament quotation doubly interesting is that Paul is himself quoting from an earlier text, namely from the Old Testament book, Deuteronomy. I quote the Russian version: 'У меня отмщение и воздаяние, когда поколеблется нога их; ибо близок день погибели их, скоро наступит уготованное для них.'[59] Pil'niak is quoting Paul, who is in his turn quoting God's words from the book of Deuteronomy, the book dealing particularly with the social and moral laws of the Israelites, purported to have been written by Moses. The quotation has a respectable intertextual provenance, devolving from God, through Moses, and Paul, and reappearing in post-revolutionary Russia. A complex intertextual significance is only to be expected, and not surprisingly its Old Testament function is at variance with that which it fulfilled in Paul's Letter to the Romans. In this original context it concerns God's injunction, through Moses, to the Israelites to observe the moral law that is set out for them, on pain of terrible retribution to be exacted against them as a race. The nature of this retribution is set out in verses 22–33, as exemplified by verse 25: 'Отвне будет губить их меч, а в домах ужас—и юношу, и девицу, и грудного младенца, и покрытого сединою старца.' Where the New Testament context relates to Mr Smith's conduct in terms of interpersonal relationships, the Old Testament context relates to the moral conduct of the community of which he is part. And verse 32 beginning: 'Ибо виноград их от

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[59] *Vtorozakonie* 32. 35

виноградной лозы Содомской и с полей Гоморрских' cannot help but recall Mr Smith who, on the first night after his return from active service:

> испугал жену, тогда еще наивную, тем, что он не мог уже удовлетвориться естественной страстью, и то, что он делал, показалось ей мерзостю; но когда муж уехал снова на фронт и у нее был любовник, на десятом свидании она захотела, чтоб любовник сделал с ней то же, что делал ее муж. (p.185)

This idea of perpetuation neatly establishes a link between the individual and the race. The two contexts of the biblical quotation thus link the two aspects of *Mat'-machekha*, and the above incident is fixed into a chain of individuals.

4. 5. 8. 8. Summary: looking beneath the surface

The foregoing discussion initiated on the basis of a re-evaluation of Bunin's *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko* suggests that the quality of literary stereotypicality is a product of reader response, and that the hierarchical division of literary presentations that results is correspondingly arbitrary. The affinity that has been revealed between Mr Smith and the Gentleman is now premised upon a whole new set of criteria suggesting that if Mr Smith is a victim of subliminal *Angst* then neither is his counterpart immune. They are reciprocally remodelled.

Literary presentations are the results of selective responses to literary devices. One such literary device was the provision by Bunin, in *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*, of not quite enough powder to mask the blemishes on the skin of the Gentleman's adolescent daughter arising from the impurity of the blood coursing through her equally literary veins: 'Дочь, высокая, тонкая, с великолепными волосами, прелестно убранными, с ароматическим от фиаловых лепешечек дыханием и с

нежнейшими розовыми прыщиками возле губ и между лопаток, чуть припудренных...'[60] That the consequence of identifying and looking beneath the surface of one literary construct is the detection of another, must prompt the question, how are we able even to distinguish one from the other without recourse to models of identification which are themselves the results of processes of distillation? In this way the isolation of the subject is reaffirmed; locked into a system of inadequate modelling to assuage the inaccessibility which characterizes the human condition, the will to maintain faith in those models of at least some degree of common applicability that cushion existence is the linchpin. Without recourse to shared models within which to subsume the self, and the strength to maintain them, exactly how *liveable* would life be? This is the question which is confronted in the next chapter. As an aid to the prosecution of this aspect of the analysis, it is first necessary however to re-address the question of the intertextual location of *Mat'-machekha*.

4. 6. Intertextual expansion

4. 6. 1. Introduction

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the interrelationship between Western civilization, and pre- and post-Revolutionary Russia, as illustrated in *Mat'-machekha*, constitutes only one aspect of that work. There are textual concerns beyond this model of intercultural conflict which have a wider, less context-specific, significance. In the broader spectrum of European Modernist literature there are to be found textual resonances that go beyond these limited parameters, and are symptomatic of a wider concern with issues of subjectivity, identity, and consciousness. More than a publicistic

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[60] *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*, p. 519.

document, *Mat'-machekha* has marked links not only with domestic literature, but also with broadly contemporaneous classics of European literature and beyond. In what follows, attention will be drawn to selected examples of shared preoccupations and concerns in order to demonstrate the possibility of discovering a productive intertextual network functioning at a level above that of immediate contextual significance.

4. 6. 2. Mann: time and space

Although the vehicle of an epic, physical journey as a means and a metaphor for a process of self-discovery has long been a staple literary device, a new facet of this device evolved both as a means of expressing the subjective nature of the understanding of time and space, and as a reflection of the emphasis placed by Freudian psychology on revelatory regression as a means of accounting for the present. This link between the temporal and the spatial, clearly expressed in Smith's journey into Russia, was, for example, paralleled by Thomas Mann in his second novel *The Magic Mountain*, first published in 1924, but written over the course of the previous twelve years. Digressing from a description of Hans Castorp's train journey from his home town of Hamburg to a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps, Mann not only draws attention to this phenomenon, but goes on to elucidate it in a way which augments an appreciation of the textual function of Smith's journey:

> Space, like time, engenders forgetfulness; but it does so by setting us bodily free from our surroundings and giving us back our primitive unattached state. Yes, it can even, in the twinkling of an eye, make something like a vagabond of the pedant and Philistine. Time, we say, is

> like Lethe; but change of air is a similar draught, and, if it works less thoroughly, does so more quickly.[61]

As Hans Castorp moves from the urban sophistication of Hamburg to the pastorality of the Swiss Alps, so Smith passes from the refined and processed civilization of the West into the primal conditions of Russia. Time and space it seems can no longer be conceived of in terms of simple parallel unidirectionality. Movement forward in historical time from a point in historical time dims the memory of that point, yet movement through space, by returning us to a primitive state, in another sense, places us before that point in time. The *unattached state* that Mann refers to is the divorce from that habitual context in which the sense of chronological time was rooted, and introduction into a new context. There are thus two possibilities: to recede from a particular state either by moving away from it, chronologically speaking, into the future, or away from it, spatially, into the past. By showing both processes to be in effect, the subjectivity of time is revealed, and the distinction between past, present, and future becomes fluid. Chronological time is shown to be a tool with which to model the passage of events into a narrative of one's own existence. Textually speaking, Pil'niak's lack of respect for Realism's narrative conventions of time and space allows the incongruity in *Mat'-machekha* of a meeting at the Polish embassy which is both above space and time, in that it comprises characters, including Lloyd George, Mr Smith, his mother, his lawyer, and others, who are simultaneously at other locations (p. 187). The significance of Mr Smith's state of consciousness lies in his

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[61] Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans.by H. T. Lowe-Porter (London: Minerva, 1996), p. 4.

sense of individual awareness and concomitant inability to forget that derives from the barrier which prevents him from succumbing to full contextual integration.

4. 6. 3. Conrad: the prototypical Kurtz

As has been suggested above, there are substantial grounds for arguing the case for the existence of parallel hidden undercurrents running beneath the smooth surface appearances presented by both the Gentleman from San Francisco and Mr Smith. If, as has been maintained, these two characters represent more than an expression of the redundancy of Western consumèrism, then it is to be expected that the *malaise* with which they are both affected should have a wider significance. A literary creation who, from the available evidence, has led a life diametrically opposed to that of the gentleman from San Francisco, comes finally to the same indistinct conclusion; the final words of the ivory trader Kurtz in Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* foreshadow those of the Gentleman from San Francisco:

> Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. [...] It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror—of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath—
>
> 'The horror! The horror!'[62]

It is tempting to speculate that the image at which he cries out is a mental reflection of himself. But having said this, it must be admitted that this passage is so replete with

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[62] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 239.

semantic potential that it has been described by Cedric Watts as: 'a thematic nexus, an ambiguous statement which sums up, without resolving, several of the paradoxical themes of the tale'.[63] A rhetorical question asked of Kurtz by Marlow of particular relevance to the investigation of Mr Smith and the Gentleman from San Francisco, and made more significant by the external contrast in their life-style, is: how and why did he become the way he was? In answering, Marlow suggests the following:

> I think it [the wilderness] had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude—and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core.(p. 221)

This suggests that though the conditions under which Kurtz existed prompted him to behave in a particular way, the ultimate reason why those conditions produced the man they did was that there was nothing inside him to prevent this from happening.[64] The conditions functioned as a catalyst in that they were responsible for activating potentialities that were integral to him, but of which he himself was not aware, and which required a vacuum within which to manifest themselves. Similarly, Mr Smith acted in a particularly brutal way under certain conditions, and the Gentleman from San Francisco continued to act in a way that reflected his own set of circumstances. By

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[63] Cedric Watts, Explanatory Note 239 (Ibid.), p. 274.

[64] Gary Browning has noted a point of contact between *Heart of Darkness* and *Mat' syra zemlia* on the grounds that 'Pil'niak's story, too, is an exploration of the horrifying realms of raw instinct and irrationality.' (Gary Browning, 'Boris Pil'niak's *Moist Mother Earth*: Tale of the Extinguished Sun', in *After the Watershed: Russian Prose 1917–27. Selected Essays,* ed. by Nicholas Luker (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1996), pp. 27–40.) The observation is not developed in the essay, which is concerned with thematic description and symbolic imagery. The case of Nekul'cv from *Mat' syra zemlia* does, however, lend weight to my argument as he is a Bolshevik whose convictions are shown to be derived from and dependent upon contextual pressure. They are easily undermined in a new context, and his essential vacuity is revealed.

so doing they become integrated with those circumstances, formed by them and part of them. Thus hollow men by virtue of being hollow, and having no substance or resistance, have the potentiality to be filled by whatever their circumstances present them with, suggesting an arbitrariness and interchangeability which explains Pil'niak's observation in *Mat'-machekha* that 'Емельян Емельяныч был в сущности—и Иваном Александровичем Каллистратовым, российским обывателем, и ротмистром Тензигольским и Лоллием Кронидовым, российским интеллигентом.'[65] The alternative, standard appraisal of the characters as set out by Viktor Gofman is that they are simply generic types:

> Так и англичанин Смит, в сущности, лишь сюжетный *знак* англичанина, Архипов,— условный знак большевика («кожаная куртка») а Трубецкой—князя эмигранта, Лиза Калитина—девушки («как березовая горечь в июне»), а Оленька Кунц—сов-барышни («О. Ку. и палочки и хвостик») и т.д. и т.д.[66]

4. 6. 4. Eliot: *The Hollow Men*

The more sympathetic and subtle analysis is echoed by the following lines from T. S. Eliot's poem of 1925 *The Hollow Men*, with its epigraph taken from *Heart of Darkness*, 'Mistah Kurtz—he dead':

> Those who have crossed
> With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
> Remember us—if at all—not as lost
> Violent souls, but only
> As the hollow men

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[65] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 117, repeated with minor alterations on p. 209.
[66] Viktor Gofman, 'Mesto Pil'niaka', in *Bor. Pil'niak: Stat'i i materialy* (Leningrad: Academia, 1928), 7–44 (p. 18).

The stuffed men.[67]

The lines suggest that death, and by implication life, has two levels, and recall the double death of the Gentleman from San Francisco and Razin's words '*Ia vse ravno mertv*'. Peter Henry posed the question *How far had he really been alive*?, and this suggests that the Gentleman's death represents not so much an essential change of state from life to death, but simply a passage to *death's other Kingdom.* In this sense, the hollow man's existence is a living death, and, furthermore, it is a parasitic existence. Secondly, this supports my contention above that hollow men can be stuffed with anything from metaphorical straw—Leaning together/Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!—to the copious quantities of food which reflect the values of the society of which the Gentleman is part. The desire to consume as a dormant potential is activated from without, and ironically constrained from without in the form of the restrictive clothing which reflects the demands of that society. For the Gentleman, the image is doubly significant; a hollow man stuffed with food, and stuffed into his clothes. The imagery in Mr Smith's case is less graphic, but the conclusion is the same; these are not *violent souls*, these are *the hollow men, the stuffed men.* They may be parasitic, but they are passively parasitic. Furthermore they retain the potentiality for a sense of guilt, though one for which there is no antidote with which to 'cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff/Which weighs upon the heart'.[68] And it weighs as heavy upon the heart of Mr Smith as it does upon that of Lady Macbeth.

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[67] T. S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men* in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969) 83–86 (p. 83).
[68] Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 4.

This line of reasoning sheds further light upon Bunin's allusion to Tiberius in *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisiko*. What is significant in this interpolation is the juxtaposition of the consequences of the death of Tiberius—'и человечество навеки запомнило его'[69]—with the inconsequentiality of the death of the Gentleman. No-one will remember this insignificant man; his life was meaningless to anyone other than himself and his immediate family, and he will leave no legacy, other than a financial one. As an actively evil man Tiberius's notoriety is enduring. The Gentleman is not essentially evil, he is oppressed and constrained by his context, as he is constrained by his clothes. His death is insignificant because it has no effect on the life of the islanders, the passengers on the homeward voyage who are completely unaware of the corpse in the hold, nor anyone else. Where Tiberius instigated an oppressive regime, the Gentleman is the product of one, an insignificant man who quite easily could have been someone else if the conditions had allowed. That is the significance of his anonymity, and explains the emphasis on superficial details. He is a man with very little will, lacking the courage even to doubt himself.

The proverbial 'vestige of humanity', retained by these hollow men, is a common potentiality to be activated by an external catalyst. This may be a physical reflection, as in the case of the Gentleman, a mental projection in the case of Kurtz, or, what amounts to the same thing, the mental reflection of Smith upon himself which is contingent upon his reminiscences of his treatment of the French girl and his wife. Memory, as potential conscience, must therefore play a crucial role as it is the raw material of internal dialogue.

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[69] *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*, p. 325.

4. 6. 5. 1. Taciturnity

The legacy of psychological realism coupled with post-Revolutionary anti-psychologism weighs so heavily upon the early Soviet Russian novel that, in the absence of exposed mental processes, there continues to be a danger of equating taciturnity with mental vacuity. This is not the case in drama, simply by virtue of the fact that here the role of the author as controller is deceptively overshadowed by the presence of live players; the author is excused from interfering, because 'real' people are involved. Following Aristotelian poetics, it is the form that is closest to real life. But both the novel and the play are literary fabrications even if the writer's presence is less obvious in the latter because of the nature of the medium. Because there is space in the novel for authorial explanations, there is the danger that the lack of such explanations will be misconstrued as the absence of anything to be explained. This could not be the case in, for example, the plays of Chekhov, where interpretation depends, to a much greater extent than is popularly permissible in the novel, on the filling in of the gaps. A similar level of indulgence can be permitted the short story characterized by a reduced level of narrative transformation by virtue of its peculiar nature, resembling as it does a *tableau*, an extract, or a scene from a play. On the other hand, when, in a novel, the reader is privileged neither to the intricacies of a character's mind, nor to the expression of that mind through speech, there is a temptation to read a character as superficial, or as a cipher lacking individuality, with formulaic significance or symbolic function. This assumption has been made, as has been shown, in the case of Mr Smith. Whilst guarding against the danger of unrestrained speculation, it must be admitted that the quality of taciturnity as a characterizing feature can have a deeper significance.

It is true that Smith's oral articulations are as minimal and mundane as those of the Gentleman from San Francisco. However, his mental articulations in the form of speculative reflections are lucid, as are his written communications. In fact, this is how we learn what we know of Smith; through his speculative attempts to understand the world, and to record those thoughts in concrete form. At a simple metaphoric level this could be construed as one side in a comparison between the impotency of Western thought and Russian action. As a narrowly context-specific interpretation this may well have appealed to partisan commentators, but, whilst admitting the possibility of this position, I suggest that this feature of the text represents a facet of a problem of subjectivity and communication that goes beyond the parameters set by the orthodox understanding of the interrelationship between post-Revolutionary Russia and the West.

4. 6. 5. 2. Joyce and isolation

The isolation which Smith suffers as a result of his inability to communicate has a parallel in Joyce's *Ulysses* in what Declan Kiberd describes as the 'lonely inarticulacy of Bloom'.[70] Leopold Bloom, like Smith, is capable only of the most mundane conversation, whilst his thoughts, though not profound, are complex and idiosyncratic. His thoughts are individualistic, where his utterances, arising from and conforming to particular situations or sets of conditions, are not. It is debatable whether such responses warrant the status of communication at all, other than at a minimally phatic level. Publicly, however, Bloom is perceived, as is Smith, as the product of his

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[70]Declan Kiberd, 'Introduction', in James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. IX-LXXXVIII (p. XI).

attempts at communication. The fallibility of the channels of communication, through interference, is graphically illustrated in both novels. Bloom's isolation is further emphasized by Joyce in the newspaper report of Paddy Dingham's funeral which contains a list of mourners that include 'L. Boom'. Pil'niak repeatedly draws attention to the fact that due to the absence of *theta* from the Russian alphabet, Smith's name can no longer be written down.

A possible interpretation of this, and one with political or symbolic appeal, is that, on the grounds that *theta* was not actually abolished until the post-Revolutionary reforms of 1918, this represents the redundancy of Smith's class as a whole. However, enthusiasm for this must be tempered by the fact that the reform of 1918 was the culmination of several decades of debate. The abolitions had been first proposed as early as 1904, though they were not finally affirmed by decree until 1918. There was therefore nothing specifically Revolutionary about this reform. What is more significant for this discussion is the reaction of the section of society most affected by orthographic reforms. It was the Old Believers who were, and continue to be, the most outraged and offended by the first major reform of Peter the Great in 1708, officially redesigning and renaming the script *grazhdanskii shrift* as opposed to the *tsirkovnyi shrift*, and again by that of 1918, which saw the abolition of *desiaterichnoe*, *theta*, *izhitsa* and *yat'*. In their eyes these changes altered the basic tool for the transmission of Old Believer literary culture, and thus contributed to a further erosion of their means of maintaining a cohesive identity.[71] Where Peter's reforms did signify a rejection of an

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[71] For a fuller treatment of this see: D.S. Likhachev, 'Doklad o staroi orfografii', *Russkaia rech'*, 1993.1, pp. 43–51., and John Sullivan, 'The Old Believers and Orthographic Reform in the Twentieth Century', *Slavonica*, 3 (1996–97), pp. 7–27.

old system, the personal significance for Smith in the lack of *theta* is the distortion in the means available to him to project himself, that moving from one context to another involves. Smith's name can no longer be written down. By moving from West to East his name has become distorted. What this demonstrates is the inadequacies of channels of communication as the only means of approximating subjective perspectives and concerns. In other words, the discrepancy is between perception and communication. This is a discrepancy which was of major concern to Joyce. In a discussion of *Portrait of the Artist*, Christopher Butler has described Stephen Daedalus as 'deeply preoccupied by the disjunction between his (unique) consciousness and (public) language'.[72] Butler has parenthesized the properties which respectively define individual consciousness and, necessarily shared, language. In Smith's case he perceives himself and his own, changing, contexts from an inescapable personal perspective, but as he moves into a new context he is seen by others in a new light. Though he is *Smith* to himself, in a new context he is *Smit*, or anything else that may arise as a result of the coupling of his, intrinsically flawed, attempts to communicate himself, with the attempts of others to understand him against the background of that context. Thus, a measure of objectivity is available to the participants of a context by virtue of their participation; objectivity is shared subjectivity, and is thus incomplete because it is context specific. More than illustrations of their isolation then, as constructs of language *Boom* and *Smit* demonstrate the inadequacy of language itself as a means of conveying meaning, and thereby undermine the usefulness of the idea of invariability of meaning as a whole. Smith also, as the product of a context and as

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[72] Butler, 1994, p. 99.

participant in the context that made him *Smith*, will share a level of context-based objectivity; this is the conforming part of him. The more context-objective a character's motivations are, the more he becomes a part of that context. A graphic example is provided by the Gentleman from San Francisco. However, he too is able to demonstrate another level of subjectivity. It becomes clear that there is considerable overlap between subjectivity and objectivity. If objectivity is context based, then the only passage to self-awareness is subjectivity. It is of no use to attempt to 'see ourselves as others see us', which simply results in self-reevaluation and realignment with conformity to that arbitrary context. The opposite is what is required; to confront ourselves as *we* see ourselves. This is not a question of the subject attempting to achieve distance from himself, in an attempt to objectify himself, but rather of attempting to overcome this distance; to confront himself as he sees himself outside of a context, and this is arguably the achievement of Kurtz, the Gentleman, and Smith in their moments of revelation

4. 6. 6. Ego and memory: Trifonov

The assumed objective values of a given context can function as a justification for essentially egotistical behaviour, and recourse to such values is thus tantamount to a denial of personal responsibility. The resurgence of memory, however, functions as an intrusive counterbalance to this denial, destabilizing the reassuring irresponsibility of conformity by engendering guilt and conscience. This inability to 'forget' troublesome aspects of one's life, to subjugate one's memory to one's ego, and reject an awareness of one's own self, which afflicts the Gentleman from San Francisco and Smith to varying degrees, has been minutely investigated by Iurii Trifonov, in, amongst other works, *Dom na naberezhnoi* and *Ischeznovenie*. Although from a later period, these

works demonstrate a return to concerns of fragmentation and the subject in the broad tradition of Modernist literature, whose development in Russia was arrested for political reasons that did not affect the course of European Modernism in the same way. *Dom na naberezhnoi* is particularly concerned with the subsumption of personal responsibility into societal conformity, as the opening paragraph makes clear:

> Никого из этих мальчиков нет теперь на белом свете. Кто погиб на войне, кто умер от болезни, иные пропали безвестно. А некоторые, хотя и живут, превратились в других людей. И если бы эти другие люди встретили бы каким-нибудь колдовским образом тех, исчезнувших в бумазейных рубашонках, в полотняных туфлях на резиновом ходу, они не знали бы, о чем с ними говорить. Боюсь, не догадились бы даже, что встретили самих себя.[73]

It appears from Trifonov's summation that some are able to successfully accomplish the subsumption of the self into society and the concomitant abandonment of personal responsibility. And yet in a further investigation into the process of egotistical metamorphosis in his last novel *Ischeznovenie*, Trifonov demonstrates that this result is not necessarily so easy to achieve. Memory stubbornly refuses to submit to the ego. *Ischeznovenie* concludes with the embarrassing incident from Gorik's childhood at the dinner table. Having remained silent throughout the meal, he suddenly sees a bug on the tablecloth, and before he has had time to think, yells out *Klop!* The company is immediately plunged into confusion, and Gorik later receives a slap from his father for his stupidity. The significance of this incident lies not in its content but in the fact that it is recorded. That night, unable to sleep for turning over this embarrassing event in

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[73] Iurii Trifonov, *Moskovskie povesti* (Moscow: SovetskaiaRossiia, 1988), pp. 349–475 (p. 350).

his mind, he calls his mother and asks her whether the guests will forget. To this she replies: '—Конечно, забудут. [...] Я думаю, что уже завтра или в крайнем случае послезавтра забудут. Главное, чтобы ты сам забыл. [...] Но прошло много лет...'[74] The fact that the incident figures in the text at all demonstrates that, even if it has been forgotten by others, it was never fully forgotten by Gorik himself, and that, by analogy, incidents of greater significance may not have been forgotten either. Although Smith's and Gorik's transgressions and motivations are qualitatively different in that Smith's crime was perpetrated against another party, and motivated by egotistical self-gratification, while Gorik's satisfies neither of these criteria, they were both essentially reactions to specific sets of circumstances, and the personal repercussions are analagous in that both are tormented by the memory of them. What does contribute further information to the discussion, on the other hand, is the essentially analagous nature of the crimes of Smith and Razin, and the essential difference in personal repercussions. Where Smith's *ona ne vinovata* in his telegram to his mother on page 124 implies his own guilt by reference to the innocence of his wife, Razin's philosophy and his words—Я убил человека, потому что он был богат[75]—confirm his belief in the essentially arbitrary nature of ethical standards. His reason for killing Smith is as good as any reason for not killing him. In addition to which, however, he unequivocally accepts the consequences of breaking this particular law. He thus respects the law simply as a statute, and nothing else. Smith on the other hand is not concerned with statutes, but his own sense of guilt. This contrast restates in

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[74] Iurii Trifonov, *Otblesk kostra. Ischeznovenie* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988), pp. 147–300 (p. 300).

[75] *Mat'-machekha*, p. 221.

another form the problem of the inadequacies inherent in the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. Leaving aside the mechanical pragmatism of a categorical imperative, how can Smith possibly know that what he is doing is wrong other than on the basis of either arbitrary contextually based rules, or, ostensibly objective, absolutes? This question is significant by virtue of its unanswerability without recourse to extra-literary philosophical models. In Smith's own particular case all we know is that he sees his action as wrong, that the knowledge of this causes him to behave in a different manner, and this knowledge is the result of a combination of revelation and reflection. This question of self-awareness is further developed in the following chapter through an examination of the text of *Ivan Moskva*.

5. THE WILL TO FAITH

5. 1. *Ivan Moskva*: the text

Broadly speaking the texts that I have been concerned with in this study have been dealt with in chronological order of publication. The final major work to be analysed is *Ivan Moskva*, first published in 1927.[1] The text that I refer to here is from the 1929 edition of collected works.[2] The tale is remarkable for the lack of critical attention it has attracted. It is briefly discussed by Gary Browning,[3] but the only extensive treatment of the text is made by Kenneth Brostrom in his doctoral dissertation of 1973. It is for this reason that I draw almost exclusively on Brostrom in the introductory section of this chapter.

5. 2. *Ivan Moskva*: critical reception

5. 2. 1. Brostrom: the allegorical perspective

Brostrom has interpreted this tale as an allegorical polemic directed against self-righteousness and pride, in which Pil'niak uses the character Ivan to demonstrate the untenability of the Bolshevik project. It is ostensibly an illustration of Pil'niak's change of heart since *Mashiny i volki*:

> Unlike 'Mashiny i volki' Pil'njak's works no longer reveal an inclination to grant any possibility of success to

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[1] 'Ivan Moskva', *Krasnaia nov'*, 1927.6, 41–83.
[2] Boris Pil'niak, *Sobranie sochninenii* (Moscow: Gosudarsvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1929), III, 165–232.
[3] Browning largely follows Brostrom seeing the text in symbolic terms: 'Whereas the mummy is a symbol of human intimacy, the city, Moscow, is a frightening emblem of estrangement and despair' (Browning, 1985, pp. 161–63 (p. 163)).

> the Bolsheviks' radical effort to remake man through the transformation of society. The 'new' will simply be the old with a new facade. Pil'njak was now thoroughly committed to a notion recurrent in his work, that individual men and societies cannot escape the past.[4]

Whatever the validity of these assumptions—and they are in a limited sense compatible with my own conclusions—having made them, the ground is prepared for a particular type of interpretation in their support. A brief investigation of this analysis will serve as an introduction both to certain aspects of the text which are beyond the remit of an allegorical interpretation, and to the more significant surface components of the tale.

The focal point of Brostrom's investigation is the remarkable experience which Ivan undergoes as a result of witnessing a spectacular sunrise on reaching a cliff top and catching sight of the ocean for the first time in his life. Brostrom describes and explains the event in the following terms, detecting therein the origin of an overweening pride which is to characterize Ivan's further development, and linking it in with the plane crash in which Ivan was to perish:

> Then all the earth seemed to shake and heave and collapse, while only the sun and Ivan (so it appeared to him) remained stationary, immovable, triumphant in a world of flux. From that day Ivan felt his destiny lay in his kinship with the sun. The manner of his death mocks that pride, for he perishes in an airplane against the heavens, in a burst of exploding gasoline. (p. 277)

If the tale is to be read as an allegory, then this interpretation must be admitted as a possible option, insofar as the allegorical assumption makes its rejection impossible.

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[4] Brostrom, 1973, p. 282.

The acceptance of the initial premise however exerts a powerful gravitational force on the textual material, drawing it into its own orbit. The aeroplane, for example, becomes 'a symbol of human genius and of man's struggle to escape the embrace in which the earth and its forces have ever held him' (p. 277). The self-perpetuating nature of this process of accretive symbolism is illustrated by the nature of the conclusions that are evolved. These I shall quote in full as they constitute the 'moral' of the story and serve as a convenient point of departure for an alternative interpretation:

> The narrator indicates that this prideful faith symbolized by the airplane leads not only to probable but to inevitable failure and destruction. Ivan and his pilot Obopyn' the elder, have arrogantly exceeded those boundaries delimiting the proper sphere of human action and they must pay the price. The narrator suggests the inevitability of their downfall by drawing an analogy in the early pages of the story between physical and chemical processes and the Biblical admonishment 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' For Ivan there is bitter irony in the fact that his efforts to control the laws of nature provide the action for which there must be an equal and opposite reaction. (p. 279)

The result of the acceptance of this potential formula is that the text is transformed into a simple morality tale in which all the textual material contributes to an exposition on the sin of pride and its inevitable consequences, including that insidious fear of flying which imperceptibly afflicts pilots, and which is to play such a significant role in the development of the text: 'They become victims of fear, of a loss of faith in themselves and in their machine, and if in pride they refuse to quit flying, they inevitably crash. Such a pilot causes Ivan's death' (p. 278). The argument loses some weight when it is remembered that Pil'niak makes plain in the text that it is in the very *imperceptibility* of the disease that the threat lies. Those that remain unaware of it are the ones that risk

disaster. It is, therefore, unconscious fear which is the determining factor, and this must both mitigate the refusal to give up, and somewhat undermine Brostrom's original argument.

On the basis of overwhelming textual evidence, the significance lies not in any fallibility inherent in the technology of the machine, but entirely in the mind of the pilot, and this does indeed accord with the above quotation. However, taking this last quotation from Brostrom in conjunction with his earlier synopsis of the moral, given above, it is unclear whether it is technology which is the culprit, as the objectification of man's will to go beyond an appointed sphere, or his faith in the technology. On one hand it is *prideful faith* which leads to his downfall, suggesting misplaced faith in inadequate technology, whilst on the other it is *loss of faith* in a technologically adequate machine. The problem is further complicated by Brostrom's introduction of the metaphysical element; downfall results by virtue not only of a loss of faith in a technologically adequate machine, as well as by virtue of technological inadequacy in spite of faith, but also by virtue of a metaphysically determined limitation on what is *proper*, which overrides any human contribution, making the first two redundant. The problem is left unresolved, and it is for this reason that Brostrom's analogy drawn with the story of Daedelus and Icarus must be approached with some care. Much is made of this analogy, but it must be remembered that in the case of Icarus it was the limitations of the wax-and-feather technology that were exceeded. In the case of Obopyn' and Ivan

the reliability of the technology—as is emphasized—if meticulously maintained, is not in dispute.[5]

In addition to this, Pil'niak's intertextual references, as has been shown, are seldom straightforward. The meaning deriving from their use in his texts need not necessarily correspond to the meaning with which they are connected in their original sources. Equipped with this awareness, it seems equally plausible that, if a reference to Icarus is to be detected, Pil'niak is drawing attention to the process of myth-building as a means for understanding, regularizing, and making sense of the world, in order to demonstrate the limitations of simplistic, formulaic wisdom. An alternative approach premised upon the Icarus scenario is prompted by a re-examination of the painting by Bruegel which was discussed in Chapter 1 (Plate 6). This painting graphically demonstrates that just as the ploughman in the foreground is bound up in his own ego-centred being, so the problem of Icarus is primarily an 'I' problem, to which great patterns, themes, and overarching schemes of natural determinism, metaphysical moral retribution, or myth-building are external. The personal aspect is necessarily downplayed by the allegorical approach, which must by nature be reductionist to a greater or lesser degree.

Having integrated the tale into the Greek mythological tradition by reference to Icarus, Brostrom accords the Biblical quotation mentioned above a similar function: 'This Judaic association places Ivan's failure within an ancient pattern of belief concerning the consequences of human excess'(p. 279). The predominant role played by the

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[5] Although Ivan's momentous initial confrontation with the sun took place looking out over the sea, he actually crashed on land, and this also weakens the case for the analogy with the drowned Icarus.

ancient mummy similarly prompts an association with the Egyptian sun god Ra because of Pil'niak's 'symbolic use of the sun' (p. 280). This somewhat tenuous link leads to an equally speculative conclusion: 'Ivan's faith has about it the aura of ancient sun worship but with a difference: Ivan believes himself to be the sun's equal' (p. 280). By drawing on the Prometheus myth as analogous to Ivan's attempt to harness the power of radium for the good of man:

> Pil'njak thus links the dawn of the age of faith in the superman with the dawn of human civilization when man was at the mercy of the forces of nature he worshipped. [...] The mummy represents the multitude of faiths from the past, now perishing, which were founded upon that principle of death and resurrection fostered by the rhythms of nature and symbolized by woman. (p. 280)

Through this network of allusions—Judaic, Greek, Egyptian, and pagan—the text is interpreted away into an intricate but superficial allegory, where discovered intertextualities merely restate and buttress a simplistic central thesis.

The reason for the somewhat pessimistic stance that Pil'niak has adopted in this novel is identified by Brostrom as his realization that material progress is not being matched by spiritual progress. Ivan, who has the 'spiritual inclinations of a man in holy orders' (p. 286) has, it appears, transformed his personal quest into a form of materialist religion:

> He preaches his 'religion' as a response to the terrible nihilism which scientific thought produces, a vision of existence in which events have causes but no meaning. Like religious men through all history he confronts the meaninglessness of death, and he yearns for immortality. (p. 281)

It is not clear from the account what differentiates Ivan's *religion* from *terrible nihilism*, nor how the former constitutes a response to the latter, especially if both are grounded in scientific thought. Ivan's allegorical condemnation is evidence that the response cannot be a reaction against scientific thought. The introduction of the role of death further complicates the question, and is one that I shall explore in my own analysis without the unproductive distinction between religious and non-religious man.

The passage is confused because further remarks make it plain that Brostrom's concept of nihilism is idiosyncratic, equating it with mortality and the immutability of human nature, and it is this definition which informs his exposition of the message of the tale, as an expression of the

> nihilistic vision characteristic of Pil'njak's work during the late twenties, that things change but mankind at large does not, and that the ultimate truth for each man is his own fragility in the face of inevitable dissolution and death. [...] Thus did the uncertainty characteristic of his former vision give way to nihilism. Yet Pil'njak's awareness of such meaninglessness did not cause him to despair, for in these years he repeatedly depicted human behaviour of a sort which implies men are capable of creating meaning and values out of themselves. They can do so, not by rebelling against the forces of earth in themselves, but by accepting them and transforming their behavioural expressions through adherence to those simple, universal virtues which are subsumed by the emotion of love and the notion of decency. (p. 291)

Were nihilism to function here in any orthodox sense of the word the passage would be clearly contradictory, in the light of the remarks concerning man-made values and *the notion of human decency* and *universal virtues*. Furthermore, Brostrom maintains that Pil'niak does not dwell on this pessimism but is drawn to 'sources of beauty rooted in and inseparable from that ugliness' (p. 282) which constitutes the prosaic business of

human existence. The critical evaluation of these sources makes them look very much like absolutes, and they are to be found in unlikely places. The feeding of the decaying corpses by their delirious comrades is cited as an example: 'The ghoulish horror of this episode is partially diffused, however, by the profound brotherly love which motivated these actions' (p. 282). For Brostrom this is enough to over-ride all talk of faith or purpose:

> A singular dissonance results, which is, as metaphor, an affirmation of the potential for worth in men despite the multitude of facts in individual lives and in history which argue the contrary. And this affirmation occurs with no commitment to a transcendental faith or to any historical teleology. (p. 282)

The nature of this interpretation demonstrates a particular problem arising from the presence in a text of arresting imagery; such images *must* be symbolic or metaphorical even if it is difficult to determine exactly why. The inter-relationship between Aleksandra, who, bearing a name with strong Egyptian connections, facially appears somewhat Egyptian; the mummy, whom Ivan caresses in his deranged state, and Savinov's demonstration of puppetry is problematic. The fact of Aleksandra's resemblance to the mummy 'acquires its symbolic connotations while providing an essential element in the meaning of Ivan's encounter with the long dead princess' (p. 283). That the mummy symbolizes the death of old faiths is supported by the fact that the study in which the encounter takes place is a converted one-time chapel, and though it is not clear what constitutes the *essential element*, it must have something to do with this. In Ivan's behaviour with the mummy—he kisses and sings to it—

Brostrom detects references to Aleksandra, her alleged rape[6] and the feeding of the corpses, noting the juxtaposition of profound love and necrophilia: 'A more effective expression of the inseparability of human beauty and ugliness can scarcely be imagined, where the boundary between psychopathology and the most elevated kind of human tenderness is obliterated' (p. 283).

A connection is forged between the mummy and the marionettes by the introduction of the theme of art:

> Insofar as Ivan is consciously at war with the past, setting science against mysticism and madness, he is at war with its art as well. It is Savinov's manipulation of his puppets that establishes the connection between art and Ivan's delirious handling of the rigid, woodenish body of the mummy which follows almost immediately. (p. 286)

And on the basis of this connection the symbolic significance is revealed:

> But oddly enough this lecture suggests that Ivan behaves like an artist not only in love but in his technology, that his efforts to control matter are hardly distinguishable in principle from the puppet master's manipulation of his marionettes. (p. 286)

Brostrom's analysis is successful in so far as it incorporates all the textual material and extracts a simple meaning. However, this is done on the basis of a potentially limitless number of possible symbolic and allegorical associations, both intra- and extra-textual.

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[6] It is explicit in the text that there was no question of rape: 'Togda v tom bredovom ïiule bezymennaia devushka otdalas' Ivanu, chtoby stat' zhenshchinoi,—togda ona vstretila Ivana takoiu strast'iu, takimi potsceluiami i takim otdan'em, kotorye mogut rodit'sia tol'ko v bredu— —' (*Ivan Moskva*, p. 215). This is particularly important when read in conjunction with the guilt that Mr. Smith suffers as a result of the rape that he has perpetrated. Ivan Moskva, on the contrary, is suffused not with guilt but love when he finally discovers the true identity of the woman.

The validity of these associations is not so important for this study as the demonstration that they can be made. Brostrom's final summing up should serve as an illustration of the ingenuity of the human mind to discover and tailor the most reassuring meaning from a disorientating mass of information:

> By embracing the mummy Ivan appears to embrace symbolically all manifestations of the enemy whose defeat has been the goal of his life: death, his own rotting body, woman and the earth forces and faiths she symbolizes. In fact Ivan has not recanted, and he continues his meditations upon human existence along the same lines as before, now with the sure knowledge that he cannot "leap out" of his own flesh and that he must soon die. Thus, Ivan perpetuates the pride for which he is destroyed. But his life has become humanly beautiful as if to spite his mind, for it achieved those heights when it was delirious. By embracing the mummy in a deranged state, Ivan demonstrates the futility of his desire to transcend this world and its forces through intellect; irrational, elemental impulses and disease compel him to act contrary to his principles, even when it means his simultaneous and unavoidable degradation, a dissonantly beautiful degradation. Without realizing it, Ivan is groping his way back to human living in the context of this earth through his decision to marry Aleksandra, for their unshakeable, noble devotion is inseparable from rape and the syphilis they share. (pp. 283–84)

In this case the allegorical method demonstrates the ease with which order and codification are equated with explanation. In actuality, this ingenious establishment of networks serves to control information, and in so doing *avoids* explanation. The exercise mirrors Kseniia's project in Chapter 3 of rendering down a disorientating context to a manageable and, as far as possible, comforting model. My own contention is that the use of allegorical allusions in Pil'niak's texts does not underpin them with immutable truths, but is part of a process to undermine such networks and demonstrate

their ultimate absurdity. It is not the message of the allegory that is of interest, but the need that engenders allegories and the process by which they are built and bound together.

5. 2. 2. Nicholas: 'static absolutes'

Although Mary Nicholas does not deal specifically with *Ivan Moskva* in her analysis of Pil'niak's *oeuvre*, her approach recalls Brostrom's to the extent that their analyses both rely on the proposition of an immutable core as their points of departure. Where Brostrom's rests on a base-line of fundamental human values, Nicholas posits for Pil'niak an anchoring world of unchanging physical facts, identifying in him a 'drive to reduce complex reality to a few, highly significant physical features'.[7] Nicholas is convinced of the absolute consistency of physical features in the texts, arguing that Pil'niak's method:

> suggests a universe in which the phenomenal world is consistent and real, the source of knowledge. The objects of the physical world are undeniable. The meaning of these facts may be open to interpretation, but their existence itself is not open to dispute. (pp. 128–29)

The point is remade and is fundamental to her understanding of Pil'niak:

> Pilniak indicates his conviction that objects from the physical world are static absolutes by his argument that images from the phenomenal world will elicit roughly equivalent responses from more than one observer. This similarity holds true over time, across language barriers, through different cultures. (pp. 227–28)

And further:

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[7] Nicholas, 1989, p. 126.

> There is an attempt to find the essence of the object in its physical properties, to investigate the impact of interpretation on that physicality, and through that investigation, to arrive at those essential features of the object which are impervious to change. (p. 126)

Leaving aside the confused question of how absolute facts and essential features are to be discovered through the unstable medium of perception when physical properties are taken to constitute essences, or a discussion of the relative status of *objects*, *images* and *roughly equivalent responses*, the uncontrollable succession of presentations that appear to the senses of Ivan Moskva would seem to cast serious doubt on the viability of the project. What seems more likely is that Pil'niak is displaying a simple propensity to return to similar themes and preoccupations in his works. The infinite variability of the images from the phenomenal world which assail Kseniia Ordynina, Mr Smith, and Ivan Moskva constitute the material which they must bring under their control. Nicholas's position has further ramifications for the reader as she proposes a series of static nucleic nodes in the text to be equated with the author's original intentions. These remain constant and it is the reader who 'assigns his own notion of relative importance to objects whose essential meaning does not change' (p. 121).

This model stands in opposition to the idea of causal relations as the defining criteria which link nodes, giving them meaning by virtue of their interrelationship, and the related conception of function as a defining factor, upon which my own interpretations are premised, and which will be developed in the next section. By locating constant meaning directly in the objects themselves, ultimate authority is denied both reader and author, and by extension, the fictional protagonist. The project of the discovery of sufficient reason to make a presentation meaningful, requiring the subject to exert an

individual organizational influence, is rejected in favour of the primacy of essential meaning in a presentation equally available to all. Nicholas's argument is further complicated by her model of a partial delegation of responsibility to the reader in assigning significance to presentations within the text: 'Pil'niak's insistence on the importance of the reader's participation does not mean that he relinquishes control over his artistic material entirely' (p. 124). But surely if the image were constant then neither author nor reader could have control over it. The model suffers both from an attempt to divide control, and a reluctance to relinquish the idea of absolutes, whilst relying on perception as the conduit of access to knowledge. To relinquish the idea of the absolute availability of a presentation, but explain its degree of stability in terms of shared frameworks of perception eradicates these incongruities and prepares the way for the analysis that is to follow.

5. 3. *Ivan Moskva*: reappraisal

5. 3. 1. Introduction: Ornamental prose

There is a critical consensus that Pil'niak's brand of Ornamental Prose reached its apotheosis in the period imediately following the publication of *Golyi god* in 1919 with the appearance of works such as *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* (1921), *Metel'* (1921) and *Mat'-machekha* (1922), after which time the author mellowed and became progressively conventional and thereby more accessible.[8] There is indeed some truth in the claim of

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[8] See, for example Browning, 1985, and Jensen 1979. Browning has devoted a section of his book to *periodization* in which four distinct periods are identified, of which the Ornamental phase reaches its conclusion in 1924: 'When Pil'niak finished *Machines and Wolves* in June 1924, he also completed the period of his most ornamental writing' (p. 93). Jensen's study takes the publication of *Machines and Wolves* as its cut-off point on the grounds that from this time on, as a result of his philosophical reorientation, the stylistic features which had previously characterized Pil'niak's work became incompatible with his new convictions and intentions, and the style, thus, became redundant.

greater acessibility through a reduction of the type of textual opacity which confronts the reader in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, but through that opacity, it should be remembered, a clear and conventional plot line is identifiable without great difficulty. At one level, as has been shown, the text is a simple tale of unrequited love and displaced revenge. The greater lucidity of expression in *Ivan Moskva* does not imply that Pil'niak abandoned the principle of construction upon which the earlier texts were built. On the contrary, it is accompanied by an explicit restatement of the organizational principle which informed the earlier works.

5. 3. 2. Textual format

The text of *Ivan Moskva* is divided into three broad sections as follows: firstly, a set of seven numbered circumstances—*obstoiatel'stva*; secondly the exposition consisting of three chapters; thirdly a concluding chapter consisting of three numbered conclusions. This device had already made an earlier appearance in the latter part of *Mat'-machekha*, where three numbered sets of circumstances were followed by three numbered conclusions. Rather than representing a break, this text demonstrates a clarification, in simpler terms, of an earlier method. It is not unusual for writers to turn to clarification when their earlier works have, for whatever reason, been misunderstood, and this is equally applicable to both themes and devices by virtue of their inextricable entanglement. The striking feature of the introduction to this text is that the simplification initially provokes yet greater confusion. The sets of circumstances are presented in a format which emphasizes their isolation, and although tenuous connections are apparent between some, others seem to have no immediate relevance. In order to facilitate the discussion the circumstances are itemized below, under their collective heading *Vstupitel'naia glava*, as part of the chapter-by-chapter

analysis that follows.

5. 3. 3. 1. *Vstupitel'naia glava*: events

Obstoiatel'stvo pervoe

This consists simply of a quotation from Frederick Soddy:

> «Второй закон, о полезном действии энергии, будет для настоящих целей с достаточной ясностью установлен, если мы скажем, что одно и то же количество энергии может быть использовано только один раз. Для получения полезной работы из какого-либо источника энергии, покоя или потенциальной, необходимо превратить ее в новые формы, в энергию кинетическую, энергию движения» (Фредерик Содди)[9]

Obstoiatel'stvo vtoroe

The second circumstance concerns the appearance in pre-Revolutionary Moscow of an Egyptian mummy brought back by a professor of history, and its subsequent relocations about the city as a result both of the upheavals of the Revolution, and the fact that, after three thousand years, it appears, by virtue of giving off an odour and a humming sound, to have begun to decompose.

Obstoiatel'stvo tret'e

In the third circumstance the main protagonist, Ivan Moskva, is introduced at a time, during the Civil War, when he and five colleagues, having become separated as a group, are attempting to find their way back to their unit. In a delirium brought on by typhus, Ivan and two others, failing to notice that the remaining three have since died from the disease, continue to carry them along, propping them up for guard duty and

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[9] *Ivan Moskva*, p. 167.

pushing food into their mouths with their own spoons, oblivious to the fact that they are in an advanced state of decomposition. In this condition Ivan wanders into a field hospital. There he finds a nurse, also raving with typhus, with whom he has sexual intercourse.

Obstoiatel'stvo chetvertoe

The events of the fourth circumstance also take place during the Civil War and culminate in the apparently revelatory experience that Ivan undergoes on the precipice overlooking the sea, remarked upon in a previous section.

Obstoiatel'stvo piatoe

Here the location and time shift forward to Ivan's mineworkings and laboratory in a remote Ural setting during 1922.

Obstoiatel'stvo shestoe

This concerns the destruction in 1917 by Junkers of a three-storeyed Moscow building occupied by defending Bolsheviks, whose bodies were left to rot beneath the ruins. These remained as they were for three years until 1922 when they were cleared to make way for the erection of a monument opposite that of Pushkin.

Obstoiatel'stvo sed'moe

This reads as follows:

> Как первое.
> «Мне отмщение и аз воздам»—дикарский закон бумеранга—физический закон действия, равного противо-действию— (p. 178).

Although there are points of contact between some of these sets of circumstances, they are of such a general nature that diffuseness prevails over cohesion. Ivan Moskva is

present in four of the seven, and the time scale of the central five circumstances is limited to the immediate period around the Revolution. In their summarized form above, the thread of decay is highlighted to a greater degree than is apparent in the actual text. Though the seventh is expressly linked with the first, the status of the relationship is obscure. The perverse lack of obvious cohesion, drawing attention to itself as a literary device, recalls the words of Francis Bacon on the relationship between poetry and the power to exert control that results from the abstract nature of the mind:

> Poesy is a part of learning in measure of words for the most part restrained, but in all other points extremely licensed, and doth truly refer to the imagination; which, being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined; and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things.[10]

In a text where even the *measure of words*, that is to say, the metre, ceases to exert a resraining influence on the material, then, semantically, cohesion gives way to parataxis. It goes without saying that semantic parataxis is not quantifiably constant; it must involve an unavoidable and essential element of subjectivity as part of the reading process. However, intrinsic to this process are the two demands placed upon any textual element, either or both of which the reader will expect to be satisfied. Firstly, that it will augment or clarify another element, to which it need not necessarily be sequentially or syntagmatically related: a paradigmatic relationship. Secondly, that it be

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[10] Bacon, 1974, p. 80.

sequentially or causally related to another element, to which it need not necessarily be paradigmatically related; a syntagmatic relationship.

A paradigmatic element will typically contribute to the development of a theme, so that although an obvious logical progression may not be available, cohesion is achieved on the basis of a common denominator, centripetally drawing otherwise disparate elements together; an example would be a collection of parables designed to illustrate the same point. In the absence of this kind of unifying nucleus, it is to be expected that the elements formally interlock by satisfying the syntagmatic criterion. The popularity of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* demonstrates the attraction of the organizational power of syntagmatic progression for the reader. In practice, as this text shows, fascination with syntagmatic progression not only proves popularly more attractive than its paradigmatic counterpart, but also overrides the requirement for plot. In the absence of syntagmatic cohesion, the pressure is on the reader to discover paradigmatic cohesion; a task that places a greater burden upon the reader and may contribute to the relatively lower status of such literature in the West. Both paradigmatic and syntagmatic associations are to be found to a varying degree in all texts—not least because there is a point at which they begin to overlap—and will contribute to their level of accessibility.

In a text where syntagmatic expectations are immediately thwarted, the reader confronted with a selection of circumstances attempts to excavate a main channel into which textual tributaries can be directed. In *Ivan Moskva*, the *obstoiatel'stva* are easily apprehended as tributaries, but without any readily apparent main course into which they can easily be channelled. The question arises, which is the main one, and how can

the others be made to converge on it? If they can be made to converge, they can be given a meaning; it is a quest for disambiguation. The circumstances are presented in a deliberately compartmentalised manner, emphasizing their isolation and avoiding any orthodox attempt at establishing formal relationships between them. There is no encouragement to link them together sequentially, causally, or temporally; a lack of indicators to compel the reader to look forward or backwards; no 'then' or 'whilst', 'therefore', or 'in the meantime'. The attention is captured by each element individually, but the transition from one element to the next is abrupt. There is no readily available evidence for the motivation of one circumstance by another. In fact, the use of the term *obstoiatel'stvo* emphasizes the status of these elements as conditions pertaining, rather than causal nodes in an interrelated process. The fact that the claim of the seventh circumstance to be the same as the first is apparently immediately undermined represents a direct challenge to the reader; if an association is to be found between these two, then the others should, as they do physically on the page, fall between them. In order to make sense of these circumstances, the reader must find sufficient reason to establish and maintain a viable system of relations between them. In this respect *Ivan Moskva* does not differ essentially from the multi-layered Dickensian novel wherein dispersed threads are picked up and woven towards a centre. Pil'niak has simplified the format by enumerating the various points of departure. As with Dickens, the full significance of these circumstances is only made clear in the exposition. Their function here, in terms of the genre of the novel, is orthodox.

5. 3. 3. 2. *Vstupitel'naia glava*: facts

The quotation that makes up the first circumstance is a restatement by Frederick Soddy

of the first law of thermodynamics dealing with the indestructability of energy. Closer investigation reveals Soddy's relevance to the career of Ivan Moskva. He was Professor of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry at the University of Oxford 1919–36, and was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1921 for his work on radioactive substances. As a result of his investigations with Rutherford into the decay of radioactive elements, Soddy reached the conclusion in 1912 that certain elements might exist in forms that differ in atomic weight, while being indistinguishable and inseparable chemically. These he called isotopes, indicating in 1920 their value in determining geological age. The paragraph represents a synopsis of physical laws that epitomize man's attempt to explain the phenomena with which he is confronted.

What is of significance for this investigation is the contention of Martin Heidegger that the method of reasoning that makes possible the development of this type of law cannot be considered in any way primordial, but is rather engendered as a reaction to the sole primordial motivation, which is an essential fear of death. Even truths apparent in, for example, mathematical formulae, or deriving from mathematical reasoning are simply attributable to a special kind of theoretical attitude which has no primordial status. This truth of death is superior to any kind of mathematical formulation, because it pervades our entire being, but is not constructed on the basis of and within our being. Any other kind of theoretical truths, such as physical laws, are not all-pervasive in the way that awareness of death is, even though they continue to hold good throughout our existence. Furthermore, isotopic decay provides evidence for a system of chronological time which underpins what Heidegger regarded as 'inauthentic'

existence, but within which physical laws can be seen to hold sway.[11] It is this which provides the kernel of an explanation for the link claimed between the seventh and the first circumstance.

The seventh cicumstance consists of three elements: the avenging god; the boomerang; and Newton's third law of motion, all of which are to be taken as synonyms of each other, and collectively, of the first condition.[12] The return of the boomerang is characterized as *dikarskii* in so far as it does not represent a formal law as such, but an experienced event. Empirical knowledge is not however sufficient. Observed phenomena are credible as long as they are under observation, but inductively gained knowledge is not reliable and must be butressed by other means: by either physical or metaphysical laws. That there is a metaphysical explanation, that there is a physical explanation, and that the boomerang will come back have the same common

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[11] A detailed discussion of the significance of chronological time and the unavoidability of death in relation to Heidegger's understanding of the *authentic* and *inauthentic* modes of being as set out in *Sein und Zeit* is beyond the remit of this investigation. A useful synopsis of the question is given by Piotr Hoffman in 'Death, time, history: Division 2 of "Being and Time"', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Charles B. Guignon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See also Timothy L. S. Sprigge, *Theories of Existence* (London: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 116–27. A much briefer outline of the fundamental nature of Heidegger's thought is given by M. J. Inwood in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* as follows: 'The basic idea is that those whose understanding of themselves is not informed by a grasp of the true nature of their individual existence, who think of themselves, say, as just complicated animals, are said to have only an inauthentic existence; whereas those who have internalized the truth of Heidegger's conception of their existence and are able to conduct their lives in accordance with it are said to have attained authenticity. According to Heidegger we always start out with an inauthentic conception of ourselves, since our pre-reflective involvements with the world and others lead us to think of ourselves as not significantly different from them. What then motivates us to become authentic is the experience of *Angst*, which Heidegger interprets as an awareness of the precariousness of a life whose goals and values are not understood as arising from the structure of one's own existence. *Angst* therefore recalls us to ourselves, and by making the existential structure of our life available to us, helps to bring us to an authentic recognition of our freedom. Heidegger connects this experience of *Angst* with one's attitude to one's own death: this attitude is typically one of *Angst*, and because a correct understanding of death as the end of one's existence reveals to us the structure of our own existence, an authentic life is "an impassioned freedom towards death"' (*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. by Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 260).

[12] Additionally there is the intertextual significance of the quotation from the Bible which also featured in *Mat'-machekha*.

denominator; they are examples of filtered-out conclusions that assist the process of existence. Whether there *is* a god or whether there *is* a physical law is less important than the function that these positions perform as convictions adopted by individuals. Though one carries the label *physical* and the other *metaphysical*, there is no absolute proof for either, and both are maintained by a faith that derives from the individual will to believe them. Existence without the will to maintain faith in laws at a fundamental level is impossible. The first and seventh, by framing the other five circumstances, constitute the backdrop against which these others are to be read.

By means of the introduction of the mummy, three thematic strains are engendered which link the generality of the background outlined above with the particularity of Ivan's individual existence. Firstly, there is the commonplace of inexorable decay, which, read against the background of the law of the conservation of energy, suffices for the allegorical level of interpretation. This, however, is linked with the question of the exertion of the will in the face of decay—'Тлен сильнее смелости'[13]—and with the collective manifestation of these individual wills through the building of myths, which, though fictitious, serve as models of understanding in the face of a confusingly entropic world. This is illustrated by the subversion of the image of the mummy at an early stage by denying it compatibility with the stereotype: 'Но волосы не черны, как предполагалось бы, но желты, как рожь' (p. 168). The unreliability of the Egyptian connection is underlined in the next circumstance. The memory of the delirium that Ivan experienced during the Civil War stayed with him for the rest of his life: 'Память этого бреда навсегда осталась у Ивана Москвы' (p. 171). But

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[13] *Ivan Moskva*, p. 170.

the details did not: 'Имени этой женщины Иван не знал и не запомнил, что лицо женщины было лицом египтянки' (p. 171). The fact that she had the face of an Egyptian is authorial information provided for the benefit of the reader, to be read in conjunction with the subverted Egyptian stereotype of the previous circumstance. Furthermore, the author chooses not to divulge her pertinent name—Aleksandra—until much later. In an overt exercise in manipulation, the author advertises his presence by withholding all the information from Ivan, releasing limited information to the reader, and casting doubt upon its validity. The Egyptian motif is primarily a method for establishing intentionally dubious sufficient reason to justify the linking of apparently disparate elements. It functions in this way for author, reader and, eventually, for Ivan himself.

The fourth circumstance then devolves to the individual by entering Ivan Moskva's personal world of models and reasons. It is a system whose instability is demonstrated by its momentary disintegration:

> — — И тогда показалось, стало физически-ясным, что—в этом мире в этот миг неподвижны только он, Москва, и оно, солнце,—было физически ясно, что солнце неподвижно, а дрогнули, качнулись и пошли справа налево вниз от солнца земля, море, обвалы, горы, леса: горы, обвалы, долины двинулись вниз. В переутомленных мозгах слышен был треск,—надо было раздвинуть ноги, упереться ногами, чтобы не упасть—с земли, которая двинулась: земля под Москвою качалась: неподвижны были Москва да солнце. Это было не знание, но ощущение. (p. 173)

The significance of this episode is that what is happening at the physical level is not in the least remarkable. Ivan is positioned on a cliff top, facing south, and the sun *rises* to

his left. The description that follows is factually correct; the sun, astronomically speaking, remains stationary, while the earth, by virtue of its anti-clockwise rotation on its axis, goes down. Ivan is geostationary, remaining in the same position on the surface of the earth but travelling with it. What destabilizes the equation is the interplay of relativity and subjectivity. Observation provides empirical evidence for the fixedness of the earth and the mobility of the sun. In spite of knowledge to the contrary, this model provides a working framework: the sun, like the moon, rises, travels across the sky, and sets. It is an empirically devised model, which is not true. When Ivan is confronted with a graphic illustration of this, he is momentarily destabilized. A stationary earth in a shifting solar system provides a comforting base into which unavoidable ego-centredness can anchor itself. The coupling of the sense of self as centre with the realization of the reality of the sun as immovable centre, and its corollary, the mobility of the earth, causes Ivan to jam his feet into the ground. Knowledge—*znanie*—here in the sense of factual knowledge, is of no significance in the face of feeling—*oshchushchenie*—and cognitive modelling which is the product of inductive knowledge accrued through experience.

The circumstances under which this realization takes place are noteworthy. Ivan and his men have suffered periods of sleep deprivation, sensory deprivation, and constant exposure to the elements:

> Люди не спали несколько ночей. Всю ночь накрапывал дождь, и только к рассвету перестал. Темнота была такая, что глаза были не нужны. Всю ночь ехали по степи. Красноармейцы молчали, мокли, не понимали—куда провалились горы. (p. 172)

All this has had a predictable effect upon the sensitivity of his mind: 'Москва ступил к обрыву, взглянул под отвес—и поспешно отошел от обрыва: закружилась голова, нехорошо потянуло вниз,—все бессонные ночи навалились на веки, сделав голову стопудовой' (p. 172). In this condition, having never seen the sea before, Ivan is assailed with new sensations: '— —и тогда в море из воды, над водой появился багрово холодный, зловещий, всепобеждающий кусок солнца. Этот кусок округлился, выдвинулся, рассыпался миллиардами дрызгов в море. Через минуту багровый эллипс стал над водой' (p. 172–73). The significance of the avoidance of specific, upward verbs of motion is now clear. The sun appeared—*poiavilsia*—and was positioned above—*stal nad*—the water. It is now only the change in relative positions prompted by their proximity that Ivan is aware of. At this stage both Ivan and the sun are immobile—*nepodvizhny*—and normality is only retrieved at that time when the sun, by being seen to be moving again, warrants the expected verb of motion: 'Но, когда солнце поднялось на аршин, все было уже совершенно будничнo' (p. 173). Ivan's ability to hold together a cognitive model through the strength of his will has been seriously affected by the deprivations that he has undergone to such an extent that a fracture appears. This fracture, by undermining models of understanding, places Ivan on the brink of the alternative world of *Smertel'noe manit* where cause, effect, motive, and reason, in the absence of will, lose their privileged status.

In summary, this circumstance has two elements. Firstly, the unavoidability and compulsion of the centredness of the self; and secondly, the proposition that the truth of physical laws is less important that the will to believe in the causality that underpins them. An assault on the first puts pressure on the second. Because of the limitations of

reason it is therefore ultimately faith maintained by will, and not reason, which makes it possible to live.

The tenor of the fifth circumstance is superficially at odds with the fourth in that the deprivation and tribulation of the Civil War which destabilized Ivan's mind are replaced by the security, both mental and physical, of the controlled laboratory environment. However, the thread of destabilization continues to be in evidence. Ivan compares the revolutionary potential of the exploitation of radium with man's harnessing of fire, but his stance toward isotopic decay is marked by a defining characteristic: 'Таинственный, непознанный радий излучает вечный поток тепла и света, творит, не иссякая, создавая новые вещества из прежних веществ,—тот философский камень' (p. 175). Though, as a scientist, he is aware of the fact that both fire and isotopic decay must conform to the first law of thermodynamics, where the former does so quite demonstrably, the latter appears to fly in the face of this principle, circumventing the rules outlined in the first and seventh circumstances. He has found the inexhaustible source of energy—*vechnyi dvigatel'*—the secret of something for nothing, the philosophers' stone: 'Имя новому алхимику—комиссар Иван Москва' (p. 176).

What is more, the apparent stability of the scientific environment is threatened by a submerged fluidity with the constant potential for reactivation. Ivan makes a point of recounting to all the guests that visit his laboratory the events of the third and fourth circumstances. And his choice of vocabulary is significant: he and his colleagues carried the corpses 'бредовым небытием' (p. 177). *Nebytie*, or 'non-being', is the state in which the interrelationship between cause and effect, inductive knowledge and

memory, and the whole system of models that makes *bytie* possible have disintegrated.

The sixth circumstance provides both a temporal and locational node in Ivan's personal perspective, to which he returns later in the text. And the seventh completes the framing as indicated above.

5. 3. 4. *Biograficheskaia glava*: levels of being

The biographical chapter represents at the same time both a concession to and subversion of the form of the orthodox novel, and thereby recalls the insertion of Ksenia's curriculum vitae into *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*. As a fictionalization of one's own life through a process of selection and combination, a personal biography is a template for *bytie* upon which predictions can be made; a mental codification and filtration of experience: 'Ибо изъеденное сифилисом тело Ивана Москвы оставило ему ясный ум, ясный мозг, тот мозг, который дал ему силы выйти из добытия в бытие, дал сил из добытия—через бытие—заглянуть в пред-бытие' (p. 183). Biography is in this way synonymous with *bytie* because it is a product of the time when, rather than being simply lived—*do-bytie*—life begins to be codified.[14] It is a question of living at the conceptual rather than physical, experiential level, conceptualizing the experiences of *do-bytie* into the model of *bytie*: 'Весь в прошлом, винтовкою Иван Москва у Никитских ворот в Москве вышел в бытие—и на развалинах истории он стал строить свое, своего мозга и своего класса, будущее, тело оставив в до-бытии' (p. 183). For this reason biography is not simply a result of dates and external circumstances which are in any

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[14] Pil'niak uses both *do-bytie* and *dobytie* interchangeably. Though the distinction is retained within quotations, the former term is employed in the discussion for consistency with his hyphenated use of *pred-bytie* as the facility of being able to project into the future.

event beyond the control of the individual, but the individual's reflection on these circumstances: 'И не всегда биографии определяют даты дел и рождений: обстоятельства, лежащие вне человека и его воли, бывают иной раз значимей воли человека' (p. 178). These are the circumstances which, stronger than the will of the individual, coerce him into an inauthentic mode of being.

The transiton between living a primarily experiential to a primarily conceptual mode was prompted in many by the Revolution: 'Биографии людей не всегда начинаются с детств. [...] Биографии очень многих в России в годы революции начались 25 октября старого стиля' (p. 178). The period of *do-bytie* spent in his remote homeland amongst the isolated Komi people is characterized by the refrain *Vremia zastit*. In the absence of personal details, the nature of the existence is conveyed through the use of aphorisms, superstitions and generalizations. It is an existence premised not upon reflection but upon acceptance, and thus unconcerned with the question of change. Details such as the mammoth bones, the preserved beams, and the lack of railways reflect this. It is not surprising therefore that literacy, as a formal method of conceptualization, selection and reflection, represents a significant landmark in Ivan's transition from *do-bytie* to *bytie*. There is a shifting of emphasis to the cerebral: 'Он нашел в себе силы знать, что тело—только тюрьма его мозга' (p. 184). And with this come the corollaries of projection into the future and expectation. From now on he begins to build 'во имя революции и человечества, такое, что смотрит только в будущее, что волит только в будущее' (p. 184). The task of building a new model by which to live requires the exertion of the will both for its construction and its maintenance.

In summary, this chapter posits three possibilities within the same framework: *do-bytie* as a pre-reflective mode, when the established codification is unquestioningly accepted to such an extent that codification of personal experience is subsumed into it; *bytie* when the arbitrariness of that codification is realized and the attempt to recodify is made; and *pred-bytie* as the possibility of making projections from new hypotheses made on the basis of *bytie*. The progression is made within the framework of the rational mind and the will by codifying experience and not through experience itself.

However there is one further possibility, as has been indicated above, which steps outside this framework; the possibility of *nebytie*. *Bytie* and *do-bytie* are closely related in so far as there is the probability that the former will resolidify into the latter. The alternative development, however, which constitutes the danger of *bytie*, lies in the fact that its evolution is prompted by a rejection of a previously accepted system of principles of sufficient reason. That a particular framework of reasons has been seen to lose its currency implies that any system has this same potential within it. The danger of *bytie* is not only that it too may become fossilized, but that its essential instability is the seed of *nebytie*. The insertion of the *Biograficheskaia glava* illustrates a further point which had already been introduced into *Ivan-da-Mar'ia:* that not only are fiction and written biography one and the same thing, but further, that one's understanding of oneself, written or unwritten, is equally fictitious, because reflection is fictionalization. There are only two possibilities: experience and fiction.

5. 3. 5. *Glava zavodskaia*: the will

Glava zavodskaia adopts as its starting point the arrival at the factory of Ivan's countryman, the Zyrianin, Sledopyt. This can be understood at the simple allegorical

level as a juxtaposition of two opposing cultures: the peasant mysticism of Sledopyt and the adopted scientific materialism of Ivan Moskva, and the chapter provides a rich vein of material for symbolist and allegorical interpretation. The function of related imagery such as the collapsed nose of Sledopyt and 'самолет на земле—черная провалина носа мотора'(p. 185) is worthy of more serious investigation than the simple identification of an extra-textual common denominator, such as 'mortality'. The problem of mortality is integral to the text, but its identification as a theme is no more than a description of the text that falls short of explanation. What is of greater concern is the role that mortality plays in terms of the relationship of individual characters to it, and their strategy for attempting to deal with it. It is more productive then to regard the meeting of Sledopyt and Ivan in this light. The difference between the two modes of existence is a phenomenon described in the text which in its self-evidence need not be restated. What is of more concern is the status of these modes as reactions to the awareness of the presence of death in life which defines mortality. These modes are simultaneously related and distinct in the same way as are the Komi and Russian languages, as exemplified in the first paragraph of the chapter. Each word represents an attempt to conceptualize and codify an experience. Yet in the same measure as the words differ, it is impossible to gauge the similarity of the experience. There is thus no reliable bond between experience and word, and just as two different words may represent a similar experience, so dissimilar experiences may be represented by the same word. By extension, it is inevitable that infinitely variable modes of existence represent alternative and infinitely variable codifications and recodifications of the same primordial condition. That these recodifications provide the framework for cultural objectivity within specific social contexts is the source of inter-

cultural discrepancies. Sledopyt characterizes the aeroplane with the archaic word *zmii*, with its Old Testament connotation of 'devil': 'О тебе говорят в лесах, что ты делаешь злые чудеса, к тебе прилетает змий и ты колдун' (p. 185). For Sledopyt, Ivan is a sorcerer, and this is a valid interpretation from the framework within which he operates. The behaviour which he repeatedly displays when faced with such phenomena as electric light proceeds from an inability to discern a sufficiently convincing reason to establish a linkage between an effect and a cause. Lacking that localized faith in cause and effect that derives from habitual exposure to a phenomenon, he seeks refuge in his own established and thus more reliable beliefs. The will to believe in the process of cause and effect that regulates a particular system is what allows one to function within that system. To such an extent is this true that a product of that system is synonymous with the will that brought it into being. This does not imply that cause and effect are a product of will, but that belief in them is; that in order for purposeful actions to be performed there must be faith that the result will be achieved by performing the action, and an alternative result will follow from not performing it. Further, the primordial motivator in performing these actions is the preservation of one's own existence which is demonstrated to man through the fear of death. The meditation on the aeroplane summarizes this point:

> Самолет—это та прекрасная машина, которая несет человека в воздух, которою человек—себя и свою волю бросил за облака. Самолет—это тот человеческий гений, та человеческая воля, которые не допускают неточностей: недовинчена, перевинчена самая пустяковая гайка,—он упадает с неба,—от человека, понесшего его в небо, не останется даже костей,—но каждая гайка, таящая смерть, свинчена человеческим мозгом: и голова того, кто понес машину в воздух, должна быть ясна, как гений гаек мотора и хвостового—на

> самолете—оперения,—ибо иначе—смерть. Так указывает машина, так машина утверждает быт, ибо—инстинктом сохранения жизни—указано человеку бояться смерти... (p. 186)

As the authorial voice makes plain, this will to faith is paramount. Without it, disaster is unavoidable: 'Если человек убежден, что «рожденный ползать—летать не может» [...] его мозг будет видеть разбитые крылья самолета, размозженные тела, смерть' (p. 186).

The interpolated meditation on flying is a development of the ideas introduced by Ivan's revelatory cliff-top experience in the introductory section of the text. The role of relativity in perception is raised: 'Самолет пошел в воздух, поползла земля, сошли со своих мест, переселившись на карту—река, нищая пароходная конторка, холм и реки, лес, поле,—люди на конторке стали мухами, все ушло назад' (p. 187). Now, however, the observer is freed from geostatic constraint by virtue of the liberation of flight. The platform of observation is shifted from the earth's surface to the aeroplane:

> Там в воздухе известно, что самолет идет сто семьдесят километров в час, только известно, ибо быстроты полета чувствовать нельзя, и видно лишь, как там внизу ежесекундно отбрасываются назад клинья полей, озера, леса,—земная рубаха, земная карта. И тоже только известно, что самолет в двух километрах над землей: высоту нельзя чувствовать. [...] Но на самолете земные часы—минутами. (p. 186)

Because of the relative status of the earth and the aeroplane there is a lack of sensory data with which to verify the facts of flying: knowledge loses its veracity in the absence of the appropriate sensation. In this situation it requires a greater exertion of will in

order to sustain that knowledge. The activity of flying represents a bridge from that sphere of quotidian, physical, and terrestrial principles of sufficient reason, the will to believe in the applicability of which made the activity possible, to an alternative sphere where those principles are no longer in effect. And in this alternative sphere the experiences are far more intense than those that are burdened and obstructed by mundane principles of sufficient reason, and cause and effect:

> Там в воздухе, окруженный стихиями, каждый устанавливает, что он летал многажды уже, главным образом в отрочестве и юности, от двенадцати до семнадцати лет, во снах: так вот полеты те, во снах,—куда величественнее, значимей, страшнее—полетов подлинных!—там, во сне и в детстве, нет препятствий полететь на лунные болота на луну, в неподлинность, в фантастику,—здесь на самолете в небе родлинность измерена тремя километрами высот:—выдумывать, проектировать, романтить—много интересней, чем отыскивать явь. (pp. 186–87)

But underlying the individual appreciation of reasonableness is a fundamental level of unavoidability to which man is subservient and upon which his promordial anxiety is based. Man can therefore never, regardless of the state of his faith in knowledge, be the master of his machine because the machine conforms to the physical laws which allowed its construction, and man is simply a victim of these laws:

> И в эти часы человек в небе узнает, что человек человеку—обязательно брат, что машина человеку—хозяин, что весь мир есть—огромная, великая мудрость, мудрость и закономерность,—ибо—очень просто—пилот неправильно принял воздушную яму—смерть, борт-механик перебил мотор—смерть, лопнула гайка в моторе—смерть! (p. 187)

Man is the victim of these physical laws in two ways: although he is empirically a slave to them, he is compelled to develop ways of believing in them beyond the empirical, inductive evidence of sensory perception, because they can never, by definition, be empirically proven once and for all. The result of the inability to maintain oneself integral to an inescapably ego-centred system of belief brought about by a failure of will is death, which is in any event the ultimate nullification and totalization of that system which was an individual life. The process is inevitable, provoking the recall of the formulae of inevitability that framed the circumstances of the first section:

> И есть, и есть, ибо «аз воздам», страшная, страшная болезнь пилотов—когда пилот вылетался: тогда появляется боязнь воздуха, боязнь полета, исчезает вера в себя, уверенность, воля, пилот теряет сердце и глаз, он неверно ведет самолет: если он останется у машины, если болезнь не заметил он и не увидели его товарищи,—он гибнет, он разбивается, он «гробит» машину. (p. 188)

A further illustration of the importance of viable models of understanding as the means of making existence possible is demonstrated by Sledopyt's reaction to electric light and the radio. Unable to discern sufficient reason to explain them on the basis of his own models he is plunged into near madness: 'В смятении, в ужасе, в ничтожестве Следопыт прятался в угол за диваном, челюсть Следопыта билась о его колена—он мелко-мелко крестился и не мог уже шаманить, ибо челюсть и язык ему не подчинялись' (p. 191).

And the question of the potentially destabilizing disjuncture between what is observed and what is known is further developed in the cliff-top scene between Aleksandra and Ivan (pp. 192–95). By positioning the subjects high up, be it on cliff tops or in

aeroplanes, and looking down, Pil'niak emphasizes through a change in perspective their ego-centredness and relative relationship within an existential framework: 'Чем выше уходили они в гору, тем просторнее было кругом, дальше уходили внизу леса и долины. Одинокий стоял в небе месяц, медленный и усталый' (p. 192). The moon in its apparent deceleration recalls Ivan's own cliff-top experience, and presages something similarly momentous by virtue of the concentration into the self as centre from which perspective derives. Whether the sun or moon factually moves is of less significance than how they are seen from the perceiving centre in the light of sensation and knowledge. There is an intensification as Aleksandra begins her declaration of love and 'Иван ступил шаг вперед к обрыву' (p. 192). There is a pause as he reconsiders his situation. By re-objectifying himself he refictionalizes himself, characterizing his love for Aleksandra as 'как в романах' and rejecting it as not appropriate to his condition: 'Иван ступил назад от обрыва'(p. 192). By the use of this literary device Ivan is reintegrated both—at the textual level—into the literary model of self-sacrifice, and—from his own perspective—into the fictional framework within which he strives to maintain himself. For reasons beyond his control, however, his ability to maintain this framework has become undermined through the progressive degeneration of his will:

> Мой мозг еще видит,—я потерял здравый смысл, ночами в бессонницу я теряю черту между явью и бредом. В бреду, как в яви, я тащу мертвецов, тех, которых тащил на фронте, и тогда качается земля. У меня остался только мозг, но и он туманится. Я говорю с человеком, и вдруг человек проваливается и вместо человека передо мною сидит какое-то странное, кровавое государство. (p. 193)

This condition of non-correlation between knowledge and sensation is exacerbated further into a breakdown of the interrelationship between the sources of sensory information:

> Ночью я просыпаюсь, и я путаюсь в своей комнате, ибо я забываю теперешнюю мою комнату и помню ту каморку, которая была у меня на Чермозе. Я протягиваю руку к стене, к часам, и мне страшно, почему нет стены, почему моя рука виснет в воздухе. (p. 193)

Though his mind and his sight transmit compatible signals, his sense of touch refutes this information. There are two equally possible systems between which it is impossible to choose: 'Все двоится, я не понимаю, где я, и я готов выть собакой' (p. 194). This bifurcation is similarly reflected in the role of language and the breakdown of his aural capacity; he hears what he thinks he is saying: 'Ивану казалось, что он говорит следующее [...] Ивану казалось, что он говорит именно так. В действительности он говорил иначе, в бреду' (pp. 196–97).

This is not simply an attack of aphasia or the inability to find the intended words to express his thoughts. As far as Ivan is concerned there is no discrepancy between what he is saying, what he thinks he is saying, and what he is hearing. From his own perspective, under the impression that he is addressing Aleksandra, everything in the system that he has built for himself is now clear to him—*vse poniatno*—but not capable of being transmitted beyond his personal sphere. The reliability of words as the means of conveying personal concepts is undermined, giving further weight to the division of the world into experience and fiction. Concepts held by individuals as distillations of experience, in themselves fictions, cannot ever be said to equate exactly with each other. There can never really be such a thing as a shared concept, but simply

mutually accessible fictions containing unspecifiable points of contact which function as the nodes allowing a level of communication. The apparent stability of words is an illusion, but one that has become so entrenched through habitual use that words themselves have come to assume an unwarranted physicality. The more limited the shared framework, the more stability and concretization the words accrue. This is illustrated by a comparison betweeen Aleksandra's responses firstly as she awaits Ivan's reaction to her declaration of love, and secondly to his description of the decaying state of his body: 'Александра протянула вперед руки, руками ловила слова, руками слова охраняла' (p. 192), and 'Алексанра подняла свои руки, чтобы защитить ими себя от слов' (p. 193).

Conversely, the more isolated the framework the more the stability of words dissolves until they lose all currency beyond that framework. The tenuous relationship between experience, concept, and the illusory concretization of concept into word becomes progressively ruptured, until such time as the bond is effectively broken and communication between two spheres cannot be sustained. That is to say, the message received becomes remote from the message intended through the progressive erosion of points of contact. The possibility for further communication between Ivan and Sledopyt, whose points of contact were in any event limited, is now removed altogether. The speech that Ivan makes in this condition is of particular significance to this discussion and it is therefore necesary to quote it in full:

> «— — ... ты слышишь, Александра?—это все понятно,— это лучи распада атомной энергии. Все понятно, да, все объяснимо,—но какой прекрасный свет! Это твоя любовь. Александра... Слушай, я говорю тебе. Человеческая жизнь следует совсем иным и гораздо более сложным законам,—средняя

человеческая жизнь. Жизнеспособность в любом возрасте представляет практическую задачу для вычисления. Жизнеспособпость при рождении меньше, чем в мужестве, когда она достигает максимума—затем, с возрастом, жизнеспособность постепенно уменьшается. Жизнеспособность атома, даже радия, не зависит от его возраста,— это простейший закон для атома, но не для меня!— Каким образом распадается элемепт?— этого человечество не знает. Есть предположение, что непосредственная причина распада атома—дело случая—слышишь—дело случая.—Вот, видишь, если бы судьба выбирала из всех живущих на земле людей оиределенный процент, которые умирали бы в каждую минуту независимо от возраста, молодого или старого, если ей просто нужно было бы число жертв, которые она набирала бы случайно, лишь бы получить нужное количество, то тогда наша жизнеспособность была бы такой же, как у атома радии. Атом радии отдаст энергию и—не умрет! Я отдам энергию и—умру. Я хочу жить, я должен жить!—слышишь, Александра!—Все человеческое будущее я вижу через наш собачий быт,—и я хочу любить, Александра... Я вижу всю закономерность того, что должно выпасть из закономерностей,—что разрушает канон сохранения энергии революцией распада атома— — .(pp. 196–97)

Ivan's argument hinges upon our understanding of nucleic decay.[15] Although a consistent number of nucleii of a given isotope will decay within a given period, it is not possible to predict exactly which nucleii will be affected.[16] The process is certain, but random—*delo sluchaia*. Ivan contends that the essential difference between man and radioactive isotopes is that the age of the nucleus, unlike that of a man such as

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[15] For a concise explanation of the process of nucleic decay and associated topics see Hugh D. Young, *University Physics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992), pp. 1251–85.

[16] 'In any sample of a radioactive element, the number of radioactive nucleii decreases as the nucleii decay. This is a statistical process; there is no way to predict when any individual nucleus will decay. No change in physical or chemical environment, such as chemical reactions or heating or cooling, greatly affects the decay rate, but the rate varies over an extremely wide range for different nuclides.' Young, 1992, p. 1267.

himself, plays no part in the cause of its decay. Although he speaks of *zakonomernost'* it becomes clear from a closer examination of this passage that, contrary to his initial claims, this attempt at a system does not provide him with the comfort that is intended. It is unsatisfying because it is both inconsistent in itself and factually false, as his last sentence demonstrates: there is no transgression of the law of the conservation of energy in nucleic decay; it is perfectly consistent with the first law of thermodynamics quoted at the outset of the text. What confounds Ivan is the apparent contingency of his own death, and this primordial concern is the one that surfaces in his articulated speech that follows:

> Александра, Сашенька, Саша, Сашуха ... понятно — лучи — распад — атому жизнеспособность ... Александра, Саша, — жизнеспособность — случай — слышишь, — случай, случай! Не хочу помирать, не хочу, не могу, слышишь!? — не хочу... — и так много раз, с повторением. (p. 197)

Significantly, the lucid *khochu zhit'* is replaced with the primordial *ne khochu pomirat'*. The unavoidability but inexplicability of his life and death is mirrored in nucleic decay. There is absolute certainty coupled with inexplicability. It is known that a given number of nuclei will decay, but without any understanding of the cause that prompts the effect, it is impossible to predict exactly which nuclei will suffer decay: there is effect without discernible cause at the root of a fundamental physical law by which we regulate our understanding of the world. An observable, empirical phenomenom through its lack of an understandable cause must be designated random. In the light of this obstacle to understanding, how can Ivan possibly make sense of his own blighted life and inescapable death? The scene indicates that the clarity that one holds in one's

mind is little more than the fiction that has been constructed in order to facilitate the process of living. Beneath this clarity there is a primordial level which is released when the mechanism to hold this fiction together for any reason fails. Ivan's delirium can be seen as an intensification of the destabilizing agitation experienced by Kseniia in her notorious speech. In Ksenia this fracturing was balanced by a measure of willed control returning her to the mundane business of the cherry biscuits, but in Ivan the will to control is becoming progressively degraded.

5. 3. 6. *Moskovskaia glava*: the fractured will

The selective process by which one establishes one's own fictional biography and compresses it into an inauthentic, chronological past existence is illustrated by Ivan's reflections on his journey to Moscow: 'Иван подъезжал к Москве со смутными чувствами, в воспоминаниях того десятилетия, которое в памяти его сейчас сдвинулось в гармошку: октябрь 1917 был вчера и геологическую эпоху тому назад' (p. 202.) The experiences of the past are reorganized into a non-experiential text, where chronology, defined by its lack of experiential temporal significance, is no more than an organizational framework. That particular decade, though it may comprise a sequence of events, no longer has any temporal significance other than that deriving from the fact that, no longer being experienced, it is conceptual and in the past. This constitutes the mode of inauthentic existence that enables Ivan to integrate with the *they* and share their common concerns and projections.

In Moscow the anxiety inherent in this mode, premised as it is upon an essential awareness of the inescapability of death, is underscored by a digression on the

countless victims of violence, alchohol, madness, and starvation brought bleeding and dying into the hospitals:

> В институт Склифасовского свозили задворки миллионного города, потерявших смысл жизни, право на жизнь, честь и жизненный инстинкт, уходящих в смерть в сумасшествии и от голода, от одиночества, от ненужности, от старости, от исковерканной молодости, поруганного мужества и оскверненного девичества,—свозили людей, обезображенных в драке, в алкоголе, в ревности, в грабеже,—молодых, старых, детей. (p. 203)

Given the hopelessness of their situations, the fact that 'каждый, оставшись жить, умоляет вернуть ему жизнь' (p. 203) must be ascribed to nothing more than an absolute reluctance to die, rather than any desire to continue to live.

The physicality of the mortal human body as a prison of the mind is a staple literary theme which in this text provides the point of departure for a more complex meditation upon the problem of being. The discrepancy between physicality and presentations to the mind are indicated by such instances as the realization by Ivan, after having been robbed, that his body is not behaving in the way he thinks it is: 'Он не замечал, что он бежал, — ему казалось, что он совершенно покоен' (p. 207). An interpretation based on a simplistic dualism is inadequate to explain the complexities of Ivan's existence. Given his syphilitic condition, he is understandably dissatisfied with the limitations of his physical body. He tells Aleksandra: 'Вот этот мешок, который называется моим телом, — сколько я дал бы, чтобы выпрыгнуть из него, из этой гнилой могилы, куда заперт мой ум' (p. 193). And physicality for Ivan as the conduit of experience is linked with knowledge, both of which, by virtue of their limited parameters, are restrictions imposed on being: 'Ты не

знаешь, что кроме незнания, которое ограничивает наш мир, ты — и я — мы ограничены еще вот твоим мясом, из которого нельзя выскочить' (p. 209). This remark is addressed to the maid, who, as he observes her, appears to him as a pulsating, functioning mass of bone, muscle and organs, organized along the lines of an intricately regulated autonomous depersonalized system — *gosudarstvo*.[17] The revelation of the physical nature of her body exposed in all its disturbing depth and intricacy is reminiscent of the attacks of nausea suffered by Sartre's diarist Roquentin on those occassions when existence intrudes into his life of desensitized habituality. It is significant that in Roquentin's case too an awareness of bodily functions is symptomatic of the onset of such attacks, exemplified by instances such as: 'And I— weak, languid, obscene, digesting';[18] and, 'a red haired man digesting on a bench' (p. 184). During one such attack Roquentin is so disgusted by the revelatory presentation of a man scratching himself, that he is forced to escape from the tram on which they have been traveling:

> The whole of the right side of his body has collapsed, the right arm is stuck to the body, the right side is scarcely alive, it lives laboriously, avariciously, as if it were paralysed. But on the whole of the left side, there is a little parasitic existence which proliferates, a chancre: the arm started trembling and then it rose and the hand at the end was stiff. And then the hand too started trembling and, when it reached the height of the skull, a finger stretched out and started scratching the scalp with the nail. A sort of voluptuous grimace came and inhabited the right side of the mouth and the left side remained dead. The windows rattle, the arm trembles, the nail scratches, scratches, the mouth smiles under the staring eyes and the man endures without noticing it this little existence which is swelling his right side, which has

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[17] *Ivan Moskva*, pp. 208–9.
[18] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. by Robert Baldick (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 184.

> borrowed his right arm and his right cheek to fulfil itself.
> (p. 181)

As a result of Roquentin's attack, the man has slipped free from the mundane category which has prescribed his place in the mental scheme of inauthenticity. Ivan's explanation to the maid for his anomalous behavior not only anticipates Roquentin's experience but also, through the use of the same verb, recalls his own earlier concern with the restrictions that are inherent in the physical body and a limited body of knowledge: 'Ты, прости, девушка, я из мозгов своих выскочил, — я куда ни посмотрю — все у меня в глазах разваливается.'[19]

He is able to see at a degree which does not correspond to the everyday level of prosaic perception at which eyes and mind operate as an integrated part of existence premised upon the mental scheme of inauthenticity which is *bytie* as *byt'*. In order to do this he has had to escape out of his brain. But by doing so, rather than achieving a Heideggerian totalization as a route to authenticity, he has broken free into *vne-bytie*, which is no more than a parallel existence to be reorganized according to the will of the subject. The illusion of presentation as conditioned by a mental schema in order to obfuscate the unpalatability of unprocessed existence is expressed by Roquentin's conception of sight as no more than a filter: 'Sight is an abstract invention, a cleaned up, simplified idea.'[20] Sight in its everyday application is no more than a habit with very little relationship to what Sartre conceives of as *existence*. Everyday perception is a matter of seeing things as they are believed to be in order to maximise their

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[19] *Ivan Moskva*, p. 210.
[20] *Nausea*, p. 187.

manageability. The phrase 'seeing is believing' turns out to have an alternative meaning, directly opposite to that with which it is popularly associated; belief is not dependent upon visual reception, but precedes and conditions visual perception. The phrase holds good, but its meaning is reversed because the visual, like the aural process, is expectation and coercion. The disquieting consequences of breaking loose from the belief system are revealed as Ivan slips free again: 'Все провалилось и опять возникло громадное государство костей, мяса, крови, нервов. Иван уже не знал, кто это государство — женщина ли, сидящая перед ним, или он сам.'[21]

The corollary of the absence of a schema is the absence of an organizing centre, as one cannot exist without the other. Effectively with no central platform from which to construct the pattern there can be no ego-centre, no self, no *sam*. Ivan merges with everything, as everything merges with him, and the individual is no more. From here he descends into a blackness of memories that without causality, time, or the habits of perception and self-fictionalization cease to have interrelatedness and remain beyond his grasp:

> Во мраке черепной коробки повисли сталактиты времени, чердаками рухляди свалена была память: и во мраке черепной коробки было совершенно темно, совершенно — черепная коробка разрасталась в невероятия, — как на заводе в шахте, Иван бродил по черепной коробке, спотыкаясь о память и с фонарем в руке. (p. 210)

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[21] *Ivan Moskva*, p. 210.

Stumbling through this chaos and blackness with the lamp that is his vestige of will to re-regulate it, he strives to discern the interrelatedness that will provide sufficient reason for a system, and regain a centre and a self. Ivan does succeed in so far as he stumbles into an existence:

> И — уже непонятно откуда, из черепа или из шахты — Иван вышел в ночное поле, в степь: — — — — трое здоровых они несли на плечах винтовки и мертвецов. (p. 210)

That it is not the same existence as that enjoyed by the maid who is tending him can be of no significance to him. All that matters for him is that he is, as he must be, at the centre of it. From the vantage point of the reader, it is the nature of Ivan's transition which is the object of interest. What had constituted a memory as part of the chronological fictionalization of Ivan's past has now, by virtue of his dislocation from the schema that held it in check, broken free from that framework and reassumed the status of experience. There is no question here from Ivan's point of view of his *re*living his memories; he is living experiences. As experiences they differ from memory, for where memories are parcelled fictions stabilized by words, experience happens in egocentred time. He has crossed from memories held in words, to pure experience and, as an illustration of this, the maid, who encourages him to sleep, becomes one of the guards who must remain on duty: 'Да, да, я посплю. Я очень устал. Ты стань на караул, возьми винтовку. Я посплю' (p. 210).

These themes are developed from a more general perspective in the section, immediately following Ivan's delirium, which concerns the lecture and demonstration of puppetry given by the artist Savinov for an audience comprising largely of fellow

actors (p. 212). The passage is saturated with allusions to the fluidity of perception, drawing attention to the fragility of any one model of sufficient reason as the basis for holding presentations in check, over any other. Belief in one can readily be suspended for belief in another:

> Марионетка — эгиптянка — женщина величиною меньше четверти метра — шла, шла, ступала своими сандалами, как самая настоящая женщина, — шла заставляя забыть, что она — только кукла в ловкости рук Владимира Савинова, дергаемая невидимыми ниточками [...] Эти куклы — совершенно категорически жили в ловкости рук Владимира Савинова [...] Куклы: — жили, оживали в руках актера Владимира Савинова. (p. 212)

Significantly, Ivan is not present at this spectacle. By switching from the particular to the general, the exceptionality of Ivan is undermined: his is a more developed case of a potentiality which is essential to any sentient mind. His name now gains a broader relevance which cannot help but recall Mr Smith as an ego in a crowd of egos. In the same way that Smith's name is deceptively simple, Ivan's mundane first name coupled with a surname which evokes the anonymity and the generality of the city to which it refers, produces a highly idiosyncratic effect. Each Ivan is an individual part of a common mode, and is pivoted on a fulcrum with the potential to swing between *I* and *they*.

In spite of the puppet's diminutive stature and all other supplementary knowledge, it is readily, on the basis of a few simple movements, assimilated into the human category. If the *I*'s understanding of the *they* is premised on such superficiality then the isolation of the *I* is unavoidable. In order to circumvent this isolation the *I* must reject itself and regard itself in terms of *I as they*. In other words to be *I as I* is to admit the

inaccessibility of any other person's existence than one's own. But the dangers of slipping out of the public mode are shown by Ivan's perception of the maid, and his behaviour towards the mummy, below.

In the light of the above discussion the tendency to regard characters such as Mr Smith, his progeny, and antecedent in the person of the Gentleman from San Francisco, as puppets can be more fruitfully regarded as part of the problem rather than answers to it. Symbolic interpretations which see these characters as ciphers designed to convey allegorical messages are not to be rejected out of hand in so far as they function at the level at which they are designed to function. But the general allegorical messages that these interpretations buttress are part of the system of modelling which holds their supporters in the *they*, because they are reflections of common goals, and societally determined standards and aspirations. By displaying his characters in such a way as to provoke symbolic interpretation, Pil'niak accentuates the mode of perception which is reflected in the reaction of the audience to Savinov's demonstration. Further, by exposing this mode he has demonstrated the unavoidability of regarding others as puppets, and the danger of seeing oneself in the same light, if the isolation which the revelatory acceptance of the self entails is to be avoided. The significance, then, of the canonical interpretations dealt with earlier is that in their complicity they actively bastion the model which Pil'niak accentuated in order to undermine.

Whilst this public demonstration of the unconscious pliability of perception through the subliminal will to manipulate and accommodate presentations in the world of *they* is under way at the theatre, Ivan, by virtue of his dislocation from the *they*, is subject to the bifurcation that that world is designed to prevent. The image of Ivan's entry into

the doctor's surgery by one door at exactly the same moment as the doctor enters by another recalls, amongst others, Dostoevskii's Goliadkin, and presages what is to follow:

> Он — тогда на улице — совершенно точно ощущал в себе два сознания: одно, теперь владевшее им, было темным, волчьим сознанием, страшным, проваливающимся в непознанные, непонятные инстинкты, — вот те, которые заставляли разорвать адрес больницы, — другое сознание было ясным, прозрачным и — безвольным — оно следило за первым и было бессильным. (p. 213)

The second *soznanie*, responsible for maintaining an integrated system to contain the individual, without the will to perform that task, can only look on helplessly; a spectator to a will-less world where events, presentations, and actions lose their justification. The tearing up of the hospital address as a refusal of treatment is a suicidal step recalling the will-less and unjustifiable attraction of *Smertel'noe manit*. It is in this state, without will—*bezvol'nyi*—that the ego-centred control system can cease to function, casting Ivan into that disorientating world where the former system of rules of integration no longer applies.

The mainstay of such a system is the fictionalization of existence which acts as the foil to experience. The least conceptualizable, and thereby least fictionalizable, of the sensory experiences, in contrast to the conceptuality of language and the pliability of visual perception, are the more directly experiential senses of touch and smell. As has been seen in Kseniia's case, both of these are prominent indicators of a transition from conceptual systemization into ego-centred experience. The same is true of Ivan who in his volatile condition as he enters Obopyn"s study is extremely sensitive to the smells

that assail him:

> Он уловил в воздухе, кроме запахов холостяцкой псины и касторки, третий непонятный запах. Он стал принюхиваться. Непонятный, бередливый, чуть заметный, — Иван не сразу узнал запах разложения, мертвечину.
> — Наверно под полом издохла крыса — решил Иван. Но запах не переставал беспокоить, и в памяти стал фронт. (p. 214)

This sensitivity recalls the *volch'e soznanie* above, and because of the inconceptualizability of these smells Ivan is in danger of overbalancing directly into the experiences that they recall. The aspect of reactivation is underlined by the use of the qualifying adjective *beredlivyi* with its sense of irritation of extant but dormant sources carried in the expression *beredit' starye rany*. The adjective is repeated on the same page to qualify the sound that proceeds from the mummy which, likened to that of a shell, and in its inarticulacy, is linked to Ivan's first destabilizing experience of the sea. By entering into these experiences, he could not avoid the challenge to his will of constructing a new system into which to build himself. The alternative is no system, and its corollary, no self. By pitching Ivan into this parallel world, Pil'niak has accentuated the isolation of the individual that was formerly attenuated by the shared preoccupations of the *they*. He is correspondingly less accessible to us than before because his principle of sufficient reason is now more radically alien to our own. It is not until after these disquieting smells and sounds have had their effect that Ivan, provoked into action by them, rises from the sofa on which he has been lying and turns on the light. It is only now that the *abstract invention* which is sight comes into play. Where the authorial voice and Obopyn' see an embalmed corpse, Ivan, not in spite of,

but because of the smell of decomposition, sees Aleksandra. Recalling the scene in which the comparison is made between what Ivan hears himself saying and what Sledopyt hears, a similar contrast is made here between what Ivan 'sees' and what Obopyn' sees, particularizing the thematic preoccupation developed generally in Savinov's public display of puppetry: 'Обопынь-старший видел совсем не то, что в бреду казалось Ивану' (p. 215).

Debarred from Ivan's personal system, it is impossible to grasp the progression that results in the revelation to him of Aleksandra through the medium of the decomposition, bones and parched skin that constitute the mummy. His subsequent adulation of the mummy and the *danse macabre* in which, contorted beneath her weight, he bears her around the desanctified, former chapel which is now Obopyn''s study intertextually recalls and parodies the ball from Hoffmann's tale *The Sandman*. This tale too is marked by its ocular preoccupation and concern with the malleability of perception.[22] Nathaniel in his dance with Olympia sees what he wants to see, failing to recognise that she is an automaton, and dismissing the students' jibes at her taciturnity—a consequence of mechanical shortcomings—as of no consequence because: 'The poetical soul is accessible only to the poetical nature.'[23]A link is traceable between the German Romantic Idealist concern with limited accessibility to

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[22] There is further evidence in Pil'niak's *oeuvre* showing the question of perception to be a theme of some considerable importance, most strikingly in his short story *Mat' syra zemlia* (1924). The text opens with a description of the peasant Klimkov, who, having scaled an oak in order to steal bark, slipped and become entangled by his footwear in the branches, is left suspended upside down until such time as his eyes burst out. At the conclusion of the text a cub assumed to be a wolf is shown to be a fox, and is destroyed (*Sobranie sochinenii*, 1929, III, pp. 15–76). In this tale too, as in *Ivan Moskva*, this preoccupation, reflecting a canonical literary theme, is not an end in itself but a catalyst to exegesis. If perception and presentation are suspect, then what, if anything, remains?

[23] E. T. A. Hoffmann, 'The Sandman', *Tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann*, trans. by Leonard J. Kent and Elizabeth C. Knight (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 117.

concealed levels of being and knowing, where higher truths are available, and the revelatory realm of consciousness to which Ivan Moskva has gained access.

It is only in this delusional condition that the truth of Ivan's encounter with Aleksandra is revealed to him. That the nurse with whom he had sexual relations and Aleksandra are one and the same had remained for him an inaccessible truth whilst in his 'lucid' state. Veracity, already conditional upon the unstable information of the senses, is further undermined by the revelation to Ivan at a level authorially denied to the reader of the same 'absolute truth'—the identity of Aleksandra—that is available to the reader at a level authorially denied to Ivan. Rather than inferring any notion of absolute truth, because it is accessible through two different routes, this pattern of fictions within fictions, as discussed in *Mat'-machekha*, suggests that truths are determined by the extent of the fictions within which they operate; both routes as elements of the same text lead to the same truth.

Neither is it simply a question of Ivan mistaking the mummy for Aleksandra. On the contrary, the woman in the field hospital actually was and is simultaneously the mummy and Aleksandra: 'Та женщина, с которой сошелся Иван в первый и последний раз за свою жизнь, тогда в июле в степной больнице, — была Александрой и мумией одновременно' (p. 215). And this can be possible, because having slipped outside of the temporal and spatial causality which regulates the extension and chronology of *they*, 'он, Иван, был вне времени и пространств' (p. 216). None of these rules is any longer of any significance to Ivan because his will no longer holds them together. It was the strength of this will, operating within a given system, which served to establish and maintain goals

compatible with that framework.

If the significance of the individual will is still in any doubt the refusal of Obopyn' to accept its degradation offers a further perspective on the question. The strain placed upon the will of a pilot exceeds that in other walks of life, because it requires a great deal more faith, as the product of the exertion of the will, to place one's trust in an aeroplane than is ordinarily expended. Though faith in any system may become habitual, there is individual potential, as has been seen, for destabilization requiring the re-exertion of the will. As the probability for destabilization in an activity where the consequences are so severe is that much higher, so are the demands upon the will. This, as Obopyn' explains, is the lot of the pilot: 'Пилоты, со временем, теряют сердце, у них появляется неуверенность. [...] Если их болезни не заметят, они всегда гробятся, разбиваются' (p. 217). In this condition the pilot's actions recall the aspect of will-lessness of *Smertel'noe manit* which has also been detected in Ivan: 'Страшная болезнь! — крикнул он. — Человек боится воздуха, марает, как шмендрик, — и все-таки лезет в воздух, [...] боится воздуха и лезет на него' (p. 217).

In his definition of this state as a disease a connection is established with the mode of consciousness available to Ivan through his succession of physical afflictions, and in return Ivan adopts Obopyn''s expression as a metaphor for his own condition: 'Я вот тоже вылетался' (p. 217). The condition is rejected by Obopyn' as one that can be subjugated to the will: 'Велю, и никакая машина не может разбиться. Велю, и мумия будет танцовать' (p. 217).

By way of an illustration of the acuteness of his own condition Ivan is tumbled into a

distorted inversion of the climactic scene from *Mednyi vsadnik*. The destabilization results from his attempt to revisit that building which held so much significance in the initiation of his conscious, systematized existence: 'В этом доме Иван дрался за свою биографию. В дни до-биографии Иван обедал в этом доме несколько раз'_(p. 218). His *do-bytie* is characterized through the animal instinct for food consumption. But this building was destroyed in that very same conflict in which he fought for his biography, and his propensity to deviate from that temporal and spatial system is demonstrated by his attempt to locate it. His failure to do so undermines his self because the building is the linchpin of his biography, and without it there is no biography, no self, and no centre. It is therefore not only possible but inevitable that the statue of Pushkin should be simultaneously in an unlimited number of situations in relation to him; losing the struggle to will a system, he progressively loses himself as a centre. And this is essential to the fear that overcomes him:

> Впереди стоял Пушкин.
> Пушкин раздвоился.
> Пушкин замыкал пути Ивана.
> И тогда Ивана объял леденящий страх. [...]
> Пушкин спрятался за церковью. [...] Пушкин был за каждым углом. (p. 219)

The *Moskovskaia glava* by switching its focus between between the public, Ivan, and

Obopyn' reiterates the point that the question of the security and isolation of *I as they* and the apparent lack of any viable alternative is not specific to Ivan alone. Although Ivan is returning to proclaim his revelation to Aleksandra, the point is emphasized (p. 219) that through her stability she has remained in the dark as to his true identity. And this is echoed in the note that Ivan receives from his robbers: 'Прости меня, что тогда в темноте я тебя не узнал' (p. 220).

5. 3. 7. *Glava zakliuchitel'naia*: remodelling and reintegration

In the introductory section of the *Glava zakliuchitel'naia* the focus is broadened from the individuals which were the primary concern of the central chapters to encompass the historical and geographical framework of the process of iron production. This does not however detract from its relevance, because this is the milieu from which Ivan emerged into his conscious existence: 'Это быт, родивший Ивана Москву' (p. 222). The use of this device recalls *Tret'ia stolitsa* where the concerns of Mr Smith are highlighted against a panoramic temporal and spatial backdrop. Though direct causal relations are not explored between the general and the particular, this method serves to demonstrate the extensiveness of the common framework within which individuals are engendered. But the relativity and finitude of any framework, in spite of its assumed incontrovertibility and permanence, is brought out by a return to the presentation of the movement of celestial bodies, which was of catalytic significance in Ivan's own revelatory experience: 'Красный месяц поднимается на востоке, красною раною уходит солнце на западе' (p. 221). The movement of both the moon and sun are 'factual', even though it is the sun that is immobile, whilst both the moon and earth are in complex motion. The force of the imagery lies in the distinction between events and facts. Facts can only ever be interpretations placed upon events through the medium of an observer. In this way events are effectively unknowable, and facts are constructed upon a willed faith in a system of causality. The perceived movement of the sun and moon however epitomizes the 'absolute' facts of any framework of assessment.

It is hardly surprising, in the face of the assault upon factuality which has coloured the textual exposition, that presentations to the senses should be seen in terms of some

fluidity. The distinction between Ivan's two modes of consciousness now loses its validity. The speech that he is reported to have made to Aleksandra in the *Zakliuchenie pervoe* is prefaced with the following: 'Иван говорил Александре, неизвестно — в бреду или в яви' (p. 222). Whether in a state of lucidity or delirium, the factual status of this speech is questionable, both in the light of the above and because in the second conclusion the plane crashes and Ivan dies before he has been able to speak to Aleksandra. If, however, he made the speech earlier, it would either have to have been made to her in her absence in a delirium, or at a time prior to his departure for Moscow. That the question is left textually unresolved suggests that, given the assault on factuality, it is not in itself a material point. This line of argument is supported by the textual status of the passage as conclusion, rather than as an element of the exposition developed in the headed chapters. The possibility of alternative and mutually exclusive conclusions is not to be ignored, but neither is the possibility that the passage is beyond the orthodox framework of chronology and literary fictionality, and by being so attracts attention to the factitious reality of fiction itself. An indication of its textual function may be found in its nature in relation to earlier reported speeches by Ivan. The tone of this speech is very different to that of his earlier 'lucid' declamation in which he characterised himself as the first genuine alchemist: 'Радий!.. это совершенно неверно, что он есть некий сверхъестественный кладезь сверхматериальной силы' (p. 222). On the contrary, Ivan returns to the simple conclusion stated in the first law of thermodynamics. The speciality of radium is that it decays more quickly than other elements, thus blinding the observer by the rapidity of its change to the universal but more pedestrian process of degeneration wherein changes take place 'так медленно, что человек не в силах проследить за

нимн' (p. 223). As a further example of the successive progression through illusory frameworks of factual permanence, it is to be pointed out that even the geostatic aspect of Ivan's initial revelatory experience is relative only to the earth's crust when viewed in the light of an awareness of plate tectonics. The reluctance to admit of permanence in the face of the arguments for the imperceptibility of change and the impermanence of facts recalls the dictum of Heraclitus, 'Forever flowing'—*vse techet*. The process of change that may be spectacularly rapid as in the case of the radioactive isotope, or deceptively protracted as in the case the three thousand year old mummy, is a universal. Exceptions to this are the result of the pliability of perception; Ivan and his colleagues were not aware of the advanced state of decomposition of their comrades in the Kuban'. The decay of his own body as a sign of the unavoidable nullification of the centre challenges him with the central problem of existence. Though it is now clear to Ivan that radium decays and creates energy in the same way as his own body decays—'Так умираю я' (p. 223)—the difference with his own existence is that, unlike that of the radiactive isotope, his is not determined by the duration of a repeatable half-life, but by the unavoidable event of a totalizing death. In this speech Ivan reflects upon his life perfectively as a completed process: 'Этим знанием я отдал свою жизнь.' (p. 223), and his death, contrasting with the imperfective process of dying, as an event in the future: 'Да, но я умру' (p. 224)

The significance of this first conclusion lies in that, in the same way as it formally steps outside of textual orthodoxy, it also represents for Ivan a step beyond his own fictional life, but one which is only possible through a further fictional device that recalls the double deaths that have been discussed earlier. And, as in these earlier cases, the

totalization of a life represented by the first death is not possible without the curtailment that is the second, and which is the subject of the second conclusion.

The question of the relative value of factual data and permanence is underlined in the opening section of the second conclusion. A worker queries the speed of flight relative to the rotation of the earth. If the aeroplane flies at a constant one hundred and seventy kilometres between two points in both directions, a discrepancy must arise between the times taken as a result of the earth's movement. The distance is effectively covered more quickly in one direction even though the speed remains the same; or, it is possible to travel more quickly at one hundred and seventy kilometers per hour in one direction than another. This prompts the categorical articulation of an implicit textual preoccupation: 'Иван вспомнил, что на его заводе время — по солнцу — разнится от местного на полчаса и нет ничего абсолютного' (p. 224). The point that is being made by the worker and endorsed by Ivan is significant because, in a small way, it represents a departure into analytical contemplation from the mode of habitualized acceptance, which is illustrated via a further reference to the sun during Ivan's mediatation before he takes off for what is to be his final flight: 'И Иван представил себя, как миллионы русских баб в этот закатный час, по команде солнца, сидят у коровьего вымени, миллионы доятся коров' (p. 225).

This departure into the analytic goes some way to explaining the thematic disjuncture marking the short paragraph from which the quotation from page 224 is taken. Having made that point in one sentence, there is an abrupt change of mood and subject. Without a break, an analogy is made between the appearance of an aeroplane seen

head on and the human skull. Though the association between the skull and death is unavoidable, for Pil'niak it is not a *symbol* of death; it is, on the other hand, a symbol of wisdom: 'человеческий череп всегда был символом мудрости.' The semiotic value of the skull is that it is synecdochically a part of death whilst symbolizing wisdom, and this recalls the semiotic significance of the casket of earth from *Tret'ia stolitsa*. The force of the image lies in the association of death and wisdom, suggesting the inextricable combination of the two.[24] At the surface textual level these two are linked with the aeroplane as the indirect cause of Ivan's death and, more importantly, the epitomization of the will. For Ivan it is more than just an epitomization, it is the very will itself, the primary motivator and defining essence of the human being which carries itself up into the air: 'Здесь на этом поле лежал самолет, человеческая воля, несущая человека в небо' (p. 226). The will and the plane become synonymous since it is only faith, through will, in a system of causality which allows both the construction of the craft and its maintenance in the air. And it is in this light that the denouement described in the second conclusion of the textual exposition is cast. As a prelude to the concluding event of Ivan's life the inapplicability of absolutes is overtly re-emphasized in a passage that dwells on relative movement, and again parallels Ivan's cliff-top experience:

> Пропеллер ревет, толпа отвернулась от самолета, — или самолет отвернулся от толпы? — Земля мчит стремительно — до того момента, пока она не качнулась под самолетом:

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[24] The original meaning of *cherep* still detectable in *cherepok* ('potsherd') was 'vessel' or 'dish'. The meaning of 'skull' is thus a metaphorical development deriving from shared morphological and functional characteristics: a bowl-shaped container (for the brain). The association of wisdom and the skull therefore has an etymological, metaphorical foundation in Russian, augmenting its experiential and symbolic potential. A matrix of meaning is traceable between 'container', 'skull', and now, 'aeroplane'.

значит, самолет оторвался от земли, значит, самолет в стихиях, где нет быстроты и высот. И тогда уже не самолет, — самолет стоит на месте, — а земля под ним ползет назад, река, леса, поля, игрушки деревень, рубаха России. Клокочет пропеллер, солнце сбоку, рядом, — режет ветер. Минуты в воздухе — часами.
Облака идут под Иваном, самолет ушел за облака [...] Солнце — рядом, то солнце, во имя которого качнулась однажды в мозгах Ивана земля.(p. 226)

The aeroplane rises above the clouds which form a barrier against the earth: 'Там не было видно земли' (p. 226). The earth because of its invisibility no longer functions as a reference point required to understand the relativity of motion in relation to the sun and the floating platform upon which Ivan and Obopyn' are isolated. Its place is briefly taken by the storm to which the plane, as a manifestation of human will, proves superior. As in *Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko*, there is no question here of a symbolic, romanticized and contrived, elemental triumph of the weather over man. It is only when the earth reappears in conjunction with the celestial events that provide the habituating framework of terrestrial existence that Obopyn' loses his will and the plane must inevitably crash: 'Сумерки, и вон из-за лесов, из-за земли красный, огромный встает диск луны, багрово красит облака: это на востоке, — а на западе красною раной уходит солнце, в кровь раскалывая облака' (p. 227).

If contact, and thereby integration, with a regulating system has once been comprehensively lost, it is impossible to regain that integration. Pil'niak's juxtaposition of the expressions 'Самолет шел штопором' and 'Земля вертелась внизу волчком' metaphorizes the confusion of the crisis of subjectivity, that is the loss of a stable platform of observation; it is no longer possible to tell which is in movement.

And without this centre, as Ivan's experience with the multiple manifestations of Pushkin's statue demonstrates, there can be no stability of reference points.

As Aleksandra watches, the plane explodes like a rocket and a further re-enactment of Ivan's earlier experience is played out in which the explosion is a substitute for the sun: 'Как некогда для Ивана солнце, сейчас неподвижными для Александры были — она и ракета, и качалась, качалась, падала земля' (p. 228). The focus of her attention is the combustion which signifies the destruction of the crucial reference point, in the person of Ivan, in the emergent systemization of her existence. Due to the intensity of focus and the centralization of personal experience into herself, external reference points have become redundant. External reference points are of no significance in the gauging of such intensely focused individual experiences. As the earth falls away from her, so anything other beyond herself and the object of her focus effectively ceases to exist: 'Александре было совершенно несущественным, что с земли встал веселый Снеж [the co-pilot], отряхивая колени' (p. 228). But as a further indication of the isolation of the personal experiences and crises of Ivan, Aleksandra, and Obopyn', there is a final reminder of the broader context within which these dramas are played out. 'Над землею шел тихий зырянский вечер...' (p. 228). Ivan's, Aleksandra's, and Obopyn''s are isolated, individual cases, of no more significance than any other.

Correspondingly, the following, third conclusion concerns Sledopyt who, having left the factory on the day prior to Ivan's death, returns to the isolated territory—*urochishche*—of his homeland where he recounts the impressions of his trip. The events that he recounts are filtered through his own perception, and thus, though

factually true, are coloured by his own interpretation, and represent a fictionalization of experience: he pokes his finger into the wall and the whole house lights up; Lunacharskii speaks via a tube running from Moscow to the factory; sparks fly from the 'eyes' of the aeroplane. There are embellishments—'Если,—говорят—побежишь, мы тебя арестуем!'(p. 229)—which prompt their own re-interpretation of events: they belted him in to prevent him from escaping. He has a certificate as written proof that he has been up in an aeroplane, because otherwise they would not believe him—'а то не поверят' (p. 229)—so it must all be true. But the passage gently undermines its own veracity by playing with the balance between event and fact, presentation and reportage, in a subdued echo of the multiple interpretations that Ivan has struggled with. Sledopyt however, after some setbacks—'а я хоть и не вижу, а говорю, что видать'(p. 229)—succeeds in assimilating on his own terms the events he has been part of and, where once he crossed himself and and cursed the pilots, he now recommends flying to everyone. There has been a modification in his systemization to successfully accommodate new experiences.

Broadening the spectrum to include yet more peripheral characters, attention is diverted in the fourth conclusion to Iashka the stable boy who, having left the factory on the day before Ivan's death, in order to join up with a group of students travelling to Moscow to study, is caught up on the road by Aleksandra. She has left the factory five days after Ivan's death and now accompanies them on their journey. There is, however, no further mention of Ivan in this fourth conclusion, nor even any record of a conversation between Aleksandra and Iashka, who is still unaware of Ivan's death. Instead, the section is concerned with the anecdotal details of the journey. At the surface textual level Ivan has ceased to have any further significance. This is not to

say that Aleksandra's taciturnity is necessarily to be taken at face value. To do so would, as has been shown earlier in this investigation, be to trivialize the analysis. We have no access to her thoughts, and her vocalizations are limited to the remarks she makes to a student seated at a campfire. The student herself is defined not by what she says, but principally by how she speaks—'медленно, очень на о, очень открытыми звуками',[25] and by her eyes: 'Глаза за пенснэ:—каие? как определить? [...] только эти глаза,—какие? как передать?' (p. 231).

The nature of the eyes that are the intermediaries of presentations can neither be defined nor conveyed, and those articulations of language which were words, and thereby the tools of definition and transmission, have become simply sounds, meaningless without the possibility of interpretation that a systemized framework allows. This lack of stability implies an essential perpetual fluidity of the foundations upon which the reference points that define any system are built, and any boundary between lucidity and its counterpart must therefore be based on arbitrary reference points. Doubt is cast upon the validity of any distinction between one and the other in the *Obstoiatel'stvo posledne*e by the additional association of *bred* with Aleksandra as well as with Ivan: 'Трехтысячелетие мумии сменилось бредом Александры и Ивана' (p.232). It is this aspect of Pil'niaks' texts which will provide the basis for the concluding chapter of this investigation into the crisis of subjectivity.

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[25] This mode of speech is particularly characteristic of Siberian dialect.

6. EXPERIENCE AND CONCEPT

6. 1 Referential and experiential expressions

In the previous chapter attention was drawn to the way in which a young student was characterized on the basis of the singularity of her mode of articulation. What she said was of less significance than the nature of the sound. The semantic function of the sounds as parcels of conceptualized meanings—*words*—was less important than the experiential articulation; we do not know what she said, but only how she attempted to say it. This represents a further step in the reception of language along the path initiated by Kseniia Ordynina in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*. In her case the force of the more directly referential function of words had begun to lose weight, in favour of an experiential use. This is not to say that there can ever be a categorical distinction between the two, but rather a gradual transition from primarily referential, functioning within a specialized but shared framework, to the highly personal and idiosyncratic.

6. 2. Free-floating expression: Marinetti, Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh

The problematic question of the possibility of the purely experiential reception of words as sounds is one that can not only be traced through Pil'niak's oeuvre, but was indeed one of the major preoccupations of the multi-faceted Modernist movement both in Russia and further afield. The level of complexity of the problem is demonstrated by Peter Nicholls's' comparison of the approaches of Marinetti and Khlebnikov to this theoretical question with reference to the former's *Zang Tumb Tuuum*:

> In Marinetti's work the meaning of the sound, its connection to the object it represents, is made through

the force of vocalization. His aim is thus to forge an absolute identity of word and referent. What Khlebnikov envisages has, in contrast, no need of a performer; additionally language is not called upon to articulate some prior experience, and signification occurs, as it were, internally; it is generated from language deployed for its own sake rather than as the instrument of thought. The word here floats free of any referent; it is, to use the term favoured in numerous manifestos, 'self-sufficient'.[1]

The expression *samovitoe slovo* which was employed to describe this concept, has continued to engender contention. Its definition has remained elusive as is illustrated by Vladimir Markov's explanation of the term as entailing a 'whole program for the study of and experimentation with the inside of the word, the laying bare of its inner structure, and making its texture felt'.[2] This in itself sheds little light on the nature of the *samovitoe slovo*. Further, the concept of *zaum'*—transrational language—a phenomenon which made its first appearance in a letter of 1913 from Khlebnikov to Kruchenykh, is shown by Markov to have had different meanings for different writers. For some it meant the creation of neologisms as yet not filled with meaning; for Kruchenykh, for example *zaum'* was the creation from existing phonemes of completely meaningless words. For Khlebnikov, on the other hand, it meant the attempt to create a new language by isolating the pure ideas expressed by the separate sounds of language. Others hoped to develop the semantic significance of devices such as rhythm and assonance, whilst for yet others the deliberate harshness of texture—consonantism—was a method of slowing down the attention of the reader in order to

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[1] Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 128.
[2] Vladimir Markov, *The Longer Poems of Velimir Khlebnikov* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1962), p. 3.

highlight the formal verbal devices of the work.[3] In their diversity they can all be seen as attempts to alienate the reader in order to necessitate an act of re-orientation.

6. 3. Mediation and concept

Though the Russian Formalists, as opposed to the Italians, had no place for onomatopoeia, and the examples cited by Nicholls above differ widely in their approaches in that where Marinetti seeks a more urgent connection between articulation and referent, and Khlebnikov hopes to transcend the external referent, both, if language is to retain its defining functions, must be subject to the following questions: how is it possible for any 'word' once repeated not to accrue a degree of mediatory conceptuality; and, to what extent are conceptualizations transferable? A shared language must always be a system of approximations, relying on the most accessible, habitual conceptualizations, divorced by its nature from experience. More personal conceptualizations are correspondingly less transferable. Even at the most fundamentally onomatopoeic level an articulated sound functions only through subscription to a shared, generalized conceptualization referring to an experienced sound. The more specialized or refined that language, at once the more exclusive and transferable it becomes. This does not of course imply numerically limited exclusivity. In *Ivan Moskva* the 'Glava zavodskaia' opens with a list of Komi words accompanied by their definitions,[4] and 'Moskovskaia glava' having opened with a list of underworld—*vorovskie*—words, again with their definitions (p. 201), closes, significantly following the depiction of the intense experiences of Ivan's progressive

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[3] For a more detailed discussion see Markov, 1962, pp. 6–7.
[4] *Ivan Moskva*, p. 185.

dislocation, with: '— республиканские слова: ИСУ, НТУ, ВСНХ, ПГУ, Промбюро, рабфак' (p. 221). Each vocabulary represents an exclusive set of transferable conceptualizations, replacing individual unmediated experience. Access to a particular communicative network can be achieved by familiarization with the operative set of generalizations; in order to participate in communication at all, the *I* must assimilate to the *they*. This analysis casts some light upon the sudden disjuncture between the intensely personal experiences of Ivan's mental reorientation, and the insertion of initial-words and stump-compounds that characterize republican language. While the former are essentially untransferable because of the nature of language, the latter are substantially transferable because of their irrelevance to personal individual experience. It is not possible to be *I* without ceding a degree of individual sovereignty to *they*, but, and because, it is never possible to communicate anything that is essentially *I* to the *they*. *I* therefore has no alternative other than to exist as *I as they*.

6. 4. Alienation: Pil'niak, Guro, Duchamps

The use of the interpolated *respublikanskie slova* cannot help but recall Pil'niak's insertion of *Glavbum* into his evocation of a snowstorm in *Golyi god*. An intensity of primordial experience is juxtaposed with the aridity of conceptualization through generally accessible words. In a work published in 1925 L'vov-Rogachevskii drew attention to the similarity between Pil'niak's evocation of a snowstorm and a short poem by Elena Guro.[5] The poem that he refers to is 'Finlandia' from the collection

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[5] V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, 'Boris Pil'niak i Elena Guro', in *Kniga dlia chteniia po istorii noveishei russkoi literatury* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1925), p. 436. There are a number of inaccuracies in the version quoted by L'vov-Rogachevskii. That given here is taken from Elena Guro, *Sochineniia*, ed. by Lazar Fleishman and others, Modern Russian Literature and Culture: Studies and Texts, 34 (Oakland, CA: Berkley Slavic Specialities, 1996) p. 349.

Troe, a joint venture in which the other contributors were V. Khlebnikov and A. Kruchenykh:

Это-ли? Нет-ли?
Хвои шуят,— шуят
Анна—Мария, Лиза,—нет?
Это-ли?—Озеро—ли?

Лулла, лолла, лалла-лу,
Лиза, лолла, лулла-ли.
Хвои шуят, шуят,
ти-и-и, ти-и-у-у.

Лес-ли,—озеро-ли?
Это-ли?

Эх, Анна, Мария, Лиза,
Хэй-тара!
Тере-дере-дере...Ху!
Холе-кулэ-пэээ.

Озеро-ли?—Лес-ли?
Тю-и
ви-и... у.

A comparison with Pil'niak's evocation reveals a noticeable similarity:

> Метель. Март. — Ах, какая метель, когда ветер ест снег! Шооояя, шо-яя, шоооояя!.. Гвину, гваау, гаааау...гвиииуу, Гвиииииууу... Гу-ву-зз!.. Гу-ву-зз!.. Глав-бум!.. Гла-вбум!.. Шооояя, Гвиуу, гаауу! Гла-вбум!! Гу-вуз!! Ах, какая метель! Как метельно!.. Как хо-ро-шо!..[6]

L'vov-Rogachevskii appraises this similarity as simply another example of Pil'niak's plagiaristic borrowings:

> Вот один из примеров таких заимствований: конец главы «Кожаные куртки» написан стилем футуристов. Борис Пильняк сочетанием звуков хочет передать музыку метели—музыку революции. Несомненно, толчком к этому послужило прекрасное стихотворение

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[6] *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1994, I, p. 142.

> талантливой футуристки Е. Гуро, умершей в рассвете творческих сил. Сопоставьте звуковые сочетания в произведениях обоих авторов и самый принцип применения этих сочетаний.[7]

It is presumably on the basis of this association that L'vov-Rogachevskii has elected to include Pil'niak in the section 'Formalisty', along with Shklovskii and the Serapion Brotherhood, comprising Part IV of his book, rather than in Part III, Chapter 6, 'Poputchiki-realisty'.[8] For what may have been political rather than literary reasons, L'vov-Rogachevskii rejected Voronskii's understanding of Pil'niak as a *bytopisatel'* of the revolution, preferring to associate him with the progressively more vulnerable Formalist current. This association seems particularly forced given that earlier on in the same article Pil'niak is painted as a disciple of Bunin. The choice of taxonomy, in any event contingent upon external factors, is especially arbitrary in relation to Pil'niak's work of this period. Whatever label L'vov-Rogachevskii chose to append to Pil'niak, his comparative analysis demonstrates an awareness of the incongruity of Pil'niak's interpolation, but a reluctance to appreciate its significance.

> В своем стихотворении Елена Гуро, посредством подбора согласных и гласных подчеркивая шипящую и гласные о, я, и, у, передает музыку сосен, шумящих хвоями под акомпанимент озера—«Лулла, лолла, лулла-ли». В эту музыку врывается человеческая речь местных жителей, пропитанная звуками, разлитыми в стране где шуят сосны. «Озеро-ли?—Лес-ли?» или суровые финны звенят протяжно «Холе-куле-нэээ». Борис Пильняк огрубел, упростил прием нежной Е. Гуро—в завывание метели, в ее «шояя, шо-я, гву» он

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[7] L'vov-Rogachevskii, 1925, p. 436.

[8] G. Gorbachev characterized Pil'niak as a 'tipichnyi poputchik' in his essay 'Tvorcheskie puti B. Pil'niaka', in *Bor. Pil'niak: Stat'i i materialy* (Leningrad: Academia, 1928), p. 49.

> вставил современные слова «глав-бум», «гвуз», рожденные революцией. (p. 436)

Closer examination reveals that Pil'niak's insertion of extraneous contemporary terminology is anything other than a simplification of Guro's device. The removal of *Glavbum* from its quotidian context and its relocation into the snowstorm recalls Duchamp's *Urinal* first exhibited in 1917. A mundane artefact, as well a mundane word, can only accrue meaning through the fracturing of its accepted associations. Alienation may be the result, but the artefact does not lose the connotations of its association with its original context; it transposes them into another context. In this way by developing a fresh set of associations it reorientates the reader toward both original contexts. The two contexts that have been brought into contact by Pil'niak's device are the elemental snowstorm on the one hand, and the world of ideology, economic theory, paper production, and central planning on the other. Furthermore, there are intertextual extensions of the snowstorm as a device of disorientation reaching out to, amongst others, Blok and Pushkin. A snowstorm equally obfuscates landmarks, bridegrooms, and planning departments. Where Pil'niak's example differs however is in the forcing together of what, for L'vov-Rogachevskii, should be mutually exclusive contexts. For him, *Glavbum*, which was perfectly ordinary in one context, has become incongruous in another. As an illustration of the impossibility of acontextuality, the example demonstrates the inescapability of any particular framework of assessment as the location from within which the quality of ordinariness is to be determined. By transposing an object of attention from one context to another the process of defamiliarization exposes the arbitrariness of that object by weakening the causal relations that have held it in place. This is what occurs in the cases of both *Urinal* and

Glavbum. Although the effect is dramatic in these two examples, there are grounds for arguing that all objects perceived as examples of creative art can only be so perceived, if they are recognized as being out of context, and thus defamiliarized. The result of the decontextualization is that the object must be interpreted anew on the basis of the combination of its new context and a knowledge of the contexts to which it refers. It is a question of how far, and to what ends, the process of defamiliarization is developed.

By his particular choice of a neologism filled with contemporary significance, Pil'niak reminds us that all language as a tool of communication is context based. All uses of language constitute acts within the contexts that determine their illocutional force. As it is never possible to relocate a piece of language in the abstract, then the effect of a speech act upon its hearers must be determined by the hearers' understanding of the context within which they find themselves, and there is no guarantee that this understanding will correspond with the intention of the speaker.[9] This radical destabilization of the word *Glavbum* which, through its newness, has still not achieved the respectability of canonization through habitualization, draws attention to the essential instability of language. *Glavbum* is especially vulnerable to desabilization because as a neologism it is particularly dependent, for its stability, upon the new context which has engendered it. If its definition relies upon its difference from other words, then in its nascent state, those words with which it has begun to be most routinely associated, and with which it is most regularly in contact, are those which it

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[9] This point is elucidated by Stanley Fish in an analysis of *Coriolanus* in his essay 'How to do things with Austin and Searle: Speech-Act Theory and Literary Criticism', in *Is There a Text in this Class: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 197–245.

is most reliant upon for its meaning derived from a system of meaningful interrelationships. Its status as a neologism that has not yet solidified allows its arbitrariness to be easily exposed, demonstrating that though there is no such thing as inherent normality, perceived normality is only achieved through statistically normal circumstances providing contexts of which the participants are unaware, and thereby creating the illusion of inherent normality. No institutional circumstance, action or use of language can ever be inherently normal.

By taking the word *Glavbum*, then, and relocating it, Pil'niak not only highlights it by removing it from its 'normal' context and warping its recognizability, but also, by association, spotlights that context from which it has been excised. The snowstorm has, recalling Blok, achieved the status of an accepted symbol of revolution, but by forcing a direct incursion of republican vocabulary into a primordial context, rather than a metaphorical link between snowstorm and revolution Pil'niak semantically undermines *Glavbum* by fracturing its network of definition. It demands to be redefined by its new context, but for L'vov-Rogachevskii the residue of its former associations precludes this possibility. Alienated in this way from both contexts, its arbitrariness as a word is emphasized and the experiential over the conceptual aspect of its potential is reactivated.

The above discussion has assumed prior knowledge of the expression *Glavbum* and its original contextual significance. It is this knowlege which is largely the cause of the sense of incongruity,[10] and it is to this that Pil'niak has drawn attention by its insertion.

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[10] Phonetic considerations could also be taken into account, as could the question of onomatopoeia, but the present discussion is primarily concerned with the contemporary, conceptual accretion to the

Without knowledge of the function of the word, its presence would be no more or less incongruous than, for example, Guro's *vi-i*. Furthermore, its use, given that we cannot now escape this prior knowledge, has a reciprocal effect on the verbal environment of the snowstorm into which it has been pitched. It casts doubt upon these words too. The question is raised as to the viability or effectiveness of onomatopoeic, or alienating metaphorical devices to convey experiential events. If language cannot be developed to such an extent that it surpasses metaphor and approaches experientiality itself, it is more expedient to say simply: *Akh, kakaia metel'. Kak metel'no.* Pil'niak undermines his own ornamental description of a snowstorm by defining the object of his attention in terms of itself. His suspicion of simile and metaphor is not confined to *Golyi god.* A similar scepticism recurs in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*: 'На бумаге, желтой как желтуха'.[11] The object of comparison is so closely paradigmatically related to the subject, that its use questions the value of the simile as a literary device. Is there any point in comparing something to something that it is not? A tension is established between the validity of simile and metaphor as a process of defamaliarization for reinvigorating the attention on one hand, and as the introduction of yet another insulating layer of conceptualization on the other. The use of such self-referential similes demonstrates an urge to come into as close contact as possible with the original event, and an admission that knowledge of the original event is not really communicable by verbal means. All words are the solidifications of individual experiences into personal concepts, with a limited transferability, which increases with remoteness from experience. It is this

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expression. It must be admitted that any combination of letters will carry a variable amount of meaning depending on its similarity to known words, or perceived onomatopoeic qualities.

[11] *Ivan-da-Mar'ia*, p. 44.

specialization of words, reflecting the specialization of systems, that is both a symptom and a product of the habitualization which characterizes that type of inauthentic being which Sartre explores in *Nausea*. Inauthenticity in this discussion is understood as a function of the ascendency of *I as they*.

6. 5. Fictionalization, integration and insulation: Dostoevskii, Gogol', Sartre, Bjørneboe

Nausea demonstrates that in order to maintain integration within a system it is first and foremost necessary to accept words at their most accessible level so as to avoid accidental and nauseous penetration beneath them to Sartrean *existence*, to *things*. In Sartre's study of a man's struggle to maintain integration, the diarist Roquentin relies on the reassuring mundanity of words as a bastion against *existence*. In the 'Undated Sheet' which prefaces the diary entries proper comprising the main body of the text of *Nausea*, Roquentin states his position: 'I'm cured, and I'm going to give up writing down my impressions'.[12] The remark is significant for two reasons: firstly because it expresses the idea of writing as a curative process of systemization; and secondly because it equates heightened individual, non-shared consciousness with illness. Both of these are relevant to the works discussed. The opening words of the first diary entry, reminiscent of those with which *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* begin, restate the idea: 'Something has happened to me: I can't doubt that any more. It came as an illness does, not like an ordinary certainty, not like anything obvious' (p. 13). As is routinely cited, Dostoevskii's anonymous hero equated the two directly: 'Я крепко убежден, что не только очень много сознания, но даже и всякое сознание

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[12] *Nausea*, p. 11.

болезнь.'[13] And Gogol' too subscribed to the idea of profundity of consciousness through revelatory illness, as testified by the opening words of *Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz'iami*: 'Я был тяжело болен'.[14] Freedom from illness is conversely associated with habitualization, conformity, and what may be regarded as inauthentic being. Roquentin's observations on the process of self-fictionalization, the building of biographies, and systemization that ensure conformity are of particular relevance to the earlier sections of this study: 'A man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his live as if he were recounting it'.[15] And his reaction to his inability to successfully resystematize his life in the face of encroaching nausea is informed by this recipe: 'I wanted the moments of my life to follow one another in an orderly fashion like those of a life remembered' (p. 63). Roquentin's condition is rather more complex than an attempt at self-fictionalization through a fear of *existence*. Whilst nauseated by the intrusions of *existence*, he nevertheless also rejects memories held by words as fictionalizations of experiences: 'It seems to me as if everything I know about life I have learnt from books' (p. 95). He strives to retain experiences without words, in order to prevent them from dying and becoming stories, as most have now done:

> All the same for a hundred dead stories there remain one or two living ones. These I evoke cautiously, occasionally, not too often, for fear of wearing them out. I fish one out, I see once more the setting, the

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[13] F. M. Dostoevskii, *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), V, 99–179 (p. 102).
[14] Nikolai Gogol', *Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz'iami*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 7 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1967), VI, 202–421 (p. 202).
[15] *Nausea*, p. 61.

> characters, the attitudes. All of a sudden I stop: I have felt a worn patch, I have seen a word poking through the web of sensations. I sense that before long that word is going to take the place of several pictures I love. Straight away I stop and quickly think of something else; I don't want to tire my memories. In vain; the next time I invoke them, a good part will have congealed. (p. 53)

It is not an easy challenge, and one that seems less viable as one slips further into inauthenticity, and experiences are fictionalized to such an extent that even dreams cease to be experiential: 'I dream about words, that's all.'(p. 53). Roquentin's position is understandably contradictory because of the anxiety aroused by the knowledge that rejection of a system of fictionalization entails dislocation and isolation. What is to become of the individual should he betray the conspiracy? The very process of writing in order to understand the process of dislocation is a part of this contradiction: 'I have no need to speak in flowery language. I am writing to understand circumstances. I must beware of literature. I must let my pen run on, without searching for words' (p. 85). He must use words to make sense of experiences, because there seems to be no other way in which to handle them.

A similar task of self-exploration was attempted by the narrator of a less well-known work by the Norwegian writer, Jens Bjørneboe in his 1966 novel *Frihetens Øyeblikk.* In this work the narrator attempts to systemize the unmanageable mass of personal experiences that have made up his life in order to gain control of his mind, and thereby, recalling Roquentin's remarks, to remember. The passage in Norwegian is succinct but particularly problematic for translation due to the use of the word *begrep*, which though variously translatable as 'notion', 'idea', 'conception' or 'conceptualization' derives from the verb *gripe*, 'to grasp' or 'catch', thus underlining the emasculation of

experience through captivity imposed by concretization into conceptual language. For the sake of clarity my translation is as far as possible, literal rather than literary.

> Everything within me was chaos and darkness—violent and savage, much too intense impressions of the senses without conceptualization [*begrep*]. As you know, without conceptualization, our impressions remain as pure experience, without the foundation of the clarity, order, and discipline of thought. [16]

6. 6. The caged wolf: conceptualization of experience

The image of the caged wolf in *Mashiny i volki*,[17] which provides a fund of allegorical potential, may more fruitfully be seen in the light of what has been said above: that is to say, not simply as a symbol of an over-arching—though, in its applicability to Pil'niak, unconvincing—oppositional scheme involving man, nature and machine, but, at a more fundamental level, as an illustration of the intrinsically human problem of the unavoidable drive toward conceptualization of experience. Pil'niak's comparison of the repetitive behaviour of the caged wolf to a machine suggests a progression from experience, through conceptualization, to machine as the concretization of conceptualization. It is not a question of mutually exclusive, oppositional and absolute

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[16]Jens Bjørneboe, *Frihetens Øyeblikk* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1993), p. 7. ['Alt inne i meg var kaos og mørke—voldsomme og ville, altfor sterke sanseintrykk uten begrep. Uten begrep blir som bekjent våre inntrykk stående som 'rene erfaringer', ikke underlagt tankens klarhet, orden og disiplin.']

[17] 'V uglu, v mednoi kletke, plokho osveshchennoi,—byl volk; volk byl nevelik, no star i ubog; kletka byla malen'kaia; volk begal po kletke: volk izuchil kletku,—on kruzhilsia v nei, sled v sled, shag v shag, dvizhenie v dvizhenie, ne kak zhivoe sushchestvo, *no kak mashina*,—ischezaia v tęn' kletki i vozvrashchaias' v svet: potom on ostanovilsia, opustil golovu, vzglianul na liudei ponuro, ustalo, ispodlob'ia—i tikho zavyl, zevnul: volk byl bespomoshchen, strashnyi russkii zver'](*Sochineniia v trekh tomakh*, I, 163–392 (p. 262). The wolf is an exhibit in a travelling menagerie, and provides a stark contrast, both in terms of its depiction and descriptive technique, with an earlier portrayal of a wolf in its free state, where it is 'kuskom ognia, kuskom lesnoi stikhii' (p. 212). The description above is characterized by accessibility and repetition—particularly of the word for 'cage', in successive inflections—emphasizing the insulation of the onlookers from the actuality of the animal both by the physical cage and the linguistic system.

essential, external forces symbolized by technology on one side and wolves on the other, but of man's perspective on the two, acting as a catalyst to the evolution of experience into machine.

The model of machines and wolves is in any event a factual one that has been evolved by man to account for the events of existence. It is no less fallible than the system of language that Troparov in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* has placed his faith in as an explanatory tool (see below). The tension that has been one of the major concerns of this investigation is that between experience and conceptualization. While Bjørneboe's narrator strives for conceptualization in order to exert control over his past, Roquentin is torn between the drive to conceptualize and the desire to retain experience. His quest is, however, not entirely contradictory; though words are essentially conceptual, he, like Kseniia, hopes to use them in order to explore their relationship with experience. What is of significance for this study is his penetration beneath words, which is symptomatic of the fracturing of a system. However this fracturing occurs, be it via illness in the extreme case of Ivan Moskva, or through the intellectual sensitivity of Roquentin—the two, as has been shown, are in any event inextricably linked—the result is the same: 'Words had disappeared and with them the meaning of things, the methods of using them, the feeble landmarks which men have traced on their surface.'[18] The true function of words becomes clear to him; they do not refer to things, but are a shield against them, referring instead to habits of conceptualization. When this function of words becomes clear to him, the *existence* that they incarcerate is liberated: 'Things have broken free from their names [...] I am in the midst of Things, which cannot be

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[18] *Nausea*, p. 182.

given names. Alone, wordless, defenceless, they surround me, under me, behind me, above me' (p. 180). The entire system of description and function appears in all its fragile arbitrariness, as does the network of causality of which it is a part. Following a severe attack of nausea, Roquentin meditates in the park upon the objects before him: 'I was aware of the arbitrary nature of these relationships which I insisted on maintaining in order to delay the collapse of the human world of measures, of quantities, of bearings; they no longer had any grip on things' (p. 184).

6. 7. The authority of language

Like Ivan Moskva, under the influence of attacks of nausea Roquentin is aflicted with the ability to perceive beneath the surface of everyday appearances · an essential existence unencumbered even by the mediatory insulation of words, facts, or function. Conversely, isolation from existence is a product of a faith in the authority of words. The writer Troparov in *Ivan-da-Mar'ia* struggles to find meaning for his life in the letters of his name, re-arranging them in the hope of finding a message, a definition or an explanation for his life:

> И разве не разлучается слово Тропаров призмой, разлагающей лучи слова,—Тро-па-ров.—Тропа проселков—в рвы. И иначе: вор—а—порт,—ибо порт, где тысячи черных человеков торчат в корчах тюков, не ограблен ли—вором? Или иначе:—вор—апорт,—яблоки такие апорт, даже не зимняки, ибо умирают в золотую осень. Тропаров: вор—порт.—труп.—Это луч, разложенный радугой.[19]

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[19] *Ivan da* Mar'ia, pp. 46–47.

It seems a fruitless task, but as he makes plain, it is the only option; in order to make sense of the chaos it must be rendered in words: 'Уезжаю, [...] писать надо'(p. 49). Otherwise the events of his life remain without order: 'Ну, какое экономическое бытие определило, чтоб стать мне писателем, и ничего не любить, кроме писательства, и ходить все время по трупам' (p. 46). Troparov's quest is to make sense of the world by collecting material and processing it into texts, locked as he is into a world of fictionalizations and notebooks. In spite of his claim above, his reaction to his sister's death demonstrates that he is no *lishnii chelovek*. He searches for a clue to its justification in the misspelling of her name; on the hospital notification her name is given as Mariia Gavrilovna *Trup*arova. Names, as labels insulating individuals, are the most remotely conceptualized of all words because any directly referential relation to a network of meanings that they might have—as Troparov's process of dissection demonstrates—has no significance for the individual they designate. 'Mr Smith' *is* not an individual, it is a label, a word that is a conceptualization of an individual. Yet as a label it is equally important for the *they*, as a means of designating the individual, as it is for the individual as a means of designating himself to, and as, *they*. A name is as much a conceptualization, or fictionalization, of the self, as it is a conceptualization of an other. In this way a name represents the results of a process of reduction of experiences, both for self and other, precipitating out into an orderly, manageable package. The name that is left after death is the catalyst for this package of memories, but on its own nothing remains aside from irrelevant residual meanings that can be warped into symbolic significance in the way that Troparov attempts to do. He attempts through the accidental distortion of his sister's name to manipulate meaning into an event by relating it to an extant system of

signification. Troparov, as a writer, has placed his faith fully in the system of signification, as the means for understanding the events that the system is designed to accommodate. In other words, the facts should explain the events. Unfortunately no system is ever fully comprehensive, a circumstance that places a continual burden on the will of its author to accommodate what falls beyond it. Accommodation requires a degree of reorientation, and radical reorientation means complete rejection of one system in favour of a replacement. Whatever the circumstances, a system of some sort premised upon the conditions prevailing within a shared framework is unavoidable; *I* must surrender sovereignty to *they*.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion has drawn on selected works of Boris Pil'niak in order to illustrate that aspect of the human condition which constitutes the Crisis of Subjectivity: to exist uncompromisingly as *I* is untenable, and to exist as *they* is impossible. The isolation that inheres in the first is unbearable, whilst the second is precluded by the inadequacy of communication. The second aspect of this problem has been characterized by John Deely as the 'modern conundrum' systemized originally by Kant 'in such a way that, while communication as a true sharing of insight is absolutely impossible within the Kantian system, the appearance of communication can be sustained by the fact that the a-priori mechanisms of our sense and understanding are species-specific and as such the same in each of us. Thus it can seem that we are communicating even though in reality the communication appearing to occur is impossible'.[1] If this is accepted as a fundamental condition, all that would appear to remain is a tacit conspiracy of delusions designed to maintain a level of stability which can be equated with what Heidegger pessimistically sees as inauthentic existence. This inauthenticity can be diagnosed in the Gentleman, Mr Smith, Razin, and Ivan Moskva, before their revelatory experiences, and in, amongst others, Kseniia Ordynina and Aleksandra. It is, broadly speaking, recognizable, in their acceptance of societally determined goals as their own, and the chronological fictionalization of their own

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[1] John Deely, *Basics of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 10.

existences. In Heideggerian terms such behaviour is a reaction to the presence of a pervasive *Angst* that stems from the primordial fear of death, the insidiousness of which is compounded by the fact that, in addition to its inescapability, it appears to have no source:

> When something threatening brings itself close, anxiety does not 'see' any definite 'here' or 'yonder' from where it comes. That in the face of which one has anxiety is characterized by the fact that what threatens is *nowhere*. Anxiety 'does not know' what that in the face of which it is anxious is. 'Nowhere', however, does not signify nothing: [...] That which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction within what is close by; it is already 'there', and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath, and yet it is nowhere.[2]

Just as its source remains indeterminate, so does the process of confrontation that afflicts, amongst others, Mr Smith and the Gentleman, and, following Heidegger, constitutes acceptance of death and the achievement of authenticity, which is, in its turn, the sloughing off of the *I* as *they* and the revelation of the true self. There is, thus, a nexus at which the fear is confronted, resulting in the authentication of one's own existence and the emergence of *I* as *I*. How this confrontation takes place is not clear, but its consequences are:

> In the first place, then, insofar as anxiety brings an individual face to face with the indefiniteness of death's threat to him, his public world is suddenly discovered as failing him. For the public world cannot protect an individual against death, and so this world as a *whole* proves to be unreliable. The tie between the individual and his public world is broken; the individual does not

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[2] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p. 231.

> "find" himself in the latter; the meanings and the truths making up the fabric of the world become alien to the individual.[3]

The achievement of an awareness of the finite nature of one's own existence has yet another consequence which is closely bound up with Heidegger's perception of human temporality and has particular relevance to the foregoing discussion. Authenticity brings one face to face with one's past. With that comes the admission of an unedited past existence with all the background, social and cultural influences, and life history, that that entails. Not only does inauthentic being preclude this possibility, but it also colours the nature of the inauthentic future. If inauthentic being is characterized by *Angst* manifesting itself in an attempt to run away from death, then, for Heidegger, it must also determine the inauthentic nature of the subject's future as a 'form of a (hopeful, fearful) "awaiting" and "expecting"' (p. 207). An individual's inauthentic being, both past, present and future, is conditioned by an evasive strategy toward a death which engenders a primordial sense of vulnerability and powerlessness. In order to assuage this anxiety, death is coped with by re-appraising it as a threat posed from *within* the world, as opposed to from *nowhere*. Life's effort is thus directed to the goal of gaining secure acceptance by the world, and that means the security of the *they*. What this entails is the adoption of a highly selective and pragmatic attitude to one's past, on the basis of usefulness in achieving the desired end:

> Since successes and failures on the road of the inauthentic future are defined by the trends and pressures of the public world, an inauthentic Dasein's

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[3] Piotr Hoffman, 'Death, time, history: Division II of *Being and Time*', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 195–214 (p. 203).

> past will be disclosed through 'forgetting'. An individual will repress and relegate into oblivion such parts of his past as may prove detrimental to his search for success in the rapidly changing world of the 'they' with all of this world's trends, fashions, and clichés. (p. 207)

An inauthentic individual will retrieve and remember from his past only that which will best serve his purpose of achieving acceptance by the society of others, of which he strives to be a totally integrated member. The confluence of the inauthentic 'forgetting' past, and the inauthentic 'expecting' future, is an inauthentic present lived as a search for security reflected in the collection of material objects, both people and things, as a method of locating oneself through the establishment of reassuring relationships into the world of the *they*. This explains the retentive but selective attitude to the past. So far then, this analysis holds good for the major protagonists of those texts, the analysis of which has comprised the body of this investigation. But given the applicability of inauthenticity, what can be said for the achievement or achievability of the alternative, authentic mode of being? What consequences will the attainment of authenticity have for the subject? Firstly, following Heidegger, by facing up to the finitude of his future the subject finds himself brought back to his past. By acknowledging this past in its entirety, and abandoning the manipulative attitude to his existence, which entailed the pursuit of societal integration and acceptance, he is able to confront the realities of his present in a free and non-manipulative manner. According to Heidegger, authentic past, present, and future have no chronological sequentiality, because through authentic existence one comes to terms with the fact that the past is simply the established habits and models by which one lives the present. The past thus simply represents one's rootedness in a particular culture.

There is a further aspect to the achievement of authenticity which is of particular relevance and which Heidegger has characterized as the *Ruf des Gewissens*—the call of conscience. This too is primordial to existence in the same way as is the *Angst* generated by the fear of death, and is thus a further necessary, because inescapable, pre-requisite to authentic being which can only be attained 'if death, guilt, conscience, [...] and finitude reside together equiprimordially in the being of an entity'.[4] It is essential to the subject. By *being*, the subject is guilty. Authenticity entails responding positively to the call of conscience, by rejecting the drive toward conformity with the *they* discussed above. It is through the call that the subject is made aware of his own guilt. As a primordial motivation it is not, and could not be, ordinary specific guilt referring to a particular misdemeanour or transgression, or conditional upon having done or not done this or that, but, like the fear of death, a general pervasive guilt. What is striking about this conclusion is that, although the methodology and the reasoning are very different, it has a fundamental affinity with Schopenhauer's concept of the inescapably evil nature of existence, and both recall the narrowly Christian doctrine of original sin, and, thereby, Pil'niak's biblical interpolations. What may have appeared to be narrowly Christian incongruities in a narrowly Revolutionary context begin to look more like resonances of a much broader human concern with questions of transgression, conscience, guilt, and memory.

The impact of revelatory confrontations on the subjects analysed in this study is such, however, that rather than resulting in a sustainable, Heideggerian authentication, it renders further existence untenable and constitutes their condemnation. In the texts

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[4] *Being and Time*, p. 437.

dealt with above, in contrast to Heidegger, it seems that destruction is the inevitable consequence of revelation; the consequence of the revelation of the self which proceeds from confrontation with death, is death itself. The exact nature of these confrontations is not revealed—either by Heidegger or Pil'niak—but in the texts that have been examined here it is clear that the physical death that proceeded from them was little more than a formality. In Pil'niak's textual world, in contrast both to Heidegger's theoretical system and, as has been mentioned, the experience of Tolstoi's Ivan Il'ich, there is no antidote to the trauma of confrontation; Pil'niak's heroes are rendered impotent and denied the possibility of further existence.

On the other hand, Kseniia Ordynina and Aleksandra successfully reorientate themselves in the world of *they* after their periods of destabilization, avoiding confrontation through a process of re-fictionalization, and re-equipping themselves to cope with existence through assimilation. The histories of the characters that populate the texts analysed above suggest that the structure that results from this process of comforting assimilation is a fragile one requiring constant attention. If attention is diverted it is unlikely that the structure will restabilize, and as an 'inauthentic' existence seems to be the only one available, then any alternative, or tendency toward authentication, must constitute a hazardous option. The problem was succinctly encapsulated by Albert Camus in his philosophical meditation *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

> So long as the mind keeps silent in the motionless world of its hopes, everything is reflected and arranged in the unity of its nostalgia. But with its first move this world cracks and tumbles; an infinite number of shimmering fragments is offered to the understanding. We must

> despair of ever reconstructing the familiar, calm surface
> which would give us peace of heart.[5]

It is significant that it is the mind that must be silenced, for, as has been shown, it is words as the apparent signs and conduits of integration which camouflage the *modern conundrum* by having the power to dull the mind and thereby ensure stability. It is in this light that Pil'niak's use of language deserves further study: how far can language be manipulated to exploit its experiential potential over its stultifying conceptuality? In the body of the investigation I have referred at times to the *experiential use of language*. The term is arguably inadequate because it is essentially self-contradictory. What is intended is not a distinction between exclusively experiential language on one hand, and exclusively non-experiential, conceptual language on the other, but rather a cline of experientiality and conceptuality. The debate deserves to be taken further than the simple identification of alienating, stylistic 'ornamental' devices, and developed into an investigation of those enigmatic effects that arrest the attention by going beyond regular metaphorization and symbol—*fita, golyi god, Kitai gorod, irlandskii dog* and the infamous *polovye organy* amongst many others. If symbolism, as a process of framework-specific semiotic mediation, and metaphor, which relies upon the identification of shared characteristics, prove unable to adequately explain these expressions, then how are they to be accounted for, other than as 'barbarisms'?[6] An

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[5] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 24.
[6] Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 2333: 'The diction becomes distinguished and non-prosaic by the use of unfamiliar terms, i.e. strange words, metaphors, lengthened forms, and everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech. But a whole statement in such terms will be either a riddle or a barbarism, a riddle if made up of metaphors, a barbarism, if made up of strange words.'

applied investigation into the status of *literal language*, *metaphor* and *barbarism* is required for a fuller understanding of Pil'niak's poetics.

It has been one of the intentions of this study to elevate the level of intertextual analysis of Pil'niak's work by demonstrating the complexity of the question of functional integration: Mr Smith is not simply a cipher because of the allusion to Bunin, and nor is he a Christian because of the excerpts from the New Testament.[7] Serious investigation of the numerous other literary allusions in Pil'niak's work would no doubt prove fruitful. In so doing I have demonstrated that Pil'niak was much more than simply an eclectic Ornamentalist with a propensity to Scythianism, but that his texts reflect an aspect of those problems of isolation, the individual, perception, and communication which constitute the problem of being. This contribution represents no more than a beginning and clearly questions have been touched upon which require further work. A closer examination of the relevance of Heidegger to Pil'niak's protagonists would certainly prove fruitful, and the question of the 'will' as a specifically human phenomenon in contrast to the Schopenhauerian natural 'Will' requires closer examination.[8] For Schopenhauer the Will is all-pervasive, equally motivating all of nature, including man. In spite of superficial similarities, apparent from isolated aspects of Pil'niak's work, the two conceptions of the human will are, in fact, radically different. Given the emphasis placed upon the role of nature in the early works of Pil'niak as an essentially, inexorably indifferent, if not actively malevolent force, and the inevitable struggle for existence that this implies, it is perhaps not

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[7] In any event, as will be recalled, the quotation in question originates from the Old Testament.
[8] Schopenhauer's understanding of the 'Will' is explained by Copleston in *A History of Philosophy* (Copleston, VII, 261–92).

surprising that Schopenhauer's name has been mentioned in conjunction with that of Pil'niak. There are indeed certain points of contact between Schopenhauer's understanding of the world as Will, and Pil'niak's early thematic preoccupations, particularly the question of conflict deriving directly from the survival instinct, and the related issue of the supremacy of Will over thought: 'His[Schopenhauer's] most distinctive contribution to philosophy is his insistence that the Will is more basic than thought in both man and nature.'[9] However, for Schopenhauer, as for Pil'niak, this did not imply any kind of dualistic division; on the contrary: 'The Cartesian position, regarded as implying the separation of the will from the body and its assimilation to the operation of thinking rational consciousness, was one that Schopenhauer utterly rejected.'[10] Furthermore, in his appraisal of Schopenhauer's evaluation of the status of man's cognitive capabilities, Copleston notes that for Schopenhauer 'reason [...] has primarily a biological function'.[11] There do indeed appear to be substantial grounds for using the serious study of Schopenhauer as an intertextual route to a better understanding of Pil'niak. In the light of the example of Bunin, care must be taken to avoid the transposition of a simplistic reading of one onto the other. It is true that Schopenhauer wholly rejected that school of thought which identified the free and controlling intellect as the guiding principle determining an individual's behaviour, but it is equally true that he found no virtue in the wilful exercise of the rejection of these principles. Similarly, though Pil'niak glorifies in some aspects of primal simplicity, he too rejects subservience to the instinctual and consequent subjugation of reason.

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[9] *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1995, p. 802.
[10] P.Gardiner, *Schopenhauer* (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 145.
[11] Copleston, 1963, p. 270.

Though there are fundamental differences between Pil'niak and Schopenhauer, the following cautionary note by Gardiner seems equally applicable to both and may serve as a suitable point of departure for a comparative investigation:

> Schopenhauer undoubtedly subscribed to the view that a man's actions are not [...] subject to the direction of a free and controlling 'intellect', capable of moulding his character and guiding his behaviour according to principles which in the light of dispassionate assessment can be seen to be those he should follow; he rejected the entire picture of human nature and ethical responsibility which lay behind this idea. On the other hand, it is quite a different thing to maintain, as some to whom the label of 'irrationalist' is attached have done, that a special virtue belongs to instinctual or impulsive behaviour as such, and that in deciding what to do one should always take the course of obeying the primal urgings of 'the blood' rather than of paying heed to the dictates of 'reason'. That latter is certainly not a position that can be attributed to Schopenhauer.[12]

It is perhaps, however, the question of genre which may ultimately prove most revealing, not least in relation to the ontological considerations discussed above. Attention was briefly drawn to the question of genre expectations in the course of this investigation and it is clear that Pil'niak was concerned to exploit the potentiality of polystylization in inter-generic texts—often to the vexation of critics who, unable to definitively categorize them, explained them away as 'transitional'; texts which do not conform must be parodies, distortions, or the liquid raw material of new potential forms in the process of metamorphosis or solidification. It is easy to forget that this is itself a framework-specific evaluation. Remembering the consternation caused by Pil'niak's disrespect for Western generic conventions, it is refreshing to learn from

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[12] Gardiner, 1963, p. 26–27

Hsiao-Peng Lu's discussion of Chinese Poetics that the genre of the T'ang 'fictional biography'

> often describes the transgression of identities and prescribed roles, mixes the natural and the supernatural, and depicts the individual in crisis, at the threshold of two orders of reality. The stories suspend the ordinary spatio-temporal continuum, question the validity of historical rationality, and introduce alternative versions of reality beyond the conventionally real. They mix different social voices, various religious systems, and time schemes.[13]

Lifting Pil'niak out of the trammels of Revolutionary, allegorical, or oppositional criticism that have tended to define the nature of much of the investigative work that has been produced to date represents a preliminary step. It is a step however which provides the foundation for the process of extricating him from the matrix of Phenomenology, Existentialism and Modernism that has determined Western twentieth-century thinking, and by so doing, attempting to understand his work through the mechanisms of a framework within which he may have appeared 'normal'. The question of the identification and itemization of the characteristics defining a particular genre is simply one of taxonomy and categorization. Of far greater interest must be the attempt to understand the interrelationship between obtaining conditions and *Weltanschauung* that produce a framework requiring the canonization of a particular form. By acknowledging the existence of alternative authorized models and examining the reasons for their genesis, analytical perspectives, not only relevant to Pil'niak, but

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[13] Sheldon Hsiao-Peng Lu, 1994, p. 8.

with wide-ranging applicability, may be discovered which may otherwise have remained hidden.

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