

Envy as an Object of Artistic Representation in Russian Modernist Prose

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Vladimir Stremoukhov, and our beloved sons:
Dimitriy, Alex, and Ilya.

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Chapter 1. On the Crossroads of Ethics and Aesthetics: Envy and the Problem of Authorship

In *Genesis*, God creates the world and approves of each creation, seeing that “it is good” (Gen 1: 18-31). In *Ecclesiastes*, the eponymous author undertakes one occupation after another, achieving perfection in each and then proclaiming each undertaking vain. Why does Ecclesiastes never quit, if he can never achieve the level of perfection enjoyed by God? What gives him energy to go on living; moreover, to keep writing? The opening lines of *Ecclesiastes*, “Vanity of vanities [...]; all is vanity” (Eccl 1:2), render the act of all further writing meaningless; yet the book exists, manifesting meaning in the *surplus act* of its own creation. Each ‘yes’ and ‘no’ of *Ecclesiastes* is like an inhale and exhale, and life asserts itself in the powerful breathing of the text. Each accomplished goal is immediately pushed away, dismissed as vain, so that it does not get in the way of a new undertaking. If the author of *Ecclesiastes* were to regard the gulf separating him from God with an envious eye, in place of sumptuous, lavishly self-contradictory paragraphs, the text would probably contain a single, accurate, but hopelessly reductive line, “All is vanity.”

The author and the hero in the book of *Ecclesiastes* appear to be one and the same person, yet their points of view do not coincide. The hero’s point of view is from inside the mind of a mortal human being, while the author writes from a broader perspective, placing the acting hero of the book within the context of God’s world. In “The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity” (mid-1920s), Mikhail Bakhtin refers to such broader perspective as the “surplus of vision” possessed by the author in relation to the hero. “The surplus of vision is the bud, containing the dormant form, out of which it unfolds, like a flower” (Bakhtin 2003, 105)¹.

¹ All translations from Russian originals are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

Bakhtin conceptualizes authorship on three levels – ethical, aesthetic, and religious – as an absolute surplus: of God’s creation, of the ethical deed [*postupok*], and of the aesthetic act – in response, as it were, to the commonly perceived² crisis of authorship in post-Revolutionary Russia. Taking Bakhtin’s concept of authorship as my point of departure in the present study, I theorize envy as an object of artistic representation in Russian Modernist prose, on the ethical and aesthetic planes, as a form of an incompetent authorship.

1. 1. Ethics Meets Aesthetics: A Note on Cultural History

The upheavals and turmoil of human life that span across many years, and even generations, in the *Ecclesiastes*, are condensed in a short period of roughly two decades in Russia from the loss in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 to the end of NEP [New Economic Policy]: a rapid succession of changes in the cultural paradigm, which renders the tranquility of the *Ecclesiastes* no longer possible. According to Sergei Averintsev, the inherent contradictions of authorship as, on the one hand, autonomous, and, on the other, contingent upon the cultural environment, are exacerbated in the Romantic cult of authorship and lead to the twentieth-century “utopian” attempts to discredit the role of the individual genius and declare the collective nature of authorship, causing further anxieties to authors (Averintsev 2003).

Dmitrii Segal and Justin Weir, in their respective works, show how the general Modernist crisis of identity, combined with breaking away from the Russian literary tradition of the nineteenth century, leads to the post-Revolutionary author’s and hero’s identities being tied inseparably together in a sort of a hermeneutic knot for those Modernist authors, who continue to uphold

² See: Shepherd, D. 1992. *Beyond Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in Soviet Literature*. Oxford [NY]: Oxford University Press, 1-28.

the individualist concept of authorship and refuse to delegate their authorial rights and responsibilities to the collective (Segal 2006, 50-156; Weir 2002, 104-10).

In addition to the dichotomies listed by Averinstev, another contradiction, specifically Russian, formed around the concept of 'mob [*chern'*],' uncritically adopted, in the nineteenth century, by the Pushkin pleiad from the Western Romantic models. According to Olga Murav'iova, the socio-economic basis for the "poet and the mob" dichotomy was missing in Russia in Pushkin's times, due to the virtual absence of a developed bourgeoisie class. Peasants and workers (who came from peasantry) would not qualify as the "mob" in the tsarist Russia; on the contrary, they were viewed in positive light, as the underprivileged in need of protection. The mob, for Pushkin's pleiad, were the very same representatives of the aristocracy, people like Faddei Bulgarin, an aristocrat of Polish descent, a deserter from the Napoleon army, a writer, journalist, and an agent of the ominous Third Department (the tsarist secret police responsible, among other things, for literary censorship). Unable to openly express their dissatisfaction with the Third Department, Pushkin and his pleiad attacked Bulgarin on the aesthetic grounds, for the lack of literary talent and bad taste, while simultaneously hinting at his compromised integrity (Murav'iova 1994, 155-90).

Under the influence of Pushkin, the Russian national icon according to Stephanie Sandler (Sandler 2004, 197-216), ethics and aesthetics gradually merged in the Russian literary imagination, and *bad taste*, which in the West served as a mere marker of social class, came to be associated in Russia and later in the Soviet Union with *bad conscience*. Socially, the 'mob' should have been the Russian intelligentsia, the 'raznochintsy,' who, on the contrary, inherited the literary tradition and became associated with the 'poet.' When Bolsheviks came to power

and introduced the peasants and the workers to literature through the 1919 literacy campaign, the most peculiar cognitive dissonance struck the Russian intelligentsia who, according to Craig Brandist, saw themselves as the saviors of the people (Brandist 2000, 27-8). The newly educated proletariat could not care less for aesthetics; they read for meaning and not for form, and were equally suspicious of the refined Symbolist/Acmeist poetics as of the revolutionary experiments of the Futurists.

The rapid succession of changes in the social, political, economical, and cultural paradigm in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917 intensified the inner contradictions already inherent in the concept of authorship leaving three basic choices to the generation of the Russian writers educated before the Revolution: work for the commonwealth of the new state and the people, write for the drawer, or emigrate. The latter two choices meant complete or partial loss of the reading audience, while the first choice, depending on the views held by the writer before 1917, might or might not require of him/her either to become conformist or join the former two groups.

The crisis of identity already inherent in the category of authorship was exacerbated by the conditions perfectly set for envy: not merely professional, social, or economical, familiar to artists around the world for ages, but also an existential envy felt by those who could not adapt to the new system of values towards those who could, or, better yet, who did not need to adapt because they had shared in this system from the onset. For the first time in the short, but magnificent, history of the Russian literature, the hard-won recognition of the writer's exceptional role as the intellectual and spiritual leader of the nation was questioned and, on most occasions, found null, unless the author joined the Revolutionary cause as demanded by

Leo Trotskii in the “Literature and the Revolution” (1922) or, even earlier, in Lenin’s “Party Organization and Party Literature” (1905).

After the Revolution, Salieri’s utilitarian logic (“what is the use of him?”), in Pushkin’s *Mozart and Salieri* (1830), gains momentum with regards to the “non-proletarian” authors, such as Iurii Olesha, Konstantin Vaginov, Aleksandr Grin, Leonid Dobychin, Andrei Platonov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Boris Zhitkov, most of the Serapion Brothers literary group, and many others, famous and not so famous. The new regime equated their perceived “uselessness” with harm.

Perhaps the most dumbfounding experience for the Russian artistic intelligentsia of the *fin de siècle* was their discovery, after the Revolution, of the scapegoating mechanism later described by René Girard: social re-structuring changed nothing in the psychologically deeply rooted matrix of human society, and “in place of old alienations, new alienations are formed” (Girard 1965, 53-83). The very same people who considered themselves anti-bourgeois were found guilty of precisely the opposite: being bourgeois, as Akradii Averchenko pinpointed in his brilliant and bitter sketch, “Self-Identification [Samooplredelenie]” (Averchenko 2009). Even prior to the October Revolution, Valerii Briusov sensed this alienating tendency and tried to defend the freedom of speech, for which he was criticized by Osip Brik (Brik 1924). Both freedom of speech and freedom of self-identification were coming out of fashion by the time Mikhail Bakhtin wrote his “The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity” and “Towards the Philosophy of the Deed” (mid-1920s).

Bakhtin’s intellectual freedom and breadth of education presented an alternative to the increasingly narrowing intellectual field due to the political oppression of the freedom of press in the Soviet Union, but his early works, written between 1919 and 1924, remained

unpublished and largely unknown until the next *fin de siècle*, the late 1990s-early 2000s. Nevertheless, Bakhtin's theory of aesthetic activity, consisting of two mutually interrelated phases, "live-entering [*vzhivanie*]" and "outsidedness [*vnenakhodimost'*]," as well as such concepts as the "surplus of vision," "answerability [*otvetstvennost'*]," "consummation to the whole [*zavershenie do tselogo*]," and "the absolute aesthetic need of the other," prove most instructive not only with regards to aesthetic activity, but also to envy, as the current study shows with examples from Iurii Olesha (1899-1960), Konstantin Vaginov (1899-1934), and Aleksandr Grin (1880-1932).

The writers of the 1920s faced an unprecedented challenge. The early Modernism, in its Symbolist stage, was a rebellious child of the Romantic era. Romanticism was the time when the complex and contradictory concept of the autonomous author, a genius, took its final shape. On the one hand, the Romantic author proclaimed independence from earlier examples and from the reader, or the public. On the other hand, the Romantic author claimed to be drawing inspiration either from a supernatural force – be it God or Lucifer, the fallen angel described in Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Authorship* (1973) – or from the genius of the people, the simple folk. The Romantic author was at one and the same time a prophet, a superior judge of his contemporaries, and a voice of the people, or the nation: independent from earthly concerns, yet at the same time indebted, both to the people, or nation, and to the supernatural sources of inspiration mentioned above.

The literary debate of the Modernist era, beginning in late 1880s, revolved around the choice between the so called civil art [*grazhdanskoe iskusstvo*] and pure art, Russia famously

inclined more towards the former, but then, again, having its own Symbolists and Decadents who favored the pure art.

In addition to this crisis of the author's identity, which revealed the aporia between being independent and being indebted, a rapid succession of changes in the social and cultural paradigm took place in the early 1900s, sometimes making sharp turns at 180 degrees. The loss of war with Japan in 1905 revealed the weakness of the Russian empire in comparison to the so called "wild" and "backward" Orient. The Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, for the first time in history, delegated the power, or so it seemed, to the people. Then came the New Economic Policy (1922-28), which to many seemed as a return to the pre-Revolutionary past, a betrayal of hard-won victories, and, last but not least, the onset of the technology, the cult of the rhythm, order, machine, and the respect for the masses, for the collective, as opposed to the previous focus on individual biography, private life, and private sentiments and feelings. Osip Mandel'stam famously spoke of the end of the novel, because the novel requires a biography, a family saga, but "now the Europeans are shaken out of their biographies like billiard balls out of their pockets" (Mandel'stam 1993, 275); in other words, there is no hero, around whom to build a plot. Simultaneously, reflecting these changes, the artists, poets and writers, experimented with the literary form, destabilizing it, defamiliarizing it, to use Shklovskii's term, breaking up the syntax, dissecting and often entirely eliminating the semantics.

Given that the best antidote to envy is the creative self-realization in the context of some kind of a universal project that adds meaning to individual, not necessarily always original efforts at self realization, the uprooted literary tradition and the loss of the pedestal of the

writer, the prophet, which in Russia was fairly tall, had potential of arresting this creative effort, of turning the mighty force of creativity against the creator, the artist, and destroying him/her. As Anthony Anemone has observed, the educated writers of the 1920s came from the generation brought up on the pre-Revolutionary ideals, but they had to make a career in the radically changed environment, where the hierarchy of values was reversed to a great degree: instead of personal responsibility there was a responsibility to the collective, the ends defined the means, and so on. Leon Trotskii famously castigated the Russian intelligentsia, the writers, for being in the rear-guard of the history while claiming to be its avant-guard. These were the people who, like the hero of Andrei Platonov's *Foundation Pit*, would fall "deep in thought amidst the fast-paced tempo of communal labor" (Platonov 1930) trying to come to terms with these changes and make some sense out of them, reformulate the meaning of their lives anew.

Forced from his privileged position of moral authority, the writer in the 1920s faced a precarious choice between three possibilities, which correspond, roughly, to the three responses to envy known in today's psychology: avoidance, destruction, and emulation. With the old values radically reversed and the old audience of aristocracy and intelligentsia rapidly shrinking due to immigration or arrests, the artist could choose avoidance: emigrate, stop writing, or continue writing without a chance at publishing. Another choice was suicidal: write against the grain, openly oppose the egalitarian regime by simply being out-of-the-ordinary, and be silenced like the prominent Silver age poet, Nikolai Gumilev. The third way was the most tempting and the most dangerous: to adopt the new ideology, or at least, try to compromise by imitating *vox populi* and emulating those in power. In doing so, the writer ran the risk of losing

integrity, and therefore damaging the very the source of creativity: his/her inner world, personally held opinions, convictions, intuition, and for some, faith.

At this time of radical change of the cultural paradigm, or, as Nietzsche would say, re-evaluation of all values, the yet unknown young philosopher, semiotician, and literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, writes three works that deal with the situation and aspires to answer the most important question on the Modernist agenda: what is the relationship between art and life, and what implications does this relationship have for the artist.

1.1.1. Mikhail Bakhtin and His Concept of Authorship

Partaking in the general Modernist inquiry about the relationships between art and life, between the artist and the human being, Bakhtin formulated his ethical and aesthetic credo in his work, "Art and Answerability": "Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself: in the unity of my answerability" (Bakhtin 2003, 6; Liapunov 2011, 3)³. The unity of the two, prefigured in his "Towards the Philosophy of the Deed," finds its realization in the ideas of the (ethical and/or aesthetic) affirmation of the other from one's unique position in time and space; people's mutual "absolute aesthetic need of the other" as the basis for such affirmation, and the idea of God as the supreme Author, redeeming and consummating people as free heroes/subjects "beyond the [subjective] meaning" of each particular life. "What I must be for the other, God [already] is for me" (Bakhtin 2003, 129-3).

On the plane of life and art, people experience "the absolute aesthetic need" of each other as partners in the ongoing dialogue; each person occupies a unique position in time and

³ This passage is quoted in Vadim Liapunov's translation (Bakhtin 2011).

space at any given moment, and not a single one can witness either the beginning or the end of one's life. The "other" possesses the absolute surplus of vision in relation to "me," because even the mirror cannot adequately convey my face to me: when one looks in the mirror, one is "possessed" by an imaginary other, who dictates the expression of the self-studying face (Bakhtin 2003, 112-5). "We must feel at home in the world of others," but as guests in the world of God: "one may not create directly in God's world," but one may perform ethical deeds, "available to [one] from [one's] own unique place in the Universe" and/or create in one's own aesthetic world. A purely aesthetic relationship to a living person is unethical and cannot serve as a substitute for an ethical relationship (Bakhtin 2003, 179-85).

The surplus of vision necessary for a successful aesthetic act is achieved, according to Bakhtin, through the organic unity of two mutually interlacing processes: "live-entering [*vzhivanie*]" and "outsidedness [*vnenakhodimost'*]," which allow the author to "consummate [*dopolnit' do tselogo*]" the hero, complete with the background and the external features, temporal, spatial, and meaningful [*smyslovoi*], unavailable to the hero's view from within. "I must feel into the other's self, temporarily adopt the other's values and see the world through the eyes of the other; [I must] take his place [...] coincide with him, as it were [...]; then, having returned to my own self, I must complement the other to the whole with the surplus of vision available to me from my own place outside of the other" (Bakhtin 2003, 96; 106)⁴.

Bakhtin stresses the temporary character of live-entering: before the actual aesthetic process can begin, the author must exit the inner world of the hero and return to his own self, in order

⁴ Bakhtin's aesthetic formula has much in common with Max Scheler's ethical theory of active empathy, analyzed in detail by Alina Wyman (Scheler 1970, 14-8, 55; Wyman 2008, 1-66).

to contemplate the hero from the outside; thus, live-entering is countered by outsidedness.

“The basic productive relationship of the author to the hero is [...] one of intense outsidedness [*napriazhennoi vnenakhodimosti*] in relation to all the aspects of the Hero: spatial, temporal, value and semantic outsidedness, [which] allows [the author] to assemble the *entire* hero [...] and his life and consummate him to the *whole* with those aspects of him, to which [the hero] has no access from within” (Bakhtin 2003, 96; emphasis in the original).

The moments of live-entering and outsidedness do not follow each other chronologically; Bakhtin presents them as two qualitatively different states of mind that intertwine and compete in the live experience (Bakhtin 2003, 107-8). As Alina Wyman observes, Bakhtin considers “the Herculean task of live-entering [...] as something essentially achievable” (Wyman 2008, 66-7), while outsidedness is presented in Bakhtin as mortal combat of the author with the self of the hero and with oneself (Bakhtin 2003, 97).

In my opinion, this latter gap allows for the possibility of envy as a form of incompetent authorship, which Bakhtin leaves outside of his sphere of interests. The envier appears to me as Bakhtin’s author in embryo, capable of one or the other aspect of the aesthetic act but unable to forge a creative, responsible unity of live-entering and outsidedness. In envy we either uncritically adopt the other’s point of view (explained later in connection with René Girard’s concept of the mimetic desire), or fail to exercise any compassion at all, judging the people whom we envy on the basis of some trite preconceptions applied to them from without (as exemplified by the phenomena of gossip or the yellow press). In either case, our own creative agency remains dormant, acknowledging only the void in ourselves or the other, but failing to fill it with the surplus of meaning through the aesthetic act or ethical deed.

According to Bakhtin, even a thought or a word is a deed, which may or may not be ethical (responsible); “any attitude [*otnoshenie*] based on a principle has a creative, productive character” (Bakhtin 2003, 40; 89). Based on this understanding of a deed as equally engaging the thought, the word, and the action, I propose that envious thinking and talking, exemplified, among other things, by such verbal behavior as telling stale jokes, gossiping, or the repetition of banalities, interferes with one’s creative capacity on the aesthetic level. Any verbal behavior, in other words, that is not backed up by a spiritual or intellectual effort on the part of the speaker or writer, lacks the responsible authorial dimension and is doomed to be drowned in the amorphous drawl of the collective (un)consciousness.

This is why, although I accept Bakhtin’s notion of the necessity to unite the lived and art experiences in the unity of one’s own responsibility (i.e., keeping in mind the all-important *difference* between the two), I am hesitant to accept his notion of art and life’s mutual “guilt” in any other sense than the artist’s responsibility to the not scientifically determinable origins of his/her creative gift rather than to the capricious demands of a “non-authoritative other [*neavtoritetnogo drugogo*]” (Bakhtin 2003, 135). Holding back art just because, as Bakhtin says, “life cannot keep up” with it (Bakhtin 2003, 5) means kowtowing to this other’s envy. Holding art “guilty” for life’s inability to keep up seems to me as dangerously tying the active artist to the inert, and inept, collective “mind.” A thought is always one’s own even if it is not original: to think means to let the electric current of a thought run through your very own brain and suffer/enjoy all the consequences of such enterprise alone. The author is always alone; not because s/he shuns the collective out of snobbery, but because s/he is facing mortality. Whether the author is gravely serious or lighthearted is but a question of style. It is in the

attempt to counter and comprehend mortality, one's own as well as the mortality of the others, that one (always one) becomes an author; and even the most popular folk song, the text of which has been many times altered (co-authored), had been originally composed by a lone author.

According to Bakhtin, overcoming raw life experience, a feeling or affect [*perezhivanie*], is essential in portraying them adequately. "I must stop fearing in order to portray fear; I must stop loving in order to portray my love [...]," and so on (Bakhtin 2003, 186). By the same token, in order to successfully portray envy, one must stop envying, but the additional, hermeneutic, challenge of envy is the general disagreement on the terms that define and encompass it. Such disagreement about the nature of envy and its reflection in the literary portrayals of envy in Russian Modernist prose, at a time of radical change in the cultural paradigm, is the subject of the present study.

Borrowing Bakhtin's idea of author and authorship and inspired by the fluidity these terms enjoy in his own writing, I do not discriminate between the author/authorship of an aesthetic act, on the one hand, and the author/authorship of an ethical act. Based on Bakhtin's statement in "Towards the Philosophy of the Deed," quoted earlier, that a word and a thought can be viewed as deeds, I equate all three as a form of authorship, which can be found in life or in art among the biographical authors and their fictional authors-heroes. Unlike Bakhtin, I do not try to differentiate, in the current work, between the author as a point of view, on the one hand, and the author as a social actor, or agent, on the other. The key concept that, in my mind, unites all these modes of authorship is Bakhtin's idea of creative responsibility, or "answerability," which I see as both liberating (from envy) and obliging (towards the other).

1. 2. Envy and Authorship in Literature and Theory: The Hermeneutic Challenge of Envy

The role of envy in authorship has been theorized from a Freudian position but, ironically, in religious terms, by Harold Bloom in “The Anxiety of Authorship” (1973). Bloom views the poet as the fallen angel in the Oedipal rivalry with the literary forefather, the fallen poet’s “Covering Cherub,” who is showing and blocking the way to Paradise with his sword, in one and the same gesture (Bloom 1973, 42-3). Confronting the phallic thrust of Bloom’s theory, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar speak of the female “anxiety of authorship” in the dominion of literature governed by men (Gilbert and Gubar 2004, 812-25). In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1956), René Girard collects the notions of envy, jealousy, hatred, and Romantic love under an umbrella term of “mimetic [also: triangular, imitative, mediated] desire” and argues that all great novelists derive their aesthetic pleasure from comprehending the mimetic nature of desire, “formally or intuitively, through the medium of their art” (Girard 1965, 3; 12-6; 22). The current study differs from all of the above in analyzing envy as an openly declared object of literary representation, and neither as an extra-literary factor, nor as an underlying motif in authorship, and explores the hermeneutic challenge of envy both to the author and to the reader: a phenomenon so essential to authorship and to human nature that it resists words and escapes characterization. Reading selected works by Iurii Olesha, Konstantin Vaginov, and Alexander Grin, through the prism of Bakhtin’s early theory, I examine ways in which envy appears in them as a possible pre-text (not-yet-text) to competent authorship: as live-entering without outsideness or outsideness without live-entering, and as the not-yet-author’s missing on the opportunity to create surplus meaning in place of a void.

1.2.1. The “Little Tragedy” of Envy: Aleksandr Pushkin’s *Mozart and Salieri*

The Russian literature has its own version of the Fallen Angel and the Covering Cherub story in the form of Pushkin’s play *Mozart and Salieri* (1830). The fictional Salieri, allegedly envying Mozart, contemplates his “moral duty” to exterminate the rival, who “like some kind of a Cherub, brought us a few songs from Paradise, only to stir the impotent desire in us, mortals, and fly away. So, fly away: the sooner the better” (Pushkin 1948, 128). On the earthly plane, Mozart is a newcomer rather than a predecessor of Salieri, but, being recognized by the latter as the “Cherub” and thus associated with eternity and God, Mozart is “older” than Salieri in this divine dimension. Having encountered Mozart, Salieri can neither compose music the old way, nor see any way to learn from Mozart, to imitate him, although such learning by imitation took place in the past, when Salieri followed “the great Gluck,” “obediently, like someone who was lost and whom a chance passerby sent in the opposite direction [*I vstrechnym poslan v storonu inuiu*]” (Pushkin 1948, 124).

At the same time, Salieri is so amazingly good at having mastered Pushkin’s iambic pentameter that, in the reader’s perception, he triumphs, in the meta-textual poetic slam, over his “god,” Mozart, who has only a few lines in the play and shuns lofty rhetoric. It is no wonder that Fedor Sologub’s 1904 invective against envy, which he sees as the Russian national vice, draws its rhetorical strength from Salieri’s rather than Mozart’s monologue: “If we are to lead a life worthy of a powerful European nation, we must stop envying. All these speculations about our being weak or strong, close to peril or, on the contrary, about to conquer the entire world, is idle talk. [...] Ardent love, self-abnegation; that is what is we need” (Sologub 1904).

The plot of Pushkin's play revolves around, and contributes to, the myth that Salieri allegedly poisoned Mozart out of envy, but the play's main theme is more broadly conceived as the problem of the relationships between ethics and aesthetics, expressed in a deft formula, "Genius and villainy are two things incompatible" (Pushkin 1948, 127-8). Ironically, too, the play's agenda spills over into the real life as Pushkin is challenged on ethical grounds almost immediately after the play's performance, for tarnishing the name of the world renowned composer Antonio Salieri in the wake of the latter's death, as reported by Dmitrii Blagoi (Blagoi 1954, 611). Pushkin retaliates on the aesthetic plane, stating that "an envier who dared to boo *Don Giovanni* could be quite capable of poisoning its creator" (Pushkin 1949, 218). Given Modernity's preoccupation with negotiating, and often obliterating, the borderline between art and life, ethics and aesthetics, it is easy to see the importance of *Mozart and Salieri* for Russian Modernist thought as a seminal text on the nature of creativity and on the place of the artist in the world, while the radical re-evaluation of values in the post-Revolutionary Russia opens new perspectives on what is and what is not enviable, both in art and in life.

1. 2.2. Envy in Black and White: The Linguistic Challenge of Envy

There is no agreement among scholars whether a blank sheet of paper with the title "Envy" inscribed on top of it was intended by Pushkin as a draft of *Mozart and Salieri* (Surat 2006; Blagoi 1967, 613-4). The very image of this aborted effort is telling. Perhaps, in the times of the Russian Avant-garde or in the postmodern era such a blank page could have stood as an artwork in its own right: an image of a verbal act rendered impossible in the presence of envy.

Pushkin's poetic thesaurus accounts for thirty seven definitions of the noun 'envy,' and eighteen definitions of its derivative adjective, 'envious' (Vinogradov et al. 1957, 28-9). Ordinary dictionaries offer on average from three to five detailed entries on envy and its synonyms, from the negatively connoted 'malice' to the positively charged 'emulation.' Amazingly, none of the dictionaries currently in use, either English or Russian, list secrecy among envy's inherent characteristics. In the meantime, virtually every scholarly study on the topic reflects on the challenge of putting envy into words.

In seeming contradiction to the above stated difficulty to verbalize envy, Eleonora Lissan allows for a possibility that envy, unlike jealousy, requires language ("the second signal system") as a medium for envy to proliferate (Lissan 2005). Investigating Lissan's hypothesis lies outside of the frame of my study; but the very possibility of envy being intimately connected to language, while also resisting it, is very much in correlation with the double bind nature of envy, which tempts and forbids at the same time, like Bloom's Covering Cherub. The current section investigates the double nature of envy in the linguistic light, as manifested in the English notions of 'envy,' 'jealousy,' and 'emulation' in opposition to the Russian 'zavist' [envy]' 'revnost' [jealousy], and the lack of a one-word equivalent for 'emulation' in Russian. The specifics of the Russian distinction between the 'black' and 'white' envy is addressed at the end of the current section, in contrast to the English distinction between 'envy' and 'emulation.'

The Greek root of 'zealos' is recognizable in the English 'jealousy' (Middle English 'gelusie,' 'jalousie,' 'gelos'): 'jealous resentment against a rival, a person enjoying success or advantage, etc., or against another's success or advantage itself' (*Oxford English Dictionary*

1993). Helmut Schoeck explains the difference between envy and jealousy as follows:

“[J]ealousy is only directed against a definite transfer of coveted assets or their removal elsewhere, never against the asset as such. Envy very often denies the asset itself. Further, ‘jealous’ may be used with no critical implication at all, as when Galsworthy writes, ‘...conscious of their duty and jealous of their honor’” (Schoeck 1987, 19). Similarly positive interpretation of jealousy as zeal is found in Fr. Pavel Florensky’s “Letter Twelve: On Jealousy [O revnosti]” in *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth* (1914). The best form of ‘sorevnovanie’ (competition), according to Florensky, is the competition/zeal in serving God, a zealous task performed in a spiritual union with other Christians (Florensky 1997, 331-43).

The ancient Greek distinction between ‘*zealos*’ (constructive envy) and ‘*phthonos*’ (dark, destructive envy) is mirrored in contemporary English by the distinction between envy and its constructive counterpart, emulation: ‘desire to equal another in achievement or excellence [obsolete]’; ‘wish, desire; enthusiasm [obsolete]’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1993). The same understanding of emulation holds true in contemporary psychology (*Envy, Competition, and Gender* 2007, 20-4; 32), now without the notion of the ‘obsolete’ synonym of envy. In addition to the competitive urge, emulation includes a moment of imitation: Brother John once made St. Francis rather uncomfortable by standing behind and faithfully emulating his every move, including spitting on the church floor. According to *Scripta Leonis* (1246?), Brother John passed away shortly thereafter, upon which he was proclaimed saint by St. Francis (*Scripta Leonis* 1990, 118-21).

Olga Sachs and John Coley’s study of Russian and English-Russian bilinguals’ use of ‘jealousy’ and ‘envy’ reveals a marked difference between the two languages in this respect.

Russians use 'jealousy' almost exclusively in reference to the situation of the romantic love, or, sometimes, friendship, in which a third party is jealous of a lucky rival. Native English and bilingual English-Russian speakers, while making conceptual distinctions between envy and jealousy on a multiple choice questionnaire, tend to substitute 'jealousy' for 'envy' when making decisions in the actual speech (Sachs and Coley 2006, 217). 'Emulation,' on the other hand, has no direct equivalent in Russian; it is conveyed with the help of a modifier, '*podrazhatel'naia zavist* [imitative envy]' in *Zavist': Formy ee razoblachenii i opravdaniia v kul'ture* [*Envy: Forms of its Denunciation and Justification in Culture*] (2007) (*Zavist...* 2007, 3-8). The modern Russian calc of 'emulation,' '*emulatsia*,' is only a technical term in computer science.

Envy without malevolence in English, 'emulation' traditionally splits, in Russian, into 'competition' and 'imitation' without any perceivable link between them. Yelena Nikoshkova's *English-Russian Dictionary of Psychology* (1998) translates 'emulation' as '*sorevnovanie*' ('competition') and lists 'socialist emulation' as an example, creatively 'swerving' from the traditional Soviet term 'socialist competition' (Nikoshkova 1998). I. G. Dubov describes a behavior that includes "emulating someone's way of thinking or acting, often without the [role model's] awareness of it" as 'imitation' (*podrazhanie*), but makes no notion of competition involved in such behavior (*Dictionary of Social Psychology*). In Russian, competition excludes imitation and imitation excludes competition. Interesting in this respect is the semantic evolution of Aleksandr Plavil'schikov's concept of '*pereimchivost'*,' which he meant as an alternative to imitation in the eighteenth century, but which came to mean 'imitation' all the same in the twenty first (Plavil'schikov 1965, 504-508; Ar'iev 2009).

The closest Russian ever comes to the English meaning of 'emulation' is in a rare dialect expression listed in Dahl's *Dictionary of the Live Great-Russian Language [Slovar' Zhivago Velikoruskago lazyka]* (1863): 'Zavistnoi rabotnik: yaryi, kak by zavistlivyi na rabotu [an envious toiler: driven, as if envious for work]' (Dahl 1955). In place of the Ancient Greek '*phthonos*' and '*zealos*' and in place of the English 'envy' and 'emulation,' the Russian language offers a 'black' and a 'white' envy. But 'white envy' has nothing to do with the English 'desire to equal another in achievement or excellence': it is a peaceful admiration, competition-free 'joy at the success of the other' (Kuznetsov 1998) or simply a form of 'acknowledging the high status of a certain good' (Stepin 2001). The question arises why 'joy' should be called 'envy.' The painstaking monograph, *Kliuchevye idei russkoi lingvisticheskoi kartiny mira [The Key Concepts of the Russian Linguistic Picture of the World]* (2005), provides no answer: its entry on envy is one sentence long and explains, without giving any definitions, that "words 'envy' and 'pride' have different connotations depending on whether they are used in a religious or secular sense" (Zalizniak et al. 2005, 458). The *New Philosophical Encyclopedia* mentions an interesting detail: unlike in Catholicism, envy is not considered as one of the seven cardinal sins in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. It is merely a derivative of a more gravely sin, that of 'silver-loving [*srebroliubie*]' (*New Philosophical Encyclopedia*). Thus, as opposed to the English 'emulation,' the Russian concept of 'white' envy does not necessarily suggest either competition or imitation.

The latter notion of envy as secondary to the material greed [*srebroliubie*] proved an additional factor contributing to the nineteenth and, especially, twentieth century Russian authors' cognitive dissonance with regards to envy, besides the already existent universal

challenge presented by envy as an object of literary representation. I will start with the universal challenge, rooted in the disturbing possibility of envy being the mother of conscience, as theorized by Nietzsche and Freud in section 1. 2. 4, followed by the explanation of how, in the Russian literary tradition, envy comes to be associated with bad taste as opposed to conscience as good taste, in section 1. 2. 5.

The reason for bringing together envy, conscience, and taste in a study on incompetent authorship lies in the fact that all three defy explicit definition as a threat to their authentic existence. Envy confessed is not quite authentic to itself before confession; conscience requires that one acts on it rather than talks about it; the “underdeveloped” taste [*nerazvityi vkus*] is synonymous with the lack thereof [*bezvkusitsa*], and the very idea of conscience as a derivative of envy strikes me as somehow dull and uninspiring: *taste-less*?

1. 2. 3. “Most Unrewarding Topic”: The Apophasis of Envy, Conscience, and Taste

In the *Word and Silence: What Russian Literature Keeps Silent About* (2006), Mikhail Epstein addresses the apophasis of Russian cultural tradition and its important implications for understanding the Russian literature. Epstein introduces the distinction between two words for ‘silence’ lost in translation into English: ‘*tishina*’ and ‘*molchanie*.’ Epstein explains ‘*tishina*’ as a passive notion, denoting mere absence of sound; in contrast, ‘*molchanie*’ is a noun formed from the verb ‘*molchat*’ [to keep silent]’; unlike ‘*tishina*,’ ‘*molchanie*’ has content: we are being silent ‘about’ something, usually something important or sacred. Epstein defines the subject of his book as “what Russian literature is silent [*molchit*] about, but not what it silently obscures [*umalchivaet*]” (Epstein 2006, 16-7). This section will discuss that, which world literature,

including Russian literature, had until now been silently “obscuring”: the existential roots of envy and its connection to conscience and taste.

Lev Shestov considered envy “the least rewarding topic for the author to portray” (Shestov 1960), and Helmut Schoeck attested to, but never explained, the common difficulty of writing and also reading about envy. According to Schoeck, authors tend to either proclaim the hero envious but fail to show envy in action, or, vice versa, they show envy in action but fail to call it envy. The readers join the authors in their “failure to attribute envy” (Schoeck 1987, 162). A body of research done between mid-1950s and 1970s, most notably by Rene Girard and Harold Bloom, suggests that envy may serve as an underlying source of creativity. If so, we could hypothesize that bringing envy into sharp focus may potentially interfere with the creative act by turning the author’s creativity inwards. Yet, the exact same practice of self-referential, hermetic writing has been attested to, without any reference to envy, as quite successful by such scholars of Russian Modernism and “fellow-travelers” prose as Dmitrii Segal (1984), David Shepherd (Shepherd 1992), and Justin Weir (Weir 2002). Contemporary psychological findings confirm that envy is equally potent in stimulating as well as in arresting one’s creativity (*Envy, Competition, and Gender* 2007, 20-32). In what sense then, is envy an “unrewarding” topic? Is it too boring or, on the contrary, too challenging? Why is it so often mentioned in passing and so rarely treated as a theme in its own right? If envy is as powerful as to promote creativity or result in crime, why is envy commonly referred to as ‘petty,’ at least in Russian? In the words of Harold Boris, why is it that the majority of writings about envy tend to be – envious? (Boris 1994, xii).

Twentieth century researchers have repeatedly commented on the difficulty of writing about envy, acknowledging some sort of a psychological barrier, an aura of anxiety that envelops the word. “So potent is envy that merely to speak of it is to risk untold dangers,” writes Mervyn Nicholson (Nicholson 1999, 2). The editors of *Envy, Competition and Gender* declare the task of “de-demonizing envy” among their primary goals (*Envy, Competition, and Gender* 2007, ix). Joseph Epstein, in his foreword to *Envy: The Seven Deadly Sins* (2003), sarcastically thanks colleagues who expressed tongue-in-cheek trust in his expertise on the subject (Epstein 2003, xv). Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora concludes his spectacular overview of religious, philosophical, sociological, economic, and psychological writings on envy, from Pre-Socratics on, with the following remark: “For hundreds of thousands of years *homo sapiens*, with a strange mixture of fear and shame, has taken for granted and avoided dealing with envy, unable to [...] face it with *logos*” (Mora 1987, 66; italics in the original). The writings of Nietzsche and Freud, two influential minds that shape the sensibilities of the twentieth century, make one believe that envy is so central to human nature that probing it with words would amount to untying the navel of civilization with the most fatal outcome.

1. 2. 4. Freud and Nietzsche on Envy and Conscience

In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Sigmund Freud established a reciprocal relationship between envy and conscience as they emerge in the primordial society of his imagination. The sons’ jealousy of the father and their envy of his absolute power and conjugal privileges lead them to patricide, upon which a society of equal brothers is established. Soon brothers discover the impossibility of peacefully co-owning the tribe’s women (first and foremost, the mother),

and a pang of guilt strikes them about killing the father in vain⁵. Conscience is born, and the cult of the deified father flourishes in the form of totemism. Vertical hierarchy is re-established in the name of the father-god, or totem, and the oldest taboo, that on incest, emerges followed by various other taboos as a means to secure the status of the tribe's elder and as a means to control envy: that, which is strictly forbidden, is originally most ardently desired, argues Freud. The modern conscience, according to Freud, is an echo of the old taboos and of the forgotten crime (patricide) that gave birth to them (Freud 2005b, 507-17). Taboos are not discussed and neither is envy or conscience: the former because it provides grounds for the taboo; the latter, because it is rooted in the taboo.

Nietzsche, another much-read author in Russian intellectual circles of the early 1900s, tells a different story, just as hypothetical as that of Freud, in *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887). According to Nietzsche, conscience – or sense of guilt – is instilled in the strongest, the noblest and originally guilt-free members of an unspecified archaic society by its weakest and most wicked members through the introduction of Christianity: a fruit of “creative” envy (Nietzsche 2006, 400). Nietzsche's understanding of ‘creativity’ in the context of envy is not to be confused

⁵The brothers' initial regret after murdering the father, according to Freud, is not about murder as such (it was seen as good when it promised improvement of their situation) but rather about the fact that no improvement followed: the kill brought no “meat” to the tribe. I read this as a moment of strong disappointment but not yet a pang of conscience; for genuine conscience is always at least partly irrational. Conscience is a counterbalance to reason: I cannot rationally prove that my deed is wrong, but *something* (i.e. conscience) tells me it is.

with 'generativity': a term invented by modern psychologists to indicate the ability to "generate" new ideas, values, things, and works of art (*Envy, Competition and Gender* 2007, 99-118).

In Nietzsche, envy's creativity is markedly secondary: rather than inventing new values, it distorts the already existing ones. The ancient values of personal greatness, robustness, and courage are replaced by their opposites: meekness, weakness, and cowardice. Language (in the broad sense, as both *langue* and *parole*) becomes corrupt in order to reflect the newly fashioned, inverted, and corrupted value system in a positive light, and only an etymological recourse to pre-Christian languages, such as the language of Ancient Greece, allows the moderns to grasp the fragments of the great ancestors' bygone values (Nietzsche 2006, 400-2). Both Nietzsche and Freud seem to suggest that language, envy, and consciousness are intimately connected, although this connection is interpreted differently by the two authors. In both cases, envy gives birth to conscience, while language – through the silence of the taboo (Freud) or through deceitful speech (Nietzsche) – helps obliterate their kinship. The difference between envy and authorship seems to lie precisely in this linguistic area: both the author and the envier have rich imagination, but, unlike the envier, the author harnesses imagination to language in order not to obliterate but to achieve a broader and deeper vision of the world within and without.

1. 2. 5. Envy, Conscience, and Taste

Pushkin's assertion that "an envier who dared to boo *Don Giovanni* was quite capable of murdering its [his] creator" reveals the connection among envy, conscience, and taste in the Russian cultural paradigm, all three important for understanding the specifics of treating the

subject of envy in Russian literature of the twentieth century as opposed to the nineteenth⁶. In particular, it may help explain the transition from Pushkin's model of envy, according to which the less talented envy the more talented, to Dostoevskii's model, predominant in the twentieth century, in which the more talented envy the less talented. To put it in terms of the conventional dichotomy between the poet and the mob: in Pushkin's world, the mob envies the poet, while in Dostoevskii, late Tolstoi, and their twentieth-century successors, the poet envies the mob. (I argue that this is the worst service to the mob the poet can render.)

I would like to begin with analyzing the meanings implied by Pushkin's line of defense against Pavel Katenin, a poet and a literary critic, who accused Pushkin, not without reason, of tarnishing Salieri's name. Next, I will address the discrepancy between Pushkin the biographical author and Pushkin the author of the play, and correspondingly, the Salieri of Pushkin's note and the Salieri of Pushkin's play.

From Pushkin's formula, these things are clear: 1) Pushkin considered Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* a work of art of superior aesthetic quality; 2) Pushkin considered Salieri incapable of composing music of equal aesthetic merit; 3) Pushkin considered Salieri envious; and 4) Pushkin considered envy as a criminal state of mind, potentially leading to murder. One of the

⁶ Interestingly, the abstract notion of taste is also artistically re-interpreted in physical terms, as the taste of food (short in supply): Olesha's Kavalierov envies a director of food ministry; Vaginov's Kostya Rotikov collects 'tasteless artifacts' and chokes on soup offered by old regime ladies; Grin's characters run a café called "Disgust" and lose the sensitivity of their taste buds after being poisoned by envious relatives.

things that is not quite clear is the chronological order, in which Salieri's envy and his act of booing succeed each other: which one comes first?

Either Salieri grew envious at realizing the superiority of Mozart's music, or could not appreciate it because his aesthetic judgment was already impaired by envy. In calling Salieri "an envier [*zavistnik*]" and suggesting his similarity to a criminal [*prestupnik*], Pushkin further complicates the matter, making it difficult to establish the cause and effect: the envier is someone who envies permanently, but what about the criminal? Does one become a criminal in the act of crime, right after it, or even before in harboring the criminal intention? Was Salieri envious of Mozart before he even heard the opera, his envy revealed in the act of booing, or did the opera make him envious?

In the latter case, Salieri acted under affect, therefore sincerely: his envy did not let him appreciate the music; even if he did appreciate it, this appreciation took place on the subconscious level, while in his consciousness Salieri hated the opera and expressed this hatred in booing [*svist*]. (Pushkin, of course, would not think in Freudian terms, but we could say, adapting to the language of Pushkin's epoch, that Salieri appreciated the music "deep down at heart [*v glubine dushi*]," but had problems "admitting it to himself [*soznat'sia v etom sebe*].") According to Pushkin's formula, Salieri's inability to appreciate music due to envy is inherently criminal.

In the former case, if Salieri was already envious of Mozart and came to the performance with a premeditated plan to boo the opera regardless of its quality, just to spite Mozart, Pushkin's statement still suggests that Salieri's aesthetic judgment is impaired. Why? Omitted from Pushkin's statement is his assumption that *Don Giovanni* is an exceptionally good

opera: one that is impossible to boo. According to this logic, even if Salieri planned to boo Mozart, the beauty of the opera should have caused him to change his mind; if he did not, it is only because he had a criminal mind, a mind insensitive to beauty. In either case, Salieri is envious; in either case, his aesthetic judgment (taste) is inferior to that of Pushkin; in either case, his conscience is tainted: he *could* be willing to poison Mozart, in Pushkin's view. Thus, bad taste is equated with bad conscience: the conscience of a (potential) murderer.

Also noteworthy is the unspoken semantic transformation that occurs with regards to the Romantic formula "the poet and the mob" on Russian cultural soil. According to Petr Bitsilli, in the absence of a solid socio-economic equivalent of the "mob" (the petit bourgeois reader of high literature) in Pushkin's times, high literature was mostly produced and consumed within the aristocratic circles (Bitsilli 2000, 32). Thus both the poet and the (imaginary) mob in Pushkin's times are, paradoxically, of the same social milieu. The borderline between them is drawn along the line of taste and the opposite of taste, the untranslatable Russian notion of 'poshlost': the vulgar, plebeian mindset, prone to envy and gossip about the poet, as opposed to the noble mind concerned with poetry. Such a conclusion can be inferred from Pushkin's famous letter to Petr Viazemskii, in which the former advises the latter not to be upset about the loss of Lord Byron's diaries: "Leave curiosity to the mob, and be one with the Genius. [...] The mob hungrily swallows confessions, personal notes, etc., because, in its baseness [*podlosti svoei*], it rejoices at the humiliation of the lofty, at the weakness of the mighty" (Pushkin 1937, 244).

The base/trite [*podlyi/poshlyi*] interest in the "dirty laundry" of the poet prevents one from partaking of poetry, from being "one with the Genius." As Irina Surat and Olga Murav'ova

make clear in their respective articles, the word 'genius' in Pushkin's times denotes the divine gift of the individual rather than the individual alone; the latter is in metonymical relationship to the former. Thus, when Salieri in Pushkin's play says to Mozart, "You, Mozart, are unworthy of yourself" (Pushkin 1948, 127), meaning that Mozart the human being is "unworthy" of his musical gift, Salieri essentially joins the "mob," tries to claim the imaginary ethical superiority of someone whom he cannot rival aesthetically.

The same voice of the mob sounds at the end of the play when Salieri is forced to doubt himself: "Or is this but the gossip of the dumb and senseless mob; and the creator of Vatican was not a murderer?" (Pushkin 1948, 134). The word "senseless" stands in proximity to cruelty in Pushkin's famous line from the "Captain's Daughter" (1836), "God save us from witnessing a Russian mutiny, senseless and merciless" (Pushkin 1980, 641). The "dumb and senseless mob" from Salieri's monologue in the play, which corresponds to the Western bourgeoisie as the consumers of art, is equated in Pushkin's literary thesaurus with the "senseless and merciless" mob of the Pugachev's mutiny carried out mainly by peasants who had never read Pushkin. The deputy minister of public education, Count Sergei Uvarov, on the other hand, read Pushkin and aimed to judge him according to Nikolai I's official ideological formula, "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationalism [Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost']."

Pushkin regarded negatively the requirement for the poet to adapt to either the official ideology or the taste of the mob ("To depend on the tsar, or to depend on the people, is it not the same?"), and, as argued by Murav'iova, viewed the very requirement as issuing from the platform of the (ideological) 'mob,' that is, people who *pretend to care* about poetry while in fact they try to subjugate the poet. However, others in Pushkin's circle such as the Decembrists,

or later, after Pushkin, the democratic literary critics such as Belinskii, held the opposite view according to which literature had to serve an ideological cause (Murav'iova 1994, 155-88).

Thus, on the one hand, the Russian literary tradition inherited, via Pushkin, the Romantic rhetoric of “the poet and the mob [*poet i chern*].” On the other hand, certain Russian writers saw their mission in improving the condition and mores of the people. Another contradiction resulted from the fact that the people were economically closer to the (virtually non-existent) “mob,” while ideologically closer to the “poet,” “the genius of the people” was another Romantic notion imported from Germany, along with the interest in folklore. All of the above led to an utter confusion of terms after the 1917 Revolution, when the entire social order was overturned, and the very concept of an individual genius was dismissed. In a fashion, similar to the one described in Pushkin’s article, “John Turner” (1836), many talents of the 1920s-1930s Soviet Russia were forced into “voluntary ostracism, out of respect for equality” by the “tyrannical side of democracy” (*Predpolozhenie zhit'* 1999a, 350). Even the boldest of them, Vladimir Maiakovskii, eventually had to “step on the throat of his own song” (Maiakovskii 1958).

Ethical battles fought on aesthetic grounds have been a distinguishing feature of the Russian literature and criticism in the nineteenth century; at the beginning of the twentieth, the diametrically opposite tendency seems to be gaining momentum: aesthetic battles are fought in ethical terms. If the tsarist censorship, suspended in 1917, was mainly concerned with the content of literary works, the new Soviet censorship, installed in 1922 and culminating in the

First Congress of the Soviet Writers in 1934, has made the literary form into a suspect⁷. There is still freedom of expression and room for artistic experimentation in the 1920s, but a Formalist critic Boris Eikhenbaum already comments, in “Waiting for Literature [V ozhidanii literatury],” (1924), on the persecutory tone of Soviet literary criticism, which reminds him of “a criminal investigator’s attitude towards a suspect” (Eikhenbaum 1969, 288). Various invocations of literary ‘death’ or ‘non-existence’ pepper the pages of Leo Trotsky’s *Literature and the Revolution* (1923), proclaiming even the able artists whose heart is not with the October Revolution “the manure for the new [proletarian] culture” at best (Trotsky 1960, 37).

In slandering the Formalists, Trotsky is quite insightful as an adherent of materialism: if form dictates the content, as the Formalists say, then, to paraphrase Salieri, “there is no truth on Earth” and ideas (the Platonic Form) have primacy over the matter (content). Pavel Medvedev [Bakhtin?]⁸, in the article, “Scientific Sal’erism [Uchenyi Sal’erism]” (1924), accuses the Formalists of murdering Mozart by over-analyzing the art forms and thus emptying them of meaning (*Bakhtin pod maskoi* 2002, 17). A powerful counter-argument to the above logic is found in Shklovskii’s “The Third Factory”: “Being defines consciousness, but conscience remains unsettled” (Shklovskii 1990, 309). Outlining the predicament of the artist in post-Revolutionary Russia, Shklovskii saw two ways: conforming to the dominant ideology or silent resistance,

⁷ See: Afanas’ev, N. 1993. “Tsenzura novogo tipa” In: *Paradoks o drame*. 1993. Ed. by Ie. I. Strel’tsova. Moscow: Nauka, 56-85, for a brief comparative analysis of tsarist vs. Soviet censorship.

⁸ Bakhtin’s authorship of the said article has not been convincingly established.

writing for the drawer, and added, “There is no third way; and this is precisely the way the artist should follow” (Shklovskii 1990, 313).

While in details Shklovskii’s approach to art appears to be in conflict with that of Bakhtin-Medvedev, I see Bakhtin and Shklovskii’s respective positions as convergent on the plane of authorship. Art and life interfere with one another, causing a profound crisis of identity, a temptation to either merge with others in assuming a collective identity, or disengage from them in closing on oneself. In recommending that the artist chooses the third, non-existing way, Shklovskii seems to say that this way should be created, that is, authored. The fragmented, split self of the biographical author must be overcome in the creative effort of authorship as *making sense* out of shards of the old self, closing the gaping abyss of envy (a desire to succumb to the gravitational pull of the other self) by forging a new self, that of the author by authoring either an ethical deed or a work of art.

1. 2. 6. Envy as the “Transcontextual Syndrome” (Bateson)

The inability to tell art from life, a metaphor from reality, manifests itself in the incompetent use of language, a “transcontextual syndrome,” as Bateson termed it. Unlike a competent author, the envier is held hostage by imagination avoiding the responsibility of making sense. Any traumatic experience resists words; but unlike all other traumas, in which the real damage is denied by the traumatized consciousness as imagined, in the case of envy, the damage must first be imagined as real, and then the trauma of envy ensues.

Medvedev’s rhetoric of ‘justice,’ ‘murder,’ and ‘crime’ utilized in the context of a literary debate, as well as Shklovsky’s preoccupation with the word as an object in “Art as Device” (1990, 58-72), call to mind the inability to distinguish language from reality by Peredonov, the

mad protagonist of Sologub's novel, *The Petty Demon* (1902). A teacher of language arts [slovesnik], Peredonov reveals utter inability to distinguish between the literal and the figurative⁹, a trait observed by psychologist George Bateson in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia. Bateson re-defines the diagnosis as the 'transcontextual syndrome' and coins the term 'double bind.' The victims of a double bind relationship (a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation) are said by Bateson to develop a peculiar linguistic defense. When communicating with a parent figure, they switch between the literal and figurative modes of expression so as to avoid the necessity to respond to the words of others or be responsible for the meaning of their own words (Bateson 2000, 201-78).

Bateson's model of the "transcontextual syndrome" is slightly reminiscent of Bloom's "anxiety of authorship" in that it involves dealing with a parent figure through manipulating the language. In this relationship, the envied parent corresponds to the hero, and the envying child, to the incompetent author. One difference between Bloom's poet (Oedipal literary child; "lesser" poet) and Bateson's mental patient (child; incompetent author) is that the latter can never beat the parent in the language game; the other difference is that, obviously, the parent in Bloom is metaphorical, while real in Bateson. Bakhtin's theory of authorship provides a direct alternative to the envious mechanism of the double bind by stressing the importance of mutual responsibility (or 'answerability') as the key element of the author-hero relationships. In

⁹ For example, he complains that too much gold was "squandered" in making the sunset golden (Sologub 1995, 238). Peredonov's linguistic incompetence has been addressed in detail in: Keren Klimovsky. The Myth of Language in Sologub's "Petty Demon" [Conference Paper]. 2011 AATSEEL, Pasadena, California.

Bakhtin, everyone is a potential author of everyone else, and someone else's potential hero in our every-day encounters with the other. I propose that envy can be viewed as a form of incompetent authorship in the meta-textual sense interpolated from Bakhtin. Envy has a creative potential, because it is imaginative; but imagination will fail every time the mutual principle of 'answerability' between the 'author' and the 'hero' is forgotten.

1. 3. Bakhtin's Compatibility with Melanie Klein and René Girard

Given the evasive, word-resistant nature of envy addressed in the previous sections, and the fact that Bakhtin did not write on the subject, I have relied on a number of other theorists in learning to recognize and properly attribute envy in literary texts (see section 1.2.3). I will list here only the two most important for my research: Melanie Klein and René Girard (adding other names as needed in the main body of the current research).

1. 3. 1. Klein

In *Envy and Gratitude* (1956), psychologist Melanie Klein proposes that the primary envy is directed at the breast ("the primary good object"), which is split in two. The very necessity of choice is stressful enough (cf. triangular desire); add to this various complications of the breastfeeding process, and envy is underway. Klein's theory is comparable to Moss' anthropological theory of gift-giving (give and take are equally important); what is peculiar to Klein is her emphasis on the radical asymmetry of mother-infant relationships. The infant cannot give anything in return for the milk. But a "good breast" can still "take in" the infant's anxiety and stress of being violently separated from the womb (outsidedness, only not voluntary). A good mother will not try to turn the infant into a breast. Klein's "good breast" is a well-paced clavier, so to speak: it dispenses the right amounts of milk at regular time intervals;

just what Salieri wants. By contrast, the “bad breast” is hard, impenetrable to the infant’s anxieties, has too little, or too much milk and delivers sporadically, like Mozart. It is always either the “bad breast” or the “too good a breast” (=bad) that is envied, Klein says. “The bad breast is unforgettable,” like a Girardian internal mediator; it torments the envier day and night, like Mozart’s image torments Salieri. Why is the breast bad? It generates milk and, from the infant’s perspective, knowingly withholds it, in order to torment the infant who cannot herself/himself generate milk. From the infant’s point of view, there is no limit to the milk the breast can produce, so any shortage is explained by the infant as the breast’s ill will. Like Bakhtin’s author, who must spare the hero, the infant must learn how to spare the breast by being *grateful* for whatever little milk it holds. Breast is a model of *generativity*, and the infant wants to both receive and possess it. Pangs of conscience strike every time the infant assaults the breast (by biting or urinating/defecating on it). Klein compares the adult “biting criticism” to the infantile assault on the breast. *Generativity* (and authorship is one kind of it) is the best antidote for envy, according to Klein (Klein 1957, 15-6; 19-20; 24-9; 39-40). I compare the hero to the infant receiving the milk, and a competent author, to the mother providing it. An incompetent author, striving to avoid the “life-and-death” battle of authorship, would always wish to trade: either with the mother, to possess the breast, or with the infant, to receive it.

1. 3. 2. Girard

Bakhtin and Girard have been traditionally seen as irreconcilable theoretical adversaries, as have been Bakhtinians and Girardians; yet both pondered similar questions about literature, about the nature of authorship, and about the self vs. the other in time and space. Both theories are traceable to the master-slave dialectics in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spirit*

(1807): Girard overtly refers to ‘middle term,’ ‘mediation,’ ‘masters’ and ‘slaves’ in his work, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1956); Bakhtin adopts Hegel’s visual imagery of the face-to-face encounter of two minds and the rhetoric of the “life-and-death struggle” between them, but places it in the benevolent mind of a competent author struggling for outsidedness.

Bakhtin’s author must *spare* [*milovat*] the hero, consummate or complete the hero to the whole [*dopolnit’ do tselogo*] with the surrounding world/context, and set the hero free to roam the world [*osvobodit’ geroia dlia svobodnogo dvizheniia v mire*]. Bakhtin recognizes Christ as the supreme Author, the Word which live-entered the world in the human shape. For Girard, Christ seems to be the supreme Hero revealing the internal truth of sacrifice to the incompetent (“scapegoating”) authors who fail to see it. The true meaning of the sacrifice is evident only to the victim, but in order to be able to see this truth, one must take the victim’s place (*Girard Reader* 2003, 177-88).

In her criticism of Bakhtin’s polyphony and dialogism in “The Philosophical Roots of Polyphony: a Dostoevskian Reading” (1999) from Girardian platform, Natalia Reed postulates a conceptual break between “The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” which she seems to approve, and Bakhtin’s *The Problems of Dostoevskii’s poetics*, which she condemns, thus indirectly acknowledging the similarity between Girard and Bakhtin’s early theories (Reed 1999, 117-52). Rachel Pollard, in a pioneering study, *Mikhail Bakhtin and the Linguistic Turn in Psychotherapy* (2008), provides a discerning analysis of Reed’s argument and advocates for more similarities than differences between Bakhtin and Girard. Pollard proposes to view Girard and Bakhtin as complementary rather than incompatible (Pollard 2008, 77-88).

In his later years, Girard seems to have made a step towards Bakhtin, without referring to him and possibly unaware of him, in acknowledging the “intrinsic goodness” of mimetic desire as “the opening out of oneself [to others],” in contrast to the resolute “debunking” of the mimetic desire in his first book, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (*The Girard Reader* 1996, 62-5; 283-4). Girard’s concept of triangular desire (outlined two pages below) is already prefigured in Bakhtin’s concept of “the absolute aesthetic need of the other,” although the two evaluate such need differently. For Bakhtin, our desire to rely on the other for completing, or consummating us, follows from our inability to encompass the whole of ourselves, complete with the moments of birth and death; and, secondly, from the principal incompleteness of our internal selves, which always strive for perfection and are never satisfied with the achieved result except in the state of spiritual stagnation (Bakhtin 2003, 196-7).

God, the ultimate Other, consummates us after death; but in earthly life, the other can render us a service of memory after we depart, and while we are alive, we rely on each other for support in the moments of spiritual and emotional crisis. The crisis of self, which may seem contradictory to Bakhtin’s postulate of the self’s uniqueness as occupying a firm position in time and space, results from the conflict between the “given” [*Geben, dannoe*] reality [*nalichnost’*] of the self, on the one hand, and the “set task” [*Gegeben, zadannoe*] of the self’s spiritual perfection, on the other. The self completely satisfied and complete from within loses impetus for further development, stagnates, and falls prey to being [*otpadaet v bytie*]; hardens, as it were, in the material being (Bakhtin 2003, 195-200).

Bakhtin’s spatial model of human interaction is a corrective to the Hegelian “mortal battle” of selves resulting from one self (master) overtaking the other (slave). The respective

vision of Bakhtin's two subjects is broader than Hegel's and includes the facial expression of the counterpart and the surrounding background in the picture. Bakhtin rewrites the Hegelian confrontation of the two minds as their collaboration, each subject having a "surplus of vision" in relation to the other and lacking such surplus in relation to self, providing a perfect opportunity for cooperation, which we may or may not take advantage of.

Bakhtin's theory of live-entering [*vzhivanie*], based on a borrowed German concept of empathy as *Einfuehlung* ('feeling-into') in "Towards the Philosophy of the Deed" and developed into the complex relationships between authors and heroes on three planes, religious, ethical, and aesthetic, places emphasis on the impossibility of repetition and imitation and on the irreducible uniqueness of each individual's experience due to each person's occupying a unique position in time and space. One cannot be replaced or share this position with the Other, no matter how closely they merge; nor can one claim non-existence, "an alibi in being." This provides a foundation for "live-entering" as a responsible act, and self-abnegation/self-sacrifice [*samootrechenie*; literally 'distancing from self, renunciation of self'] as a meaningfully enriching act of a "consummating being [*bytie-sobytie* ¹⁰]." Passive live-entering, possession, the loss of the self, has nothing in common with the *active* act-deed of self-forgetfulness [*samootvlechenie*] or self-sacrifice [*samootrechenie*]: "In *self-sacrifice* I realize, most actively and fully, the uniqueness of my position in being. [...] The world from which Christ departed will

¹⁰ The idea of God as the word become flesh plays an important role in Bakhtin's ethics, as noted by Pollard (Pollard 2008, 155-9), and reveals itself in Bakhtin's manner of thinking in puns, observed by Holquist (Holquist 2001, 53-69), such as '*bytie-sobytie* [being-event/co-being].'

never be the same as the world in which He had never been; it has undergone a major change” (2003, 19; italics in the original).

Just like Girard, Bakhtin objects to the indiscriminate identification with the other and sees such identification as a kind of an obsession; unlike Bakhtin, Girard sees all identifications as indiscriminate, irresponsible, and for the most part, unconscious. In the *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, Girard theorizes envy, jealousy, and hatred under the umbrella term of the triangular (a.k.a. imitative, mimetic, mediated, and metaphysical) desire, and condemns the Romantic idea of originality, which, in his mind, is mistaken and harmful because it obscures the imitative nature of desire.

Originality and uniqueness are not to be taken as synonyms in the case of Bakhtin and Girard. While Girard exposes originality as a wishful illusion, Bakhtin insists on uniqueness as an obliging condition: imitation, for Bakhtin, is impossible and even if it were possible, it would be irresponsible. For Girard, imitation is inevitable: unique or not, what is important for Girard is that we are not original (not self-originating); neither are we in Bakhtin. Each “hero” created by the supreme Author (God) might be unique, yet it cannot be original in the above sense of “having autonomous origins.” It is not the origin, but the realization of one’s unique position in space and time, and the impossibility to claim the “alibi from being,” that is important for Bakhtin.

Girard divides desires into spontaneous and mediated ones: the former are authentic and the latter illusory. The spatial model of the mediated desire is a triangle, with the lines connecting the desiring subject to a desired object at its base, and a mediator at its top, and radiating rays of desire simultaneously towards the subject and the object. Girard first

discovers the shiny triangle of desire in the episode with the barber basin in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. The noble hidalgo mistakes the barber basin for a knight's helmet because it "shines" with the reflected light of his mediator's desire, the fictional knight. The ray of desire issues from Amadis—or more precisely, from the author of the chivalric novel about the adventures of Amadis—then reflects off of the shiny barber's basin of Mambrino, and onto Don Quixote's retina. "From the mediator, a veritable artificial sun, descends a mysterious ray which makes the object shine with a false brilliance. There would be no illusion if Don Quixote were not imitating Amadis" (Girard 1965, 18).

Girard distinguishes between external and internal mediation. In external mediation, the role model (the mediator) is openly acknowledged and imitated, as with Don Quixote's imitation of Amadis, the distance between the two is so immense that no rivalry (therefore, no envy or jealousy) is possible. In internal mediation, the imitator is deceived into thinking that his/her desire is original. Internal mediation is exemplified by Sancho Panza who thinks that he wants to become a governor of an island, but this desire is a mediated desire suggested by Don Quixote; it is not Sancho's own, spontaneous and authentic desire, unlike his usual desires for food and wine. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza can peacefully co-exist because their spheres of interests are different. However, had Sancho tried to court Dulcinea he would have become Don Quixote's internal mediator, which would have led to envy and jealousy between them. Internal mediation exists between close rivals and tends to be mutual and endless, culminating in the existential crisis of a Dostoevskian hero, torn apart by multiple mediators. "People become gods for each other" in Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment*, but these are sinister, sly, and merciless gods prone to backstabbing (Girard 1956, 53).

The reason for envy, jealousy, and hatred between people, according to Girard, is our ego's mistaken claim to originality, while all our desires, "joys and, especially, suffering" are borrowed from others. Because of the Romantic compulsion to be original, we cannot stand the thought of our desire being a copy of the other's. So we deceive ourselves by reversing the chronology of events: we imagine our desire to be there first, and our rival's desire to follow and threaten our own. The ultimate, metaphysical desire, according to Girard, is to become the other, to die in the other. Yet the only Other who can promise us resurrection after we die in him is Christ (Girard 1965, 83-95). Girard advocates for *imitatio Christi* instead of falling prey to the Romantic illusion embodied in Don Quixote. Girard praises Don Quixote's renouncing his mediated desire at his deathbed, and makes the finale of *Don Quixote* an example of all great novelistic endings (Girard 1965, 59; 294-5).

Just like Bakhtin, Girard accounts for the divine supreme Other (Author, in Bakhtin) and, just like Bakhtin, he negatively views the desire to merge with the other as a kind of a "possession," in the religious sense (Bakhtin 2003, 112-3; 205; Girard 1965, 61). Both speak about the temporal distance between the author as he used to be, and the author as he becomes by the end of his aesthetic activity, having created a novel. Both theorists emphasize the importance of death for the aesthetic activity. Only Bakhtin discerns death (actual or anticipated) at the root of the aesthetic activity aimed at the rebirth of the hero (who can be autobiographical), while Girard places death at the end as a manifestation of the author's rebirth through the death of the hero (Bakhtin 2003, 181; Girard 1965, 297).

While in his later career Girard places more emphasis on the mechanism of scapegoating as resulting from our blindness to the mimetic nature of our desire, the young

Girard is simply anxious to remove the painful sting of envy, jealousy, hatred, and Romantic love by unmasking the mechanism of mimetic desire and denouncing it as intrinsically bad. By contrast, Bakhtin does not care much for pain, ignores envy, and focuses on proving to himself the necessity of stepping into the role of a scapegoat, “to sacrifice myself responsibly” to the world.

Both Girard and Bakhtin think in triplets: God, I, and the other, but from different angles. In Girard, the other is a foe, and the closer s/he gets to you the more dangerous s/he becomes. God saves you from the dangerously close other. In Bakhtin, the other is ultimately a friend, a “neighbor [*blizhnii*],” and God obliges you to save thy neighbor. Girard says that you do not need the other when you have God. Bakhtin says that everyone needs everyone: you need the other, the other needs you, and God needs both of you to have the need in one another. Girard identifies with the victim, the scapegoat, who has “the surplus of vision” (to borrow Bakhtin’s term) with regards to the victimizers (Girard 2003, 193). A victim and a scapegoat himself, ostracized by the Soviets for most of his life, Bakhtin allows some variety: people are different as are the motifs of their various desires. The human being in Girard is predetermined by mimetic desire; Bakhtin’s human being is free and unpredictable, capable of mercy and deserving of it.

Girard portrays the world as it is and Bakhtin as it should be. Girard takes pity on you and makes your life easier by liberating you from the other (providing some useful tips on entrapping the other along the way), whereas Bakhtin assumes that you are happy as it is and chains you to the other with the categorical imperative. Bakhtin is boring; Girard, witty. Bakhtin will make you sick; Girard will cure you. And only after you have been cured and rejuvenated by

Girard may you go back to Bakhtin and cheerfully pick up your chains of the categorical imperative. You may (or may not, as you wish) go back to Bakhtin after discovering that Girard's gaze is fixed approvingly upon the dying Don Quixote, while Bakhtin rejoices at the sight of the live and kicking one.

1. 4. Envy as a Pre-text for Participatory Thinking

The difficulty of speaking about envy lies in the fact that neutral, impartial, "objectively accurate" discussion of it is virtually impossible¹¹. Envy may be subconscious rather than conscious and, as Girard shows, tends to project itself, bounce off the envied back onto the envier and back again (Girard 1965, 59). Envy is predominantly an intimate experience kept secret and does not always transform into action. Envy, as Gonzalo Fernandez De la Mora proposes, is best symbolized by a mask (De la Mora 1987, 73). For all these reasons, whoever claims to have any knowledge of envy effectively confesses to having known it intimately, prior to knowing it in theory.

Furthermore, as soon as we begin to define what envy is or is not in theory, as soon as we produce some kind of a list of what is or is not enviable, our very choices, our ordering of

¹¹ One can never be sure of one's choice of a personal pronoun to speak about it. Speaking about a third party's envy may implicate us as badmouthing them out of envy; confronting someone directly in the second person, as in "you envy him/her/them" or, especially, "you envy me," may very likely terminate the relationship; and blatantly confessing one's envy in the first person, unless such confession is softened with humor and/or meant as a figure of speech, an earnest praise, inevitably creates uneasiness.

the components on the list, as well as our exclusion, omission, or replacing of some of them, necessarily articulates our hierarchy of values, which can, in turn, be dismissed as envious by those whose hierarchy of values is different from ours.

From De La Mora's observation that, on the one hand, virtually anything can become an object of envy and, on the other hand, envy can be camouflaged as a noble intention (De la Mora 1987, 73-8), it can be, conversely, inferred that any noble intention can be suspected of camouflaging envy. Even the most sincere praise or the most friendly, constructive criticism can become a target of envy or be labeled envious. Any good intention can be said to be paving the road to hell; any act of benevolence can be "revealed" as envy wearing a mask of kindness; and any atrocity can be rationalized, by those who perform it, as an act of justice upon, or as defensive precaution against, the conspiring envious other (Hitler's extermination of the "envious Jews" is an example).

Likewise, our refraining from action or judgment can be qualified, besides being merely apathetic or cowardly, as avoidance caused by envy (*Envy, Competition, and Gender* 2007, 25): turning a blind eye to something or someone we secretly envy. All of the above makes envy a perfect pretext for the Bakhtinian "participatory thinking [uchastnoe myshlenie]" described in "Towards the Philosophy of the Deed": thinking from one's concrete position in time and space, which gave impetus to the idea of mutual authorship explored in "The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity."

Through participatory thinking, envy does or does not convert from a pre-text into a text, and this conversion may be complete or partial, more or less successful. The moment of aesthetic bliss, complete satisfaction with the work of art, regardless of its genre or artistic

conventions of the time, follows the moment of reaching an ethical conclusion. Neither finite nor absolutely accurate nor the last conclusion in the biographical author's life, it is *distinct and significant enough* to crystallize as a singularity—as a quantum of light as opposed to a wave, as an ethical deed or a perfect work of art, which needs not to be the last deed or work of art in one's life either.

This is not to say that an aesthetic act may be substituted for an ethical deed; only that the aesthetic act is impossible without an ethical conquest (however fleeting and temporary). Good people do not necessarily produce good literature: a quantum of creative energy may be exhausted in an ethical deed; a literary failure does not necessarily suggest an ethical failure. But the opposite is true: lack of ethics will never result in an aesthetic success, will always hit a false note, and an unethical deed will always strike us as ugly, from the moment of its inception.

Authorship, according to Bakhtin, presupposes personal responsibility. Envy is incompetent authorship because it is an irresponsible, self-serving narration of the envied other whom we hold accountable for our perceived unhappiness. In envy, we imagine the other as responsible for authoring us; we relegate our authorial responsibility to the other and oblige the other with the task that is, in all fairness, solely our own. We punish the other for refusing to author us according to our plan, our preconceived idea of ourselves: the ideal selves we refuse to aspire to. In competent authorship, on the other hand, we succeed in assuming responsibility for ourselves and, should we choose to author the other (we do anyway, but incompetently, in envying them), we hold ourselves responsible for the adequate and fair (benevolent, sparing, redeeming) representation of the other; for granting our hero

independence and appreciating the hero's existence as a value in itself. "The absolute aesthetic need of the other" cannot be expressed in terms of demand, but only in terms of hope¹².

1. 5. Envy as a Form of an Incompetent Authorship

Due to the writers' general reluctance of "attributing envy," as mentioned in section 1.2.3 of the present chapter, finding literary texts that openly deal with the topic of envy is difficult. The following texts have been chosen for analyses: Iurii Olesha's *Envy* (1927); Konstantin Vaginov's *The Goat Song* (1926-8; 29) and *The Works and Days of Svistonov* (1929-30); Aleksandr Grin's "The Scarlet Sails" (1923), *Jessie and Morgiana* (1929), and "Fandango" (1927).

Two criteria were observed in choosing the material for the present study: 1) the works had to be either entirely about envy (such as Olesha's *Envy* or Grin's *Jessie and Morgiana*) or contain a more or less substantial account of it taking up a significant portion of text (such as the chapter on Misha Kotikov in Vaginov's *The Goat Song*, and/or 2) the text should somehow signal the author's awareness of envy being the topic of his/her writing. Thus, in Grin's *The Scarlet Sails*, the theme of envy is signaled by the text's being clearly modeled on the story of

¹² Personal responsibility also presupposes that we spare and redeem the other only on behalf of ourselves; if there is forgiveness to be granted, we may forgive on our own account the wrong (real or perceived) done to us personally, but not the wrong done to the other. This may serve as a rebuttal of occasional reproaches to Bakhtin for avoiding the problem of violence. Forgiving the violence done to us is our authorial choice; forgiving the violence done to the other is a violation of the authorial rights of the other.

Cinderella: an archetypal story of envy, according to Ann and Barry Ulanov (Ulanov and Ulanov 1998, 39). Vaginov's *The Works and Days of Svistonov* alludes to Hesiod's poem, *Works and Days*, in which "good" and "bad" envy figure prominently in the beginning, and continues the line of the author as an envious spy present initially in *The Goat Song* (besides mentioning of envy in the text of the novel). In "Fandango," the central episode with a "statistician Iershov" lashing out against the "useless" gifts of the Spaniard Bam-Gran, who represents art, is an allusion to the two kinds of "truth/justice" in the Russian archetypal text on envy, Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri*.

The hermeneutic challenge of verbally representing envy is analyzed in the above texts, through the prism of Bakhtin's live-entering and outsidedness, as resulting in either successful or failed authorship. Failure or success are attributed, in the current study, either to the author-as-hero, in the case when the hero is semi-autobiographical (as described in Weir's eponymous study), or to the hero-as-author, when the envious hero is portrayed as a kind of a failed author, or both. To the extent envy wins, the author fails; but there is always hope for the envier to develop into a competent author.

1.5.1. Iurii Olesha

Chapter 2 deals with the seminal Modernist text, *Envy* (1927), by Iurii Olesha, through the double prism of Mikhail Bakhtin and René Girard. The novel contains a passage, which prefigures, almost verbatim, Girard's formulation of the mimetic (triangular) desire in the *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1956)¹³. Only in place of the barber basin of Mambrino, there is a "smooth, oblong cylinder of a tea-sausage," and in place of Don Quixote, a reluctant author-

¹³ See chapter 2 for direct quote.

hero, Nikolai Kavalerov, who actually *refuses* to be mediated by the Soviet substitute for Amadis, a food minister Andrei Petrovich Babichev (Olesha 1977, 37). After having discovered the mechanism of envy, Olesha mysteriously continues searching for it. He is trying hard to convince the reader that Andrei Petrovich Babichev is a worthy model to imitate. However, to borrow Bakhtin's terms, there is such a misbalance of live-entering and outsidedness in the novel that its fabric disintegrates and Olesha stands naked before the reader: it is simply too obvious that he does not mean to say what he is pretending to say. His alter-ego, Nikolai Kavalerov, while pretending – for the author – to envy everyone around him, on a closer reading works a double- and a triple-, and a quadruple-shift, to hide the fact that he does not envy them. Why?

According to Valentin Kataev's memoir "with a key" (encrypted names), *My Crown of Diamonds* [Almaznyi moi venets'] (1979), Olesha's impetus for writing the novel was not as much envy as jealousy to a NEPman [khoziaistvennik], to whom Olesha lost his first love, Seraphima Suok (Kataev 1979, 60-7). Upon reading *Envy*, Shklovskii, a friend of Olesha's and Seraphima's third husband, famously concluded that "the piece is constructed wrongly" because "the mode of perception throughout the novel belongs to the negative heroes" (Shklovskii 1990, 480). Interestingly, the novel barely addresses jealousy of the hero, while the theme of envy looms large. It is as if envy, which in Russian is very distinct from jealousy (see section 1.2.2 of the current chapter), served Olesha to "cover up" the initial, extra-literary motif of jealousy. I would go as far as to propose that envy, in *Envy*, is almost deliberately counterfeit.

Envy's allegedly positive hero, Andrei Babichev, the director of the Soviet food ministry and an American type business manager of the Taylorism era (which introduced technology as a

model for humans to emulate), does not look all that positive on a closer reading. He is crude, physically unattractive, and said to have “no imagination.” It is simply hard to believe (for those who *value* imagination) that Nikolai Kavalero, the semi-autobiographical “negative” hero in the novel, could envy Andrei, “a sausage-maker” (Olesha 1977, 42). Kavalero possesses the artistic vision and knew the bliss of creativity; he is poor, but poverty is an attribute of many a Romantic poet. Besides, Andrei, a statesman, provides Kavalero with room and board and employs him as a secretary. If anything, Kavalero should feel grateful. Or so it seems.

Olesha’s artistic motivation to write *Envy* is revealed in the dialogue between Kavalero and his double (and Andrei’s brother), Ivan Babichev, who tells him, “You are lucky. You have the opportunity to avenge yourself while, at the same time, avenging the epoch, which brought us into being [kotorai byla nam mater’iu]” (Olesha 1977, 97). The kind of envy portrayed in the novel is declared, by the author with Ivan’s help, to be the envy experienced by the “dying epoch,” i.e. the pre-Revolutionary Russia, “to the epoch that comes to replace it” (Olesha 1977, 42), i.e., the Russia of Socialism and American Taylorism. Ivan explains to Kavalero that the New Men of this brave new world “suck us in like food: they suck in the nineteenth century like a python sucks in a rabbit... Chew and digest. What is of use to them, they digest. What harms them, they dispose of. They dispose of our feelings; our technology, they digest!” (Olesha 1977, 107)

Envy contains many powerful lunges like the one quoted above, although, of course, not everyone would find them powerful. Or just. Kavalero’s position, expressed here by Ivan, who reads Kavalero’s mind (Olesha 1977, 97), is weakened by at least two factors. First of all, he owes his (temporary) well-being to Andrei, who saved him from the gutters (Olesha 1977, 19;

47; 102). Second of all, his taste at times fails him. For example, he addresses a girl in the beer-hall with a poem followed by bragging, “Young girl! I can give you much more than others!” (Olesha 1977, 18). Failing on the level of taste undermines Kavalero’s position as a persecuted genius.

Yet, there is another dimension to Kavalero’s seemingly gaudy speeches. The poem he quotes to the girl in the above scene, “The Tea-Rose” by Teophile Gautier, is translated by Nikolai Gumilev, who was arrested and shot on false charge in 1921, only a few years earlier, by the very same Andrei Babichev who pose as good Samaritans in *Envy*. The tea-rose is written, practically wedged, deep into the tea-sausage throughout the novel (as chapter 2 demonstrates), and the meaning of this a bit too demonstrative ambiguity escapes the reader, whether or not this reader shares the cultural paradigm according to which there is simply no way a sausage can smell better than a rose. Olesha masochistically tries to pretend it may. In pretending so, he hastily comes up with a few tricks that would make Andrei and his adopted son, a soccer player Volodia Makarov, look generous and sophisticated, while Kavalero and Ivan, along with German soccer-star Getske, must be slandered by the author in order to dim their true brilliance (of feeling, skill, intelligence, and so forth) and misrepresent it as an artificial shine.

There is one attempt at a dialogue between Andrei and Volodia, the “positive” heroes, during which they do not actually speak but rather Andrei recalls Volodia’s monologue from a past conversation, while the representative of the brave new world is peacefully asleep across the table from him (Olesha 1977, 99-102). There is a letter to Andrei, supposedly from Volodia, which magically replaces Kavalero’s own hateful letter to the same person, while being in

Kavalerov's pocket. The style of the letter is an utterly false, unskillful mix of a pseudo-proletarian vernacular with the most intricate fragments of lyrical prose, which Olesha ascribes to Volodia's pen (Olesha 1977, 57-60), although they are unmistakably Kavalerov's own, as discussed in section 2.7.4

The entire novel features Kavalerov bragging about his ability to write "my way" and "your way"; "this way" and "that way"; a skill that is, apparently, employed in Volodia's letter. The author's complacency, both Kavalerov's and Olesha's own, culminates in the episode of the soccer match, when the anonymous third-person narrator of the second part interrupts a beautiful, dynamic description of the match between the German and the Moscow teams, in order to help out the Soviet side. With Volodia as their goal-keeper, the Soviets are rapidly losing points, on the field as well as in the readers' eyes. The means of helping "our" side is chosen according to the spirit of the times: the narrator pulls up a record on the German team's best player. It turns out that Getske "cared only for himself," "was not a member of any sports organization because he compromised himself by switching sports clubs for money," and so on. He also notes that the German team was lucky because they played not against the wind (Olesha 1977, 123-9).

The novel ends on a quiet note, with Kavalerov asking, for the third time, one and the same question, "What does it mean?" (Olesha 1977, 141). Kavalerov, whose last name alludes to chivalry (*kavaler* = 'chivalric knight'), travels throughout the text with an imprint of a grid on his cheek: a trace of violence and imprisonment, as well as a hint at the knight visor. Because, when "saved," he is taken in Andrei's car legs first (Olesha 1977, 19), I propose that the author-

hero in the novel is dead all the while, and the stench of his corpse is masked by the presence of tea-sausage that smells like a tea-rose.

According to Girard, envy took place: the author wrote what the customer [*zakazchik*] had ordered him to write—a panegyric to the state. According to Bakhtin, the author’s ethics can be said to redeem him: when he is speaking his mind, he sounds as a confident, powerful artist; when he is trying to be loyal to the customer, his style disintegrates, and “a bright, clear forehead of a tired intelligent man” shows through the shreds of the text fabric, just like when Ivan Babichev’s hat slides back for a moment (Olesha 1977).

1.5.2. Konstantin Vaginov

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the understudied legacy of Konstantin Vaginov, a friend of Mikhail Bakhtin, and to his artistic polemics with Bakhtin’s concept of live-entering. Vaginov and Bakhtin were engaged in a real-life dialogue when Bakhtin’s “The Author and the Hero...” was being written. Bakhtin’s often prescriptive approach to the literary process (the pages of “The Author and the Hero...” are peppered with the imperative ‘must’) finds its “descriptive” correction, in the form of parody and satire, in Vaginov’s four novels: *The Goat Song* (1926-9); *The Works and Days of Svistonov* (1929-30); *Bambocciada* (1931), and *Harpagoniana* (1933). Vaginov identifies a blind spot in Bakhtin’s theory and shows that the technique of “living into” the hero can be effectively used by the agents of the OGPU, the Soviet secret police.

Painfully aware of the writer’s vulnerable position as the target of ideological brainwashing and blackmailing, Vaginov reveals his anxieties about the author becoming a denunciator [*donoschik*] in his two novels with a key, *The Goat Song* and *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, which form a diptych. The first novel concerns the life of the Russian intellectual and

artistic elite, including the Bakhtin circle, after the Revolution, during the eerie “carnival” of violence and destruction of old values.

In place of Bakhtin’s merciful author and repenting hero, Vaginov puts a cunning secret spy and a naïve narcissist, respectively. Then an intricate literary game begins, during which the author and the hero repeatedly exchange identities, while their proper names, alienated from the owners, play the same game on yet another, meta- and intertextual level. Each transaction between the voyeuristic author and the narcissistic hero is conducted according to the logic of envy: the dark side of Bakhtin’s theoretical concept of live-entering. On the one hand, Vaginov punishes the envious author by dissolving him in the chaos and cosmos of intertextuality. On the other, he questions the ethical and aesthetic competence of the reader. In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, a creatively appropriated line from Pushkin’s last letter, “That’s the way to write” (Pushkin 1999b, 509), subtly indicates the redemption of the author by deeming him competent and, in the last aftermath, envy-free.

Vaginov’s play on last names is complex and markedly postmodern, rather than modernist: his novels with a key are deliberately in the “wrong” key, provocative and brilliant. The last names are floating signifiers, in relation to their supposed “owners,” the signified ones. “The collector of tastelessness [*sobiratel’ bezvkusitsy*],” Kostia [Konstantin] Rotikov, whose last name means ‘little/small mouth,’ is the only one who understands that his double-antipod, Misha [Mikhail] Kotikov, a student of the dead poet Zaefratskii, is a secret police agent (a Danteist/Dentist [Dantist]). Rotikov’s counterpart in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, the writer by the last name Svistonov (rhyming with Sologub’s Peredonov, the envious protagonist

of the *Petty Demon*), can be also seen as a man of “little/small mouth,” his last name formed from the verb *svistet’* [to whistle].

If *The Goat Song* denounced the clandestine whistle-blower, Misha Kotikov (not to be confused with Bakhtin), in the sequel *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, the author’s alter-ego, literateur Svistonov, is presented as a kind of a spy on his heroes. Because the latter work basically tells the story of creating the former work, Vaginov the author of *The Goat Song* comes to be self-represented in *The Works and Days of Svistonov* as yet another whistle-blower (from ‘svist,’ ‘whistle,’ and ‘svistet,’ ‘inform’ in the Russian slang¹⁴). Thus Vaginov-Sistonov portrays himself as a spy on a spy: a literateur who discloses his heroes’ secret spying activities and, for this very reason, paradoxically, reveals himself as the one spying on them.

Hesiod’s poem *Works and Days*, to which Vaginov’s second novel’s title alludes, presents envy as split into a “good” and “bad” one. “Good” envy stimulates people to work, while “bad” results in wars and strife. The famous lines describing the professional (good) envy in Hesiod, “Potter is furious with potter and craftsman with craftsman, and beggar is envious (*phthoneei*) of beggar and singer of singer” (Hesiod 2006, 58), resurface in the beginning of Nikolai Gumilev’s “Life of a Verse” (1912), and even earlier, in Pushkin’s letter about “writing for money” (quoted in Muraviova 1994, 155).

Interestingly, the poet (singer) is still said to have “bad” envy and regarded on par with the beggar, even when Hesiod speaks about “good” envy. Vaginov superimposes Hesiod’s poem onto the national text about envy, Pushkin’s “Mozart and Salieri,” to highlight the role of the rhythm as the element that differentiates between the two modes of envy. According to

¹⁴ See: Baldaev, D. 1997. *Slovar’ blatnogo vorovskogo zhargona*. Moscow: Kampana, 30.

Bakhtin, ethical life is incompatible with the rhythm and constitutes a sort of a possession (Bakhtin 2003, 191).

Through multiple allusions to Pushkin and to Pushkin's popular myth as the Mozart of his own play, Vaginov portrays the literary scholar, Misha Kotikov, as secretly envious of the subject of his study, the better poet Aleksandr Petrovich Zaevfratskii (his patronymic, Petrovich, reminiscent of Peter I and his reforms, just like Andrei Petrovich Babichev's patronymic in Olesha's *Envy*). Misha Kotikov is portrayed as a dilettante poet and an incompetent author in relation to Zaevfratskii. Based on Pushkin-Mozart's myth, the bad literary taste is connected, through the classical motif of Zoilus (alluding to a secret spy and a critic Faddei Bulgarin), to the guilty conscience of the Salieri type (who works in a rhythm, like Hesiod's peasant with a plow). Misha Kotikov's soft paws (his last name means a cat) are shown to hold the metal instruments of dentistry, literally pulling words out of his patients' mouths. He is a torturer, a collaborator with the Soviet secret police; and, like the ominous literary critic of the Soviet times, V. V. Iermilov, resurfacing in a later novel, *Bamocciada*, he is dangerous.

The Works and Days of Svistonov has been typically seen as Vaginov's apology to Lev Pumpianskii, the prototype of the main hero in *The Goat Song*, professor of classical literatures Teptiolkin. However, implicitly, it also continues the Kotikov line. This time, Vaginov portrays his alter-ego Svistonov as a spying writer, a "litterateur" (a slightly pejorative, bureaucratic term for a writer in Russian) and makes Kotikov into a sideline character, young poet Iablochkin (by endowing both portrayals with a memorable detail: red cheeks [*rumianets*]). He suggests that Svistonov is simply envious of a happier and purer entity, and, like Mephisto in Goethe, is fault finding. Everything Svistonov touches becomes a part of his satirical novel until he is finally

surrounded by his own heroes and landscapes of his own making. The critics commonly see Svistonov's plight as a punishment for not loving humanity, while I argue that the novel contains plenty of instances for Svistonov to redeem himself.

Yet, according to Bakhtin, only the other may be the genuine source of redemption: a person alone cannot redeem him/herself without closing off the possibility to change, inherent in every living person. Thus Svistonov follows Olesha's hero to the purgatory of the text. There is a dead end, and everything is predictable. Vaginov manages to escape at the last moment, just like Olesha. The difference between the two is that Vaginov-Svistonov does not stoop to falsity: the portraits of the heroes are "beautiful because painted according to nature" (Vaginov 1999, 230). The last phrase is a quote from a work for children by Pushkin's friend Aleksandra Ishimova, the last person Pushkin addresses in writing before his fatal duel next morning. The letter (and Pushkin's lifetime writing) concludes with Pushkin's words, "This is how one should write" (Pushkin 1999b, 531). It can be argued that, just like Mozart in Pushkin's play, Svistonov "would hate to part with [his] work," so he never does.

Vaginov punishes Svistonov to satisfy the envy of his readers, the "young male and female gossipers," but Svistonov smirks forgivingly because he possesses a surplus of vision with regards to them, which allows him to "consummate" them with the "loving [*miluiuschimi*] aesthetic elements," as prescribed by Bakhtin (Bakhtin 2003, 127).

Kostia Rotikov [*little mouth*] in *The Goat Song* and Svistonov [*whistle-blower*] in *The Works and Days of Svistonov* parade as authors with small mouths, rendered nearly mute by their word-resistant subject: envy. They attempt to unmask the true enviers, the political voyeurs and spies that surround them. However, it is impossible to accuse anyone of envy

without immediately implicating oneself. Vaginov's anxiety of turning from a writer into a secret spy manifests itself in the images of an incompetent author and an envious voyeur: a Dante scholar cum Dentist, with sharp metal instruments in hands, ready to torture the next good poet who ends up in his hands. Envy turns on itself and the writer flees.

1.5.3. Aleksandr Grin.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the least known and most misunderstood author, Aleksandr Grin. I will analyze, through the double prism of Mikhail Bakhtin and Melanie Klein, Grin's three works: the best known of his oeuvre, "The Scarlet Sails" (1923), the virtually unknown in the West novel *Jessie and Morgiana* (1929), and the long short story "Fandango" (1927), one of Grin's masterpieces, which can be also viewed as his literary manifesto. "The Scarlet Sails" deals with the envied, *Jessie and Morgiana* with the envier; and "Fandango" brings together the two lines in a perfectly synchronized, 'fandango'-style dance-competition, rich in literary, political, and historical allusions.

If Olesha portrays the pain of envy from within the envious consciousness of the author, and Vaginov, in his parodying homage of Bakhtin, conceptualizes this pain as the author's failure to achieve *outsidedness*, Grin goes against the grain of the entire Russian literary tradition, which had so far focused almost entirely on the sufferings of Salieri and left Mozart out of the equation. Grin's empathy is always with the envied and his main pathos is to let the best man (or woman!¹⁵) win.

¹⁵ While unquestionably sharing into the same misogynist stereotypes as his favorite Russian and European writers, Grin differs from them in one respect. He endows his heroines with a sense of humor and linguistic sensitivity (many of them versify for fun). This places Grin's

Iuri Olesha admired Grin for rich imagination and literary “resourcefulness” (‘vydumka’), and considered him equal to Edgar Allan Poe (Olesha 1965, 505), whereas Gleb Struve dismissed Grin as “a third-rate Stevenson” (Struve 1971, 365). The paradox of Grin as a writer is that, while openly admitting his indebtedness to the first- and second-rate Western adventure novels, he carved for himself a unique niche by becoming “an anomaly in Soviet literature” (Zavalishin 1958, 112-3; quoted in Struve 1971, 365), remaining, until his very last days, proudly un-engaged with the October (although attempts were made to posthumously “Sovietize” him).

Grin’s demonstrative, and at the same time deceptive, dissociation from the Soviet politics is but a continuation of his pre-October individualistic quest. In markedly misogynistic language, he renounces “the frightful word ‘motherland,’ which should really mean nothing more than a person’s birthplace” in his first programmatic short story, “The Reno Island” (1909).

Ambivalent towards the West but intolerant of the “[Russian] national trait” identified by Fedor Sologub as envy, Grin re-writes the rivalry between Russia and the West, termed *ressentimental* by Liah Greenfeld (Greenfeld 1990, 549-89), as the opposition between the North and the South, subverting the accepted paradigm in a phallic, orthogonal gesture. As if in a creative “swerve” (Bloom) from Valerii Briusov’s anti-utopian story, “The Republic of the Southern Cross” (1904)¹⁶, Grin makes the North a symbol of the rigid, oppressive, poor, and female heroine on an equal footing with her creator and makes her into a Bakhtinian subject, the authoress-heroine.

¹⁶ Briusov published some of Grin’s early stories in *Russkaia mysl’* in 1912, and Grin addressed Briusov as “Dear and deeply respected [‘glubokouvazhaemyi’] teacher” in the letter from

collective-minded Russia, which is envious of the warm, free-spirited, rich, and individualistic (if only unmistakably colonial) South.

On the one hand, Grin's misogynist and colonialist clichés, naively imported from his favorite childhood readings of Western authors, considerably undermine the degree of his "resourcefulness" (praised by Olesha) by making the final outcome of his otherwise inventive plots rather predictable. In this respect he is an incompetent author envious of his heroines and claiming an impossible autonomy from the society. On the other hand, Grin's open *Western-mindedness* provides him with a legitimate way to disassociate critically from the (ostensibly feminine, but essentially male-dominated and paternalistic) "motherland" and assert his own creative freedom as the "third-rate Stevenson" exempt from the limitations of the Soviet discourse.

Envy as a form of incompetent authorship emerges in post-Revolutionary Russia among the writers who are forced to survive by selling pieces of their souls and minds to the state in exchange for an opportunity to realize their talents. Yet the catch of this deal was in losing one's identity, which, incidentally, was central to the writer's talent. This was a perfect double bind set for the intelligent and refined in the post-Revolutionary Russia: a choice between direct physical extermination (like in Gumilev's case), a gilded cage (like in Olesha's case), death by starvation (as in Grin's case), or selling one's soul to the button master, following the plight of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (see chapter 2 for a detailed discussion).

December 28, 1914 (*Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Grine* 1971, 480-9). The constellation of the Southern Cross is one of Grin's key literary symbols, and it is hard to explain its genesis other than through Grin's familiarity at least with the title of Briusov's story.

In the absence of adequate audience (which partly emigrated and partly was being exterminated by the regime), the non-conformist writer focuses on him/herself, producing amazing jewels of “hermetic” prose, a “self-programming text” as defined in Dmitrii Segal’s “Literature as the Safe Conduct” (1981). This position of isolation is not chosen freely: it follows logically from writing in a vacuum; from addressing those who, as you know, will not understand you because they have a gun, and you do not have one. Maiakovskii, in “The Second Order to The Army of Arts” (1921), calls to abandon “the rose bush of poetry, before you are chased away with gunstocks” (Maiakovskii 1956). The workings of envy are evident, but this envy prefers to remain anonymous. It speaks on behalf of the people; it convinces the persecuted author that it is s/he, the author, who is envious of the collective and recoils from it out of stubbornness. The authors who remain stubborn in the face of such pressure, those who are able to maintain a lucid vision of their predicament both from within (conscience) and from without (historical context), preserve their gift for posterity: they are competent authors.

Those who cave in and try to speak the language of the dictator, allowing the dictator to author them on behalf of the vaguely defined “people,” compromise their gift and see it degenerate before their very eyes. In this situation, the desire to go blind, as expressed by Ivan Babichev in Olesha’s *Envy*, is the manifest envy of the less gifted, less sensitive, less conscientious, because the latter appear to be “the fittest” to survive: this is the truth of life. But, contrary to Salieri’s assertion in *Mozart and Salieri*, that there is no truth on high, Pushkin’s variation on Horatio’s “Monument” serves as a vessel for this higher truth: the immortality of the creative genius, which lives on beyond any practical, utilitarian reasons, and even in spite of them. “All of me will not die; the soul, in the secret/sacred [*ν zavetnoi*] lyre will outlive my

dust, and escape decay; and I will be glorious, until in the sub-lunar world, at least one poet remains alive” (Pushkin 1980, 4323-4).

Authorship is undermined in envy both from within and without. It suffers from the pressure of the external envy of those who fail to live up to someone else’s talent beside them; their own, internal envy, precludes them from attaining authorship through the “objective aesthetic love,” as outlined in Bakhtin’s “Towards the Philosophy of the Deed.” “Lovelessness [*bezliubost’*], indifference, will never develop enough power to sustain the tense deceleration over the subject; to fixate, to sculpt its tiniest detail. Only love can be aesthetically productive [...]” (Bakhtin 2003, 58-9). Ethics meets aesthetics in the competent authorship: in the power of seeing good as good, without the envious urge to declare it evil; in the power of seeing evil, without blinding oneself into thinking that it is good. The *biographical* author is not a saint, and needs not be; and who is to judge the correctness of the other’s vision? What I describe here is not as much an achieved ideal, but rather, the direction of the inner compass.

Chapter 2. “The Piece is Constructed Wrongly”: Searching for Envy in Iurii Olesha’s *Envy*

No one has ever seen God / but there are rumors / he plays soccer / on the Elysian fields. // According to unbelievable sources / he plays “saved and damned” / twenty four hours a day,/ watching every move made by the players / whom he creates on the spot. // Without missing, / God hits / into one goal and then the other. // The strings of the nets respond with a moan: /“saved,” “condemned” (Joanna Kurowska, *Catechesis*)¹⁷.

2. 1. A Loner in the Field: Who Killed Lilienthal?

Rationalizing his decision to poison Mozart, the envious Salieri in Pushkin’s eponymous play cites Mozart’s uselessness as the reason to murder him: “What is the use of him? Like some kind of a Cherub, he brought us a few songs from Paradise, only to stir a wingless desire in us, children of dust, and fly away! So, fly away then; the sooner the better!” (Pushkin 1948, 128). The protagonist of Iurii Olesha’s *Envy* (1927), witnessing the launch of a new Soviet airplane on the airdrome field, nostalgically recalls the “transparent, quivering like insect wings” name of the German pioneer of aviation, Otto Lilienthal, and resents the onset of the utilitarian era. “The fluttering man, Otto Lilienthal, got killed/killed himself [*ubilsia*]. Flying machines no longer resemble birds. [...] How quickly aviation has become an industry!” (Olesha 2004, 43; Olesha 1967, 32).

¹⁷ Quoted by: Kurowska, J. 2013. *Catechesis*. In: *The Wall & Beyond*. Little Elm [TX]: eLectio Publishing, 16.

The plight of Lilienthal, the fluttering man [*porkhaiuschii chelovek*], is the plight of the artist's freedom of expression in the Bolshevik era. The demise of the fluttering loner, Lilienthal, is contrasted with the triumph of the Soviet soccer team on the green field; their grass is greener, but fluttering loners are not to hover above it. According to Evgenii Dobrenko, notwithstanding the wide spectrum of artistic movements after the October Revolution, "all of them moved within the assigned boundaries [of freedom]," which denied the artist's autonomy from the authority (the ruling party), on the one hand, and from the (positively connoted) "masses," on the other (Dobrenko 2005, 89-91). Due to the undeclared nature of these boundaries, which make themselves felt in Olesha's text, the cause of the artist's demise in *Envy* (symbolized in the death of Lilienthal) remains insufficiently explained and anonymous, as it were, as opposed to the case of Pushkin's Mozart who is "privileged" to have a well-defined murderer, Salieri, with a well-defined motive, envy.

What are the motives of Kavalierov's envy? Does he want autonomy or authority? What is enviable, from the hero's – and from the author's – point of view? To which extent do these two points of view coincide? Is it possible that the subject(s) and object(s) of envy, as well as its cause and effect, are misplaced in the novel? The current chapter examines both possibilities with regards to Olesha's work through the double prism of two complementary theories: Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of authorship in "The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity" (mid-1920s) and René Girard's concept of mimetic desire (Girard's umbrella term for envy, jealousy, and hatred) as the underlying theme of every great novel, as claimed in his *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1956).

The linguistic challenge of translating the short Russian reflexive verb 'ubilsia' [literally 'got himself killed'] in the passage on Lilienthal, rendered by two different translators of *Envy* as 'got killed' (MacAndrew 1967) and 'killed himself' (Schwartz 2004) ¹⁸ respectively, reflects the hermeneutic challenge presented by the entire novel to the reader. Depending on the cultural paradigm and the system of values embraced by the reader, Olesha's novel can be viewed, alternatively, as either being about envy or *not* about it; as either a literary success in capturing it or, on the contrary, as a literary failure exposing the "raw," "unprocessed" envy of the author.

According to Bakhtin, an aesthetically effective, verisimilar depiction of an experience in the work of art demands that the author first overcome it in life: "I must stop fearing in order to describe my fear; must stop loving in order to portray my love [...]" (Bakhtin 2003, 186). Similarly, Girard advocates for the author's overcoming and re-evaluating past experiences as manifested, in his opinion, in the unity of all novelistic endings as "fresh beginnings"; as the death of the hero signaling the hero's and the author's spiritual rebirth (Girard 1965, 97). Whether or not the transformation of the author's raw live experience occurs in Kavalierov; whether or not the text is complete with the catharsis of the author's liberation from envy, which served as its *pre-text*, is the case in point of the present analysis.

If we find Olesha's novel as revealing the mechanism of envy, we declare the novel a literary success, its author as having conquered, at least temporarily, his own envy in the act of

¹⁸ The five other translations have been done by Berczynskii, Brown, Butler, Payne, and Ross.

See: *Olesha's Envy: A Critical Companion*. 1999. Ed. by Rigmila Salys. Evanston [IL]:

Northwestern, 30-31, for a brief comparative review of all six, excluding Schwartz.

creating the novel, transcending the boundaries of the text in the act of “outsidedness” (as required by Bakhtin), and leaving the confines of “the prison [of mimetic desire] in which [all great novelists] were first imprisoned together with their contemporaries,” as explained by Girard (Girard 1965, 3). If, on the other hand, we find the author as helplessly stuck within his own novel, pinned to the text, as if a butterfly on display, by the sting of his own envy, which is obvious to the reader but obscured from the author, we deem the author incompetent and his novel, a literary failure. In the latter case, the work will not strike us as an organic unity of content and form, inaccessible to the dissecting blade of analysis; will not speak to us in its own peculiar voice, with power and authority of the living other, a partner or an opponent in a dialogue, but rather, will prostrate before us in all the helplessness of an unfinished project, a Golem or a Frankenstein, hopelessly short of becoming a human being.

Olesha’s artistic insight is that he highlights the connection between envy and the conflict of values; his ineptitude (or perhaps, his innovation) as an author lies in the fact that he cannot decide on the *syntactic* primacy of either. Does the hero’s envy serve as a pretext for the author to wage the battle of values? Or does the author see this battle as lost in advance and explain it away with the hero’s envy? (I would choose the latter.)

As soon as we produce some kind of a list of what is or is not enviable, our very choices, our ordering of the components on the list, as well as our exclusion, omission, or replacing of some of them, necessarily articulates our hierarchy of values, which can, in turn, be dismissed as envious by those whose hierarchy of values is different from ours, because, according to Scheler and others, envy has the power to invert values (see Chapter 1). The hermeneutic challenge of *Envy*, the perfect trick of it, is that, no matter how we judge, Olesha’s book will

spell out *some* kind of envy, either the author's, or the hero's, or the reader's (mine), to *someone who reads it differently*. In this sense, we may endorse Mervyn Nicholson's statement that "literature is in itself a kind of a counter to envy [because it] reveals that, which envy seeks to hide" (Nicholson 1999, 6-9).

2. 2. The Plot of Envy

Envy has undergone six English translations, the last one by Marian Schwartz in 2004. Because of the hermeneutic challenge mentioned above, among the ordinary losses in meaning and expression, inevitable even in the best of translations, the losses in meaning due to each translator's personally held value system may be especially misleading. This is why, prior to analyzing the text which some of my readers may only know in translation, I find presenting my own, rather lengthy, version of the plot summary a necessary first step to its interpretation.

Set in mid-1920s, with a flashback to the Civil War of 1917-22, the novel was published in 1927. The historical background includes the period of NEP [New Economic Policy] (1922-28), the reign of Taylorism and the cult of the machine. Nikolai Kavalero, a lyrical poet and an alcoholic in remission, is employed as a secretary by the director of the Soviet food ministry, Andrei Petrovich Babichev, who rescued him from the gutter and sheltered him. Kavalero temporarily occupies the couch of Andrei's adopted son, the soccer player Volodia Makarov, an exemplary Soviet youth who is on leave to visit his biological father, a heavy industry worker, in Murom. At age eight, during the Civil War, little Volodia saved Andrei from a terrible death at the hands of the White Army: the enemies planned to put Babichev with his back on an anvil and smash his face with a hammer. Holding hands, the bulky, grown-up Babichev and little Volodia escape to Moscow on foot (Olesha 1977, 17-22; 100).

Volodia is in love with Valia, Andrei's niece, who left her anti-Bolshevik father, Andrei's brother, Ivan Petrovich Babichev, and lives separately from both waiting for Volodia to propose. Volodia and Valie agree to marry and kiss for the first time at the opening of a Quarter [Chetvertak, phonetically close to 'chetvertovat', 'to maim'], the public dining hall organized by Babichev 11, 58-60). Babichev's other project is the design of a new sort of sausage, which "smells like a rose in the blazing sun" and "does not go rotten in one day," as Babichev's business partner, Solomon Shapiro, attests (Olesha 1977, 33-6).

Andrei's brother, Ivan Petrovich Babichev, stalks Andrei and Valia, reproaching the former for "stealing" Valia and imploring the latter to return home (Olesha 1977, 22-3, 30-1). Ivan walks the streets of Moscow with a yellow pillow in his hands as a manifestation of the old-times, non-communal living and preaches against the Bolsheviks in the beer-halls. "Bullets get stuck in the pillow. With a pillow, we will suffocate you" he tells his Bolshevik brother, Andrei (Olesha 1977, 114). Andrei periodically says that Ivan ought to be shot or locked in a psychiatric ward (Olesha 1977, 23; 32; 49; 86).

Ivan boasts of having invented a demonic wonder-machine, Ophelia, "a most perfect piece of technology," which he endowed "with the most vulgar of human emotions." Named after Shakespeare's Ophelia, Ivan's machine falls in love, gets jealous, goes mad, sings, and picks flowers (Olesha 1977, 22-3, 107). Part two of the novel relates two more inventions from Ivan's childhood: a dream-generating device and a giant soap bubble/air balloon. Ivan is punished for his fantasies by his stern and realistically minded father (Olesha 1977, 71-6), whose name, Petr, is invocative of Peter the Great. The third brother in the family, Roman, had been executed by the tsarist regime while Ivan graduated from a Polytechnic College and

Andrei was abroad (Olesha 1977, 72; 78). These are the only two times Roman is mentioned in the novel.

Before he is saved by Andrei from the gutter, Kavaleroov rents a room from an aging widow, Anna Prokopovich, whom everyone in their communal apartment complex calls, in the diminutive, Anichka. Anichka is in love with Kavaleroov, but he is disgusted by her and considers her advances a “symbol of [his] male degradation” (Olesha 1977, 25-8).

Kavaleroov falls in love with Valia at first sight, when he accidentally walks in on her conversation with Ivan, who stands under her balcony. Ivan leaves; Valia, moved by pity, rushes after him but Ivan disappears around the corner. On her way back, Valia meets Kavaleroov and wants to ask him something, but he interrupts saying, “You have rushed past me like a rustling bow full of flowers and leaves.” Valia remembers the stranger and his metaphor verbatim, and mentions it in a phone conversation with Andrei. Andrei repeats it in chunks (fragment sentences), laughs, and says that whoever uttered it must have been an alcoholic from Ivan’s retinue. Kavaleroov overhears it while proofreading Andrei’s brochure on a meat grinder (Olesha 1977, 30-3).

Soon, during his and Andrei’s visit to an airdrome, Kavaleroov steps aside for a beer and is barred from getting back to the field by the Soviet military guard. Kavaleroov makes a scandal, calls Babichev a sausage-maker, breaks up with him and writes him a hateful letter, in which he defends the rustling bow metaphor and declares a war on Babichev for everything the rustling bow represents: “tenderness,” “pathos,” “individuality [lichnost’],” “names that touch one’s soul, like the name Ophelia,” “everything that you oppress” (Olesha 1977, 39- 53).

Disgusted to go back to the widow Prokopovich's house, Kavaleroṽ tries to make amends with Andrei, but Andrei's adopted son, Volodia returns home, shines as a goal keeper during a friendly soccer match between the Moscow and German teams, and Kavaleroṽ understands that Valia is lost forever. He gets drunk and ends up in the widow Prokopovich's bed (Olesha 1977, 129-34).

After the break up with Andrei, Kavaleroṽ encounters Ivan: the two meet as Kavaleroṽ approaches a mirror in the public park and sees Ivan in it. Kavaleroṽ joins Ivan in his "conspiracy of feelings": a plan to organize "the last parade" of all human emotions, good and bad, before the new world, with its cult of the machine, wipes them out. Ivan explains to Kavaleroṽ that his frustration with Babichev is but "the envy of a human generation that aged for the first time [...]. The dying epoch envies that which comes to replace it. [...] Go out with a bang. Leave a scar on history's ugly mug. Shine, God damn it!" (Olesha 1977, 94; Olesha 2004, 103).

The two "conspirators" fantasize about getting revenge on Andrei with the help of Ophelia (Olesha 1977, 117); but like in many other works of the 1920s-1930s (e.g. Boris Zhitkov's *Victor Vavich*, Boris Lavrov's *Youth*, Il'f and Petrov's *The Twelve Chairs*), displeasure with the Bolsheviks is, much like envy in the Christian dogma, a self-punishable sin¹⁹, and the

¹⁹ In *Victor Vavich* (1929-34), Zhitkov's would be anti-hero, the intelligent Bashkin, commits suicide after being coerced into collaboration with the secret police (Zhitkov 1999, 613). The protagonist of Levin's *Youth* (1930), loses the girl he loves to an older rival, a Communist, who is proclaimed by the heroine the real "youth" [iunosha] (Levin 1987, 276-304). Ostap Bender, in

person of intelligence and education, especially humanitarian, opposing or even neutral to the regime, must go down on his/her own accord. So Ophelia turns onto her creator, Ivan, and pins him to the wall. Ivan screams “like a hare [zaiats],” phonetically and graphically close to the Russian equivalents of ‘envy [zavist’]’ and ‘jester [paiats].’ As for Ivan, who is suggested to be Kavalеров’s Dostoevskian double through the motif of the mirror and mind reading (Olesha 1977, 66-7; 97), he turns back onto his “creator,” Kavalеров, and betrays him twice.

First, Ivan takes Kavalеров “to see Valia” as she joins Volodia in warming up before the earlier mentioned soccer match. There, Ivan abandons Kavalеров, throws himself to Valia’s feet and repents, confessing his envy and asking his daughter to poke out his eyes, in a peculiarly inverted version of the Oedipus’ myth (Olesha 1977, 119-22). Then, in the finale, after Kavalеров’s two unsuccessful attempts to disengage from the “chomping” widow Prokopovich, Ivan meets him in Anichka’s bed upon Kavalеров’s return, proposes they take turns sleeping with Anichka, and offers a toast to indifference, ending the novel with the Communist version of ‘amen,’: “Hurray!” (Olesha 1977, 129-34; 140-1). Kavalеров’s reaction is unknown and the reader never hears from Kavalеров again.

2. 3. The Uneven Architectonics

Olesha’s *Envy* is commonly regarded as the twentieth century’s version of Dostoevskii’s *Notes from Underground* (1863). However, in this comparison, two important differences between them are overlooked. Firstly, the Underground Man begins his downfall with denouncing literature and European culture, while Kavalеров suffers precisely for his refusal to

Il’f and Petrov’s *The Twelve Chairs* (1927), dies from the hand of his companion, the former aristocrat, Ippolit Matveevich “Kisa” Vorob’ianinov (Il’f and Petrov 1997).

denounce them. Secondly, Dostoevskii's *Notes from the Underground* have an evenly balanced, two-part composition, letting the hero speak in the first part and then showing him compromise his own words in action in the second part (Dostoevskii 1973, 99-179). By contrast, the composition of *Envy* and its overall architectonics are noticeably misbalanced. Kavalero is the unreliable narrator of the first part, but it is not known who the third-person narrator of the second part is, because this latter narrator turns out to be just as unreliable and side-shifting.

It could be argued that the second part is narrated by Ivan Babichev, because it contains a story of his childhood. Yet this proves wrong in the episode with Ophelia, when, in the story told by Ivan about Ivan, it is said that "the narrator fell silent," after which an "I" speaks, who also turns out to be Ivan. However, elsewhere in the text, Ivan is spoken of in the third person, now with and now without sympathy: the artistic manner of Kavalero (see section 2.7). The narrator could also be Ivan who imagines himself as a Kavalero who wants to be Volodia (see sections 2.7.2 and 2.7.4 for Volodia as Kavalero's hero and/or ideal double). Yet, it is unclear who is the narrator behind the unpleasant remarks about Ivan's not being really an engineer (Olesha 1977, 79), or his constant saccharine smile (Olesha 1977, 91), which seems at odds with the same character's courageously confronting a GPU officer, or Ivan's genuinely poetic, i.e. not trite, statement, which harkens back to the fluttering Lilienthal: "From what kind of a rose bush has flown out the fluttering moth [vyporkhnul motylek] of your smile?" (Olesha 1977, 86-90). According to Kazimira Ingdahl, Olesha could not decide on the final draft of the novel up until the time of its publication (Ingdahl 1984, 39), which does not exclude that he did not decide on the narrator either or meant to reveal his own persona behind all the narrators. Given the importance of the Ophelia motif (madness) and the rustling bow/branch [vetv'] motif

(split), the novel's main topic seems to be the split personality disorder. The author-hero-narrator of *Envy* is split, but it is unclear *how*.

The difficulty of finding the envied and the envier in Olesha's novel results from the uneven application, by the author, of the "live-entering" and "outsidedness" principles to the heroes of the opposing camps, the old and the new world. By "live-entering," Bakhtin means the author's penetration into the inner world of the hero, "coinciding with him, as it were," and seeing the world through the hero's eyes. Conversely, "outsidedness" presupposes the external, distanced look on the hero, which includes his physical appearance and the background (physical, ideological, historical, and so on) that allows to "consummate" the hero and let him or her go: the author "lovingly withdraws" in order to let the hero "move freely in the world" (Bakhtin 2003, 97). In *Envy*, the principles of live-entering and outsidedness apply fully to Kavalero and Ivan Babichev, and partially to Andrei. Valia's portrayal is entirely external and she has only one line to say in the text; there is outsidedness but no live-entering on the author's part. As for Volodia, the ideal Soviet youth, I agree with Marietta Chudakova that even his external portrayal is very fragmentary: a leg here, a muscle there, and yet elsewhere there is his "green bagel of a sock" (Chudakova 1972, 64-7).

Volodia's inner world is represented by a single conversation with Andrei Babichev (not in real time, but recalled by the latter), a letter to Andrei, written in a strangely inorganic mix of styles (see section 2.6), and by the third-person dry and didactic narration of Volodia's thoughts and feelings, collectivist in nature, during the soccer match, as he plays for the Moscow team against the Germans (Olesha 1977, 127).

2. 4. The Critical Response: Envy as a Battlefield of Values

The initial critical response to *Envy* was rather positive, even with the communists, but almost immediately the critics were confused about the target of Olesha's satirical venom. Rigmalia Salys quotes a laudatory passage from an early review in the 1928 May issue of *Pravda* [Truth], the official Soviet newspaper, "This work [...] without a doubt places Olesha among the ranks of the best contemporary writers. Splendid mastery of style, subtle psychological analysis, *vivid depiction of negative types* – all this holds the reader's attention from beginning to end" (*Pravda* 1928, 6; in Salys 1999, 18; italics added). Not everyone would agree with the last statement. In a personal letter to Dmitii Tal'nikov, Mikhail Prishvin characterized *Envy* as having "an impossible, arrogant beginning and a chewed up, feeble end" (in: Chudakova 1972, 33). Tal'nikov questioned Olesha's portrayal of the supposedly positive type, Andrei Babichev, in an article titled, "A Live Human Being or a Righteous Stuffed Dummy?" (Tal'nikov 1928, 3; in Adamovich 2002, 647-8). Iakov Cherniak explained that both sides were wrong, and that there are no positive types in the novel because each of them, to a greater or a lesser degree, is a product of the bourgeoisie (Cherniak 1928, 107; 112; in Salys 1999, 18). Summarizing his impressions from *Envy*, Victor Shklovskii wrote, "The piece is constructed wrongly, because its mode of perception [*metod videnia*] is that of the antagonists [...]. Olesha does not have duel seconds [*sekundantov*] between himself and the people he creates" (Shklovskii 1990, 480).

Contrary to what one might expect, the reasons for the diametrically opposite interpretations, rather than stemming from deeper layers of the text, were laid out invitingly on the surface of it. In his 1931 review of *Envy* for the émigré press, Georii Adamovich expressed astonishment at the blindness of the "Moscow critics," who, "in their naïve appraisal of the

novel did not notice that, which is so obvious to us here”: that “no matter how caricatured Kavalеров’s character is, his presence is far from beneficial for the cheerful sausage-maker [Andrei] and the self-assured soccer player [Volodia Makarov].” In order to understand it, says Adamovich, “one does not need to read between the lines: it suffices to read Olesha’s text without the bias, according to which the winners are always right” (Adamovich 2002, 501).

Indeed, the very openness of the author’s conflict of allegiance (whether or not the winners are right) proved confusing to the Soviet readers, who tried, as Dariusz Tolczyk has shown, to “see no evil” (Tolczyk 1999, 58-92). Recalling their initial enthusiasm about *Envy* in Olesha’s obituaries and memoirs thirty years later, they could not agree on one and only thing: whether or not *Envy* “ha[d] passed the test of time” (Inber 1966, 326-7; Kremlev 1971, 318-9; Erenburg 1971, 408-9; Shvarts 1990).

The entry from September 4, 1956, in Olesha’s diary, which came to be known under the title *No Day without a Line*²⁰, reads, “I firmly believe [*ia imeiu ubezhdenie*] that I wrote a book, *Envy*, which will live for centuries” (Olesha 1999, 312). Contemplating the historical context of Olesha’s novel at the end of the Brezhnev’s era in 1982, Iurii Nagibin comments in his own diary of a writer, “[*Envy*] is already quite impossible to read [...]; first of all, because of a

²⁰ This diary, arguably one of Olesha’s best writing, has never taken the form of a complete work and exists in two completely different versions and under two different titles, *No Day without a Line* (1961), compiled by Victor Shklovskii in collaboration with the writer’s widow, Olga Suok, and *The Book of Farewell* (1999), put together by a contemporary Olesha scholar, Violetta Gudkova. In Bakhtin’s terms, this can be viewed as a rare case of an author “consummated to the whole” by his readers.

completely inauthentic, falsely stated problem. [...] Not a word of truth; the blunder of its time; pathetic, doomed, sincere [yet] rotten attempts of an intelligentsia member to pick a raisin out of an ironclad Easter bread of dictatorship [*naiti iziuminku v zhelezobetonnom kuliche diktatury*]” (Nagibin 1996, 458).

In polemics with Shklovskii, and in sharp dissonance with the nostalgic tone of the 1960s recollections of Olesha, the dissident and iconoclast Arkadii Belinkov argued, in his voluminous case study, *The Retreat and the Downfall of the Soviet Intelligentsia: Iurii Olesha (1958-64)*, that the reader’s confusion was well calculated by the author and resulted from his desire to play it safe during the time of troubles. Holding a radically Romantic view of the role of the artist as the heroic scapegoat of the society (any society), Belinkov blamed Olesha for cowardice and political complacency. “Many things are called ‘envy’ in Olesha’s novel [...]; most often, the sense of a violated justice” (Belinkov 1997, 242-3).

Belinkov’s contemporary, the German sociologist Helmut Schoeck, had no problem connecting the sense of violated justice with envy and praised Olesha’s courage in openly confessing it. “Olesha’s youth was sent in the secure ambience of a middle-class family of officials in pre-Revolutionary Russia. [...] It is not difficult to imagine how the world of the new-style Party bosses in the Russia of 1925 appeared to him. His hatred and envy are set down on paper, and he had the courage to choose the single word ‘envy’ for the title” (Schoeck 1966, 177). Needless to say, Belinkov’s biting criticism of Olesha was less detrimental to the latter in Olesha’s own ethical coordinates, than Schoeck’s approval of him on such a quotidian basis.

A peculiar change of ethical gears occurs in Russia entering the precarious post-Soviet and post-imperial phase of political development and, simultaneously, discovering the works by

René Girard, Melanie Klein, and “the great and the terrible” (Etkind 2001) partisan of the American capitalism, Ayn Rand. Long before perestroika, Andrei Babichev has been repeatedly compared to the American businessmen [*delets*] by the Western and Russian critics alike, and this characteristic was generally understood by both sides as Olesha’s recalcitrant protest against the Soviet implementation of Taylorism and the cult of the machine in the mid-1920s (Kalfus 2004, x). In the 2000s, Andrei’s “American” qualities were re-interpreted as positive, and Kavalеров’s drama came to be explained in terms of the lack of efficiency, self-sufficiency, and frustrated self-realization. “Olesha’s depiction of the decay of [Kavalеров’s] envious personality is shockingly precise”; “Kavalеров [...] could not find himself in the new reality [*ne nashedshego sebja v novoi zhizni*] and [was] capable, therefore, only of bitching [*zlobnoe briuzzhanie*]” (Sokolova 2002). Olesha was, once again, credited for having sketched a verisimilar portrayal of envy, but this time on completely different grounds than those on which he came to be praised in *Pravda* in 1928.

However, the tradition of reading *Envy* along the axis of the poet vs. the sausage-maker had not been completely obliterated. Recalling Olesha’s famous speech at the Congress of the Soviet Writers, E. Golubovskii’s asked the contemporary readers to imagine “what a real combat of the poet and the sausage-maker meant [back then]” (Golubovskii 2005). Vadim Iarmolinet, on the contrary, dismissed Olesha as “the naked king of metaphors” and “the negative hero of [his] time” (Iarmolinet 2011), continuing, as it were, Belinkov’s line of argumentation.

In a more Postmodernist spirit, the organizers of the 2009 art and literary event [*lit-art-aktsia*], “Envy to Iurii Olesha [Zavist’ k Iuriu Oleshe]” at the Odessa Literary Museum, lay

emphasis on Olesha the artist rather than the wretched son of his time and humorously invited the event participants “to envy on premises [*zavidovat’ v zale*]” in a Futurist-style advertising poster (*Odesskii literaturnyi muzei* 2009).

Paradoxically, interpreting Olesha very differently, critics of various camps (pro-Soviet, Western, émigré, anti-Soviet) converge on endorsing Olesha’s verisimilitude. Even the raging Belinkov recalls, in the opening lines of his *The Retreat and the Ruin...*, that, initially, he intended to open his monograph on Olesha with the phrase, “The books of Iurii Olesha are precise, like tiny models of our history” (Belinkov 1997, 26). What is this envy which Olesha formulated so “precisely,” yet so that its object, and even its subject, remained evasive?

2. 5. Envy Anonymous: A Meditation on Mediation

The drama of Olesha the author and Kavalierov the hero, whose love of harmony, intermixed with the fear of the Revolutionary chaos, time and again throws them onto the semi-maternal bosom of Andrei Babichev (*‘baba’* is a vernacular term for ‘woman’), can be best illustrated by Nabokov’s passage on butterflies [*babochki*] in *Speak, Memory* (1951/66), stating that it would be pointless to “appeal to the theory of ‘the struggle for life’ when a protective device was carried to a point of *mimetic subtlety, exuberance, and luxury far in excess of a predator’s power of appreciation*” (Nabokov 1967, 125; italics added). However, mimicry is not only a protective device: it can be also used by a predator on a hunt.

While the victim aims to blend with the environment or to scare the predator away, the mimicry of the predator, besides blending with the environment, may be employed to *attract* the victim (e.g. the ultra-violet flower patterns woven into the spider web). In the latter case, the predator counts directly on the victim’s “power of appreciation.” This seems to be the

situation portrayed in *Envy*. Andrei Babichev displays a lack of appreciation towards Kavalero, who displays a great deal of artful mimicry, and an excessive appreciation of Babichev, which reveals the former as the mediator (the envied subject) of the latter.

Bakhtin distinguishes three possibilities of the author-hero dysfunctional relationships: the hero presents an unlimited authority to the author and takes over; the author is too manipulative of the hero, using the hero as a puppet; and the author is his own hero (Bakhtin 2003, 97-102). In Girard's system of mediated desire, Bakhtin's first option (the author being entrapped in the hero) has two possibilities: external and internal mediation. External mediation exists between Amadis and Don Quixote, as well as between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza: it is a harmonious relationship of a disciple to a role model who is so high up on the pedestal that no conflict of interests is possible; therefore, there is no envy. Internal mediation occurs when the distance, physical or spiritual, between the mediator and the mediated is reduced. At this point, their mediation, i.e. envy, becomes mutual, and the envious subjects will employ deceit and self-deceit to appear independent in their own eyes as well as in the eyes of their rivals (Girard 1965, 53-88). The last option seems to apply to Nikolai Kavalero as the hero of *Envy*, with some modifications analyzed in the current chapter.

Kavalero's ambiguity towards comrade Babichev, a mix of fascination and disgust, on the one end, is met, on the other end, by Andrei's (real or pretended) lack of interest. Kavalero says that he feels like "catching" Andrei, "finding his weak spot"; he often observes the unsuspecting Andrei from behind (Olesha 1977, 15-6; 23; 42). Based on that, Kavalero is the predator and Andrei the victim; Kavalero, the envier, and Andrei, the envied.

But Kavalеров is also clearly afraid of Andrei; Andrei is a “clay idol,” a “Buddha,” and he “oppresses” Kavalеров (Olesha 1977, 42; 47-53; 61-2). Buddhism is about non-violence, which adds ambiguity and an uncanny flavor to Andrei Babichev’s image. Most of all, Kavalеров is disconcerted by Babichev’s lack of interest in him, combined with Babichev’s flaunting his disrespect for privacy and social propriety (signaled in the first line of the novel: “Mornings he sings on the toilet”). Kavalеров is trying to step into Babichev’s shoes, to understand him from within, but at the same time hopes that Babichev will “beat him to it” and become his redeeming author. But Babichev has no power of appreciation, except for what can be eaten: bad luck for Kavalеров “the fruit” (Olesha 1977, 17; 63).

Kavalеров copies Babichev’s words and intonation on the phone, when relating Babichev’s message to another caller, up to the last word, “Regards!” initially addressed to him, Kavalеров, by Babichev when Kavalеров was taking the message (Olesha 1977, 15). He composes, in his head, the propaganda speech Babichev *should have* delivered to the angry housewives on Babichev’s visit to a communal kitchen in the workers’ quarters (Olesha 1977, 12). He tries to impress Babichev with a passage that sounds like a perfect opening for a journalist’s sketch [*ocherk*]: “I often think about our century. Magnificent our century is. And is it not a beautiful fate, when a person’s youth coincides with the youth of the century?” (Olesha 1977, 24). He demonstrates to Babichev, in a confrontational letter to him, the ability to think “not only in images, but also realistically” and employ a realistic language, as required by the “magnificent century,” as opposed to the imaginative and convoluted style, which is strongly discouraged (Olesha 1977, 50). Babichev remains unimpressed.

It is only when Kavalero­v betrays his poetic genius and stoops down to the language of the mob, alleging that Babichev is having an affair with Valia (Olesha 1977, 50; 62), that three things happen: 1) Andrei finally acknowledges Kavalero­v with a slap on a face; 2) Andrei bans him from his house (Olesha 1977, 63), and 3) the reader obtains firm grounds to believe that Kavalero­v is, indeed, an envier rather than an author. Kavalero­v's stooping down to the language of gossiping and libel turns his close observation of Babichev, which might have passed for professional interest of a semi-omnipresent author, into the voyeurism of a layman.

The above will hold true for those who take Pushkin's advice, in his letter to Petr Viazemskii, to "leave the gossip to the mob and be one with the genius" (Pushkin 1937, 244). For those who do not, Kavalero­v is guilty of envy as charged, not because he stooped down to layman's behavior (gossiping, libel), but, on the contrary, because he narrated (confessed, so to speak) his own envy in a work of art. The latter assumption ('guilty because confessed') would run contrary to Bakhtin's and Girard's proposition that an emotion is overcome in the process of literary creation.

In order to prove that Kavalero­v is envious, Olesha must show that Kavalero­v is an incompetent author. But this is virtually impossible without condemning the very pen that created Kavalero­v: Olesha's own pen, because the essence of Kavalero­v is his being a gifted author and a sensitive individual, as opposed to the gossiping and slandering mob of Pushkin's letter.

In Pushkin's time it takes a Salieri to snipe the Cherub-man, Mozart; in Olesha's time, the fluttering man, Lilienthal, goes down on his own accord. In both cases, the direct beneficiary of these deaths is some kind of a collective: the professional community of

musicians in the case of Salieri, who feels a calling “to stop [Mozart], lest we all perish: the high priests in service of music” (Pushkin 1948, 128)²¹, and the aviation industry in case of Lilienthal. Unlike Salieri, however, the aviation industry has a perfect alibi: it did not kill Lilienthal and may reap the rewards of his death with a clear conscience; especially since Lilienthal, knowingly or not, contributed to the emergence of the aviation industry. In like manner, the writers and the intelligentsia in post-October Russia cannot but keep in the back of their minds the fact that, in one way or another, they had supported the regime that is now persecuting them.

Lilienthal’s death helps improve the safety of aviation and prevents other “flying men” from getting killed by flying alone on “quivering” insect wings. This is a positive outcome as far as human life is concerned, but not in the metaphorical sense of “flying/fluttering” as inspiration and poetic freedom. Not incidentally, the imagery of the episode conveys an increase in gravitational pull and a loss of voice: from the magic sounds of Lilienthal’s “quivering” name to the aviator’s dead body; from the flying machines’ resemblance to birds, i.e. singing creatures, to modern airplanes reminding one of “heavy fish” (Olesha 2004, 43), i.e. voiceless creatures.

Envy is given voice in Pushkin’s play, and even if the psychological grounds of Salieri’s envy are dubious (after all, Salieri shares with Mozart an intimate firsthand experience of

²¹ One may object that Salieri only pretends to care about the collective, but cares only for his own fame; but Salieri’s logic allowing him to justify, even if insincerely, the death of one by the wellbeing of many, still rests on the preconception that the wellbeing of the community is more important than the life of its member.

creative bliss, after which it is hard to believe in his fame-thirst²²), the portrayal of this envy's manifestations is believable. For example, Salieri fails to recognize the "wingless desire" of envy, which stirs within him *in response* to Mozart's music, as entirely his own; in Ulanov and Ulanov's terms, he fails to "own" the emotion (Ulanov 1987, 135). Unlike the rude and booing Salieri in Pushkin's note "On Salieri" (1830), the Saleiri in the play is cautious and backstabbing; rationalizing, false-preaching, and so on. While the logic of Pushkin's note contains a weak link (why would someone who could *openly* boo Mozart *secretly* poison him?), *Mozart and Salieri* is a verisimilar portrayal of envy in art.

By choosing to do away with creative stimuli, external (Mozart) as well as internal ("wingless desire"), Salieri misses out on the opportunity to author a new composition. Shunning the responsibility/answerability of uniting life experience with the experience of art in himself, he endeavors, mistakenly, to live without art (Mozart's music) and to create in the absence of life (Mozart's life). Yet, to his partial credit, Salieri's object of envy is noble enough, and by recognizing his own envy and giving it a profound thought – "I envy; profoundly!" (Pushkin 1948, 124) – Pushkin's Salieri is just a step away from his creator and is

²² Bakhtin gives a laconic definition of fame [*slava*] as "the [external validation] by a non-authoritative other [*neavtoritetnogo drugogo*]" (Bakhtin 2003, 135). There is another kind of 'slava' in Pushkin's poetic thesaurus, the 'glory'-*slava*: "I wish for glory, so that my name resounds from everywhere around you [you=the Romantic object]," but this kind of 'slava' is indeed incompatible with crime committed out of envy, because such 'glory' is the external expression of the internal honor, [chest']. Cf.: adjectives of the same root, '*slavnyi*' [very good]; '*besslavnyi*' [shameful].

“redeemed” by the “loving esthetical elements” (Bakhtin) of Pushkin’s art. Unlike Salieri, Olesha’s hero never gets in touch with the reason for his envy; even though he draws a perfectly Girardian triangle in his effort to understand his feelings at seeing his adversary succeed.

Girard’s spatial model of mediated desire is a triangle, with lines connecting the desiring subject to a desired object at its base, and to a mediator at its top, “radiating” rays of desire simultaneously towards the subject and the object. “From the mediator [Amadis], a veritable artificial sun, descends a mysterious ray which makes the object shine with a false brilliance. There would be no illusion if Don Quixote were not imitating Amadis” (Girard 1965, 18). Olesha, some thirty years before Girard, presents Kavalierov’s relationships with Babichev in the same terms of shining and even correctly locates the source of the “artificial sun”: it is Andrei Petrovich Babichev, the mediator, who shines with glory.

He was beaming / shining [*on siial*]²³ today. Yes, the mark of glory lay on him. [...]

He, the ruler, the Communist, is building a new world. And in this new world, glory sparks because a new sort of sausage came out of the sausage-maker’s hands. I do not understand this glory. What does it mean? This is not the kind of glory I was told about by the biographies, monuments, history... Has the nature of glory changed? Everywhere, or only here, in the new world being built? I want

²³ ‘Shining’ refers to the effect on others, while ‘beaming’ conveys the emotional state. By placing the ‘slava’-‘glory’ next to the ‘beaming’ Olesha instantly converts it into ‘shining.’ On the multiplicity of meanings and connotations of the Russian ‘siianie [beaming/shining]],’ see: Siniavskii 1995, 10-8.

to beam /shine just like Babichev was beaming/shining today; but a piece of sausage will not make me beam/shine (Olesha 1977, 37).

Kavalerov keeps searching for the source of his envy *long after he had correctly located it in his mediator: Babichev*, and not in the object: the sausage, a metaphor of social utility.

Kavalerov even breeds a double, Ivan, to help him cope, but to no avail. Despite the topical explanation, provided by Ivan, that the “dying epoch envies that which comes to replace it,” the text provides next to no clues on how the brave new world, in which glory sparks from the new sort of sausage, is better than the old, save for the obvious privilege of not dying; and die the old age must. Likewise, it is unclear how “the New Man” who “comes to steal our iron” (the technological achievements of the nineteenth century) is better than an old “*spets*” [derogatory for ‘spetisalist’] who had produced (authored) it²⁴.

Meanwhile, the reasons why the old age is better are out in the open, presented in Kavalerov’s confrontational letter to Babichev (treated below in the third person) as a series of

²⁴ By acknowledging the privilege of the New Man, the old age commits suicide. The New Man cannot be blamed for the demise he brings to the representatives of the old age, because the New Man is “innocent” in a peculiar way: he has no conscience. He cannot even be said to have lost it. Instead of an individual conscience, the New Man’s conscience is mediated through the collective; and the collective is always on the lookout for a scapegoat, according to Girard (Girard 1996, 97-106). Andrei and Volodia, who join the collective, agree to view cruelty, not as an inevitable imperfection of the world, but as “generosity” and even “kindness on a larger scale of the [historical] clock face” (Olesha 1977, 101).

questions, graphically organized as a poem; it is the only instance of such an organization of text in the entire novel²⁵.

Who authorized him to oppress me?

How am I worse than him?

Is he more intelligent?

Richer in spirit?

More delicately organized?

Stronger? More significant?

Greater not only by rank but in essence?

Why should I admit to his superiority?

(Olesha 1977, 47).

The answers to all of the above questions, except the first and the last on the list, will depend on what one considers 'good,' 'intelligent,' 'rich in spirit,' 'delicate,' 'strong,'

²⁵ And it is a telling loss in Schwartz's translation, especially given the translator's sensitivity to poetry manifested throughout the text. Nevertheless, Schwartz disposes with the stanza organization of the text in Kavalero's letter and also renders Kavalero's earlier contemplation about the changed nature of glory in the past tense instead of the original present. The reason for these sacrifices of meaning may very well be that the nature of glory had changed, at the time of writing *Envy*, in two places on the globe, in the Soviet Union and in the United States. In order for *Envy* to sell well, Kavalero must keep his poetic urges in check and learn to overcome his displeasure with the changed nature of glory: this seems to be the editors' message to Kavalero and to those who may find his views attractive.

‘significant,’ ‘great,’ and ‘essential.’ They also depend on whether or not a particular item on the list is considered valuable: enviable. The list in its entirety is representative of the value system upheld by the noble class. According to Sofia Chuikina, this value system laid stress on personality rather than on practicality. The noble was supposed to be noble not because it was somehow more practical than being cynical and crafty, but because one’s nobility obliged one to be so (*Normy i tsennosti povsednevnoi zhizni 1920-e-1930-e gody* 2000, 159-61).

Besides the duty to self, the Russian noble had a duty to the country; this latter one, according to Chuikina’s research, was often the basis for making the diametrically opposite choices to serve in the White or Red army; to oppose the regime or to collaborate with it; depending on what was seen as benefitting the country (*Normy i tsennosti...* 2000, 151-92). Thus the answer to Kavalеров’s first and the last questions, “Who authorized him to oppress me?” and “Why should I admit to his superiority?” can be reformulated as one question of how, in the mind of the nobility, the duty to oneself came to be in conflict with one’s duty to the country.

By *irresponsibly* delegating the rights of authorship to Andrei Babichev; by accepting the role of his jester; by agreeing to wear the stigmatizing, degrading tags of the “intelligentsia in-between layer” and “the philistine [*obyvatel'*],” Kavalеров *authorized* Andrei to oppress him and created the foundations for his own envy. Now he is facing the challenge of keeping the balance between live-entering (seeing the world through the eyes of the hero) and outsidedness (the author’s return to oneself; placing the knowledge gained through live-entering in the context of the author’s own point of view). The challenge, for the author of noble descent, is to withstand the ‘dictate of the proletariat’ and their spokesmen: the nobility

who had given in to this dictate and associated with it, like Andrei Babichev, the director of the food ministry, with his 'Quarter' [Chetvertak], which is phonetically close to 'chetvertovat' [to maim; to lynch]. The renouncement of authorship on Kavalero's part helps us understand his repeatedly failed attempts to gain control over the environment, as noted by Elizabeth Beaujour (Beaujour 1970, 38-58), and provides a theoretical base for Victor Peppard's observation that, in *Olesha*, the striving for ambivalence leads, in some instances, to schematism and "artistic paralysis," even though Peppard does not see such instances in *Envy* (Peppard 1989, 119; 123).

Kavalero wants Andrei and his new world to shine, not as an artificial sun (the electric bulb), but truly, "in essence." He is ready to accept Andrei as his external mediator, or a "savior," as he calls him on the first day. Kavalero's evacuation of self as an incompetent author has the result that, upon recognizing his mediator as a fake [*lipa*], he fails to assume the position of "outsidedness" and "consummate" the hero in the role this hero is suited for: a government official in charge of the food industry and pals with the GPU (secret police): "And Andrei dragged [Ivan] from his pedestal, and grabbed him by the pants with his fist, and threw him to the militia man: "Take him to GPU!" (Olesha 1977, 86). Instead, Kavalero keeps trying to attain Andrei's mode of vision, rejects his own, personally held vision, informed by the wealth of culture and history, as faulty (envious), and tries to squeeze himself into the format of Volodia: the New Man, the lawful occupant of the state official's couch. By seeking Andrei's approval, Kavalero is trying to become Andrei Babuchev's hero, with the end result of being entrapped in internal mediation.

2. 6. The Boundaries of Empathy

According to Sergei Averintsev, Bakhtin's idea of live-entering [*vzivanie*] is informed by the widespread German philosophical notion of *Einfuehlung* [*vchuvstvovanie*] (Averintsev 2003) and, as shown by Alina Wyman, shares certain aspects of Max Scheler's related idea of active empathy; in particular, the impossibility to fully merge with the other and the necessity to respect this distance (Scheler 1970, 14-8, 96-102; 192-5; Wyman 2008, 66-107). The necessity to remain outside of the other's suffering in order to be able to actively help the other is transformed, in Bakhtin's "The Author and the Hero...", into the concept of "outsidedness," which provides "the surplus of vision" and allows author to "consummate the hero" with the "loving/redeeming [*miluiuschie*] aesthetic elements." In addition, the aesthetic activity must be "appropriate [*umestnym*]": an aesthetic reaction to someone's request for help is unethical (Bakhtin 2003, 183). Thus, competent authorship presupposes the ability to recognize what is appropriate in a concrete situation: an aesthetic act or an ethical deed.

A strong argument against Kavalеров's competence as an author is his impaired judgment in this area. When Valia rushes towards him, in tears, after her disturbing conversation with Ivan, Kavalеров makes an aesthetic observation of a tear on her cheek, comparing it to a droplet of water on a vase, and, before Valia is ready to ask her question, "beats her to it" and delivers his phrase about the rustling bow (Olesha 1977, 31). Ever since, Valia is silent in the novel; she is also deaf and mute, as it were, neither hearing nor talking to Kavalеров.

Valia is objectified by Kavalеров in his letter to Andrei: "I will win Valia like a prize"; by Ivan: "I wanted to carry a woman high, like a torch"; and by Andrei in Kavalеров's nightmare:

“They will bring her now.” The last words refer to Valia, but earlier they were associated with the sausage in Babichev’s numerous phone calls: “Have they brought it/her [ee] yet? (Olesha 1977, 51; 92; 137).

As noted by Arkadii Bliumbaum, Valia, and other beautiful women in Olesha’s oeuvre, symbolize living harmony; music, which speaks without words (Bliumbaum 2008). The import of Valia’s representing the music is addressed additionally in sections 2. 6 and 2.7; for now, suffice it to say that, with respect to Valia, Kavalero fails to be a competent author in the Bakhtinian sense, because he “beats Valia to it,” when she is about to ask a question, thus rendering his heroine silent.

Likewise, the conflict between Kavalero and Babichev grows out of silence and impaired communication, although their initial encounter carries the seed of a dialogue between the author/hero Babichev and the author/hero Kavalero. Coming back to his senses in the morning, Kavalero lets Babichev in on his life (as if in return for Babichev’s letting him into *his* life), and Andrei offers him room and board, along with secretary work, in a very polite and tactful manner. In this initial encounter with Kavalero, Andrei Babichev observes the rules of competent authorship according to Bakhtin: 1) he supports the dialogue, establishing face-to-face, subject-subject relationships, by explaining his motive (pity); 2) temporarily puts himself in Kavalero’s position, acknowledging that his unsolicited intrusion into Kavalero’s life may possibly be offensive for the latter; and 3) “exits” and “consummates” the hero by providing him with the background and freedom of choice: “There is enough room. There is light and fresh air. There is work for you [...]. What do you say? [Literally: ‘Do you want it?’ *Khotite?*]” (Olesha 1977, 20).

This is about the last time we see and hear Babichev speak and act in accordance with the cultural paradigm familiar to Kavalero: tactfully and with respect. The morning of their first formal encounter, after their informal encounter over the gutter, is also about the last time we see Babichev, through Kavalero's eyes, as a "dandy [*schegol'*]" (Olesha 1977, 9). From that point on, Babichev's speech and manners rapidly and mysteriously deteriorate: he invites Kavalero to the table by saying "chow down [*lopaite*]," walks around in his underpants, and performs his rather noisy ceremonies of the morning toilet and calisthenics in Kavalero's room, despite having his own. During calisthenics, Babichev's trousers get unbuttoned because he is rather plump. His table manners are a far cry from civilized, and he has a habit of digging in his ear with a pencil in Kavalero's presence (Olesha 3-17). Kavalero suspects that Babichev despises him. "He does not say it, but it is clear [from his behavior] without words" (Olesha 1977, 14-5). Kavalero, in turn, is both disgusted and fascinated by Babichev's utter lack of shame: "Mornings he [Babichev] sings on the toilet" (Olesha 2004, 5).

Before dismissing Kavalero as fault-finding and envious, it may be informative to look for the source of his displeasure with Babichev in the cultural paradigm of the bygone era. We know nothing about Kavalero's past except that his "fate *shaped itself* in such a way that no one would entrust [him] with the production of soda drinks or with organizing bee-hives" (Olesha 1977, 49; italics added). According to Sofia Chuikina and Sergei Kirilov, however, the "fate" of people like Kavalero did not "shape itself"; it was very definitely shaped by the discriminatory Soviet laws in relation to the former members of the noble class and the old-style intelligentsia that often came directly from it (*Normy i tsaennosti...* 2000, 151-92; Kirilov 1995, 134-59).

As explained by Chuikina, the unity of ethics and aesthetics in the makeup of the aristocratic personality, whose internal principles had to be matched by the elegance of their external expression, was among the major principles of the noble upbringing carried over by many children of the nobility into the new, post-October life. Their aristocratic behavior, along with their common refusal to lie about their background due to the highly esteemed principle of honor/integrity [*chest'*], made them vulnerable to the legal discrimination on all levels, including in education and on the job market (*Normy i tsennosti... 2000*, 151-92). By adjusting his daily habits to the environment and letting go of his aristocratic manners, Andrei Babichev seems to have learned the lesson Kavalero is refusing to learn.

To be sure, Kavalero is a drunkard and Andrei does calisthenics (something aristocrats would also do, only not in their guest's rooms while the guests are still sleeping). Impressed by Babichev as a "dandy [*schegol'*]" on the first day of their acquaintance, Kavalero soon discovers that he cannot rival his well-off "savior" in vulgarity. Babichev's transformation from a dandy into a brute happens in less than a couple of weeks (Olesha 1977, 17). It must be especially disheartening for Kavalero in light of the circumstances in which he had been rescued from the gutter in the first place: Kavalero was thrown out into the gutter by the drunken crowd whom, in defending his honor, he accused of vulgarity.

In the beer-parlor, a drunken Kavalero meets with a company of likewise drunken males surrounding an attractive young girl and heads toward their table to socialize. The girl jokes at his expense and he turns around mid-way [*vernulsia s poldorogi*]²⁶, followed by the

²⁶ See section 2.6 on how Kavalero's turning around mid-way places him next to Pushkin's Salieri.

gang's laughter; someone throws a pea at him [*kto-to shvyrnul goroshinu*], which makes Kavaleroḃ a "pea jester [*shut gorokhovi*]." Kavaleroḃ turns around again to face his offenders and showers them with marvelously crafted literary insults, reminiscent of Ian Komenskii's grotesque medieval imagery in *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (Olesha 1977, 17-8; Comenius 1998, 66-7; 72). Some of the imagery employed in Kavaleroḃ's accusatory speech, such as the horse-reins and the binoculars, reverberates in the seemingly neutral descriptions of Andrei Babichev at the airdrome and at the soccer match. Likewise, the unknown girl's laughter at Kavaleroḃ's expense in the beer-parlor is parallel to Valia's laughter, taken personally by Kavaleroḃ, at the soccer match, where, once again he is laughed at by the crowd (Olesha 1977, 39; 129).

Andrew Barrat suggests that Kavaleroḃ and Ivan are the de-crowned kings of Bakhtin's carnival, and their demise is well deserved (Barrat 1999, 47-60); but Kavaleroḃ and Ivan are already at a disadvantage with respect to the crowd. De-crowning them any further amounts to effacing them from the earth; it is the toilet singing, chewing and chomping, and sweating Andrei, who is the real carnival king, never de-crowned in the novel and crushing Kavaleroḃ, along with his "rustling bow," for confronting him.

Girard may criticize Don Quixote, but it is Don Quixote who bravely opposes the scapegoating crowd at any carnival. Like a true Don Quixote, Kavaleroḃ never offends the girl laughing at him in the beer-parlor. His thoughts are on rescuing her individuality: tearing her away from the crowd. He exclaims in his usual tone of bewilderment, "What happened to the world? He [the girl's ugly companion] fingers you and you are giggling? It feels good?" The last phrase quoted above is syntactically ambiguous and may be interpreted as the author's directly

addressing the reader above the head of the hero. The third-person masculine pronoun 'he' may be read in reference to the preceding masculine noun 'the world,' and the formal second-person singular 'you,' apparently addressed to the girl, works just as well as the second-person plural. "What happened to the world? It fingers you [you, the reader/readers] and you are giggling? It feels good?" The motif of unpleasant fingering, recurrent in the novel in connection with the violation of privacy (Olesha 1977, 7; 11; 24; 113), can be linked to the motif of Hamlet, who cannot be "played like a flute."²⁷

The sense of self-worth, aristocratic conduct, is important for Olesha not as some kind of class bigotry, but in the vein of humanism, search for the human in humans. No matter how drunken Kavalero is, he carries his beer-mug in front of him "like a lantern": an allusion to Diogenes, who used to carry around a lantern in the daylight, looking, as he said, for the human being [*chelovek*]. But the "human being" (Babichev), as has been said earlier, "is digging in his ear with a pencil."

"We are not a family; we are humanity," Andrei says, and he is almost ready to denounce Volodia if Volodia turns out not to be a New Man (Olesha 1977, 101). Instead of the

²⁷This motif is prominent in Olesha's later play, *The List of Blessings* (1931), in which Kavalero's ethical and aesthetic quest is repeated by a female heroine, Lyola Goncharova, an actress who plays Hamlet at home and on a tour abroad. In both worlds, the play is rejected: in the USSR due to its being of no interest to the workers, and in Paris, due to its being of no interest to the workers *and* the petit-bourgeois, unless Goncharova plays a flute with her rear end (Olesha 1983, 69-125).

individual [*chelovek*], Babichev extolls Volodia, a man without qualities [*chelovek bez svoistv*], a perfect specimen of a faceless, undifferentiated “humanity” [*chelovechestvo*].

The motif of the rustling bow in the novel is also important in connection with the slanted family tree motif. Kavalero’s family is eloquently missing from the novel (as opposed to Andrei’s, Ivan’s, Valia’s, and Volodia’s families, which are at least briefly mentioned)²⁸. Ivan is obsessed with a “tree of veins” on the back of his hands (Olesha 1977, 71); Andrei is said by Kavalero to be a “*lipa* [fake],” but the noun ‘*lipa*’ also means ‘linden tree.’ Andrei’s chest sports a scar looking like a cut off branch: it is, most likely, his brother Roman, executed before the Revolution. (But Roman’s first name is invocative of the Romanov dynasty; thus, Andrei is at once similar and dissimilar from Lenin, whose brother was executed by the czar.) Kavalero, expelled from Andrei’s house for libel, in the presence of Volodia and Valia, is compared to an “over-ripe fruit” falling off of a “beautiful tree”; “the lock snapped as a bow broke off,” and for the first and only time in the novel, Kavalero makes a “plopping [*smiakaiuschii*] sound” of a falling fruit: not quite “chomping,” but close (Olesha 1977, 63).

²⁸ Violetta Gudkova’s painstaking analysis of the evolution of Olesha’s official autobiography, gradually erasing his true past to fit into the new world’s ideological frames, contains an excerpt of Olesha’s free writing: “I was born in such and such year in.... I was born... I was not born anywhere. Not in a year. In a year not. Godunov [*Ne v godu. Godu v ne. Godunov*]” (Gudkova 2004). Olesha’s self-effacing pun is based on the final scene of enforced silence in response to tyranny in Pushkin’s drama “Boris Godunov.” Godunov is also the archetype of a “fraud” [*samozvanets*], the self-appointed tsar of Russia hiding his Polish descent, as well as Olesha’s own.

Answering Kavalеров's question, "Why did you pick me up and bring me here?"

Babichev provides compassion as the reason; but the genuine character of his compassion is undermined by his readiness to kick Kavalеров out of the apartment upon Volodia's return. The time of Volodia's return is unknown, so Kavalеров cannot plan ahead. He is bound to Babichev by his responsibilities as a secretary, but we never know how Kavalеров is paid (is it food, shelter, and pocket money?), and the end of his contract (if any) is also unknown. Kavalеров himself refers to his own position as a "free-loader [*prizhival'schik*]" (Olesha 1977, 48), as if forgetting that he is working for Babichev. Or does he *want* to forget?

2. 7. This Way is Your Way, This Way is My Way

Kavalеров's work is to proofread the brochure on a meatgrinder, which discusses in gruesome detail how "heads and legs of the lamb [*golovy i teliach'i nozhki*]" are transformed into "food products, bone marrow for technical needs [*tekhnicheskii kostianoi zhir*], purified hair, and bones for various artifacts²⁹" (Olesha 1977, 32). The episode with the gruesome brochure directly follows Kavalеров's encounter with Valia, during which he creates the metaphor of the rustling bow, and this juxtaposition represents the two ways for Kavalеров to realize his literary talent. Kavalеров is presented with a choice, symbolized, in addition to the bow, by the Y-shaped vein on Valia's chest, mentioned in the letter to Babichev (Olesha 1977, 51), and he nearly goes mad, because the right choice in his situation, according to his ethical

²⁹ Possibly buttons: one is shining prominently on Andrei Babichev's stomach in the beginning of the novel, and Kavalеров risks being re-melted into one, because, like Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt, he is trying to adjust his vision as required by those in power (Ibsen 1972).

and aesthetic principles addressed in section 1.5, borders on suicide for Kavalеров the man; the opposite choice marks the suicide of Kavalеров the artist.

The motifs of ethical and/or aesthetic choice and of the road as quest accompany Kavalеров throughout the novel, making him kin to his literary predecessors, such as Hamlet, Don Quixote, Salieri, Peer Gynt, and the Poor Knight from Pushkin's eponymous poem. Hamlet and Don Quixote have been briefly covered in section 1.5, and the Poor Knight is addressed in the upcoming section 1.7. Presently, I will discuss Kavalеров as a Salieri and a Peer Gynt, followed by the discussion of Kavalеров's, and Olesha's, literary choices made in the episodes with Volodia's letter and with the soccer match.

I will try to show that, despite the author's (Olesha's) and his semi-autobiographical hero's (Kavalеров's) alertness to the choice between the "your way" of the reigning ideology and the "my way" of their personal artistic intuition, they seem to convince themselves of the necessity to reject the "my way" in favor of the "your way." In my opinion, this proves detrimental to the quality of their respective writing, and the two moments of stylistic breakdown marking the limits of the author's competence in *Envy* are Volodia's letter and part of the episode with the soccer match.

2. 7. 1. Seeing in Reverse: Peer Gynt and the 'Artifacts' Made of Bones

The "artifacts" made of bones in Babichev's brochure are possibly buttons: one is shining prominently on Andrei Babichev's stomach in the beginning of the novel. The world in his button goes "round and round [*khodit krugom*]" (Olesha 1977, 8). Combined with the motif of a "madman who slit his own throat" and his "name, fluttering above" like Lilienthal's name in

the airdrome episode (Olesha 1977, 87), Babichev's button is symbolic of a button from Henrik Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt* (1867), well known to Olesha's contemporaries³⁰.

Peer Gynt, the Norwegian's version of the prodigal son, is running away from the law and finds safety in the woods with a King of Trolls, who offers him riches and prosperity on the condition that Peer Gynt accepts the rules of the troll kingdom. He must overcome his disgust and drink a potion made of excrement (the trolls' "honey") and learn to see white as black and black as white, and Peer Gynt obeys. Later in the play, he finds himself locked in a mental asylum, where one of the patients imagines that he is a pen in need of sharpening, upon which he promptly cuts off his own head with a blade. The mental patients tell Peer Gynt that "the Universal Mind has given up its ghost," and the criteria for intelligence and stupidity have been reversed.

Finally, upon returning home after a long journey, the old Peer Gynt is approached by a Button Master, who offers to "re-melt" him into a button. The Button Master's reasons are that Peer Gynt belongs neither to heaven nor to hell, is neither a great sinner nor a righteous man, and, in fact, has never been himself. Becoming a button is a perfect choice for him. Moreover, Peer Gynt had been a button all along: "You were sculpted in order to be sewn high up to the Universe's outfit," but turned out to be defective: a button that lost its "ear [ushko]," and for this reason Peer Gynt must be sent to the melting pot (Ibsen 1972).

Peer Gynt's predicament (except that he is saved from the Button Master by a girl who loves him) is similar to Kavalierov's. He is neither fish nor fowl; neither working class nor

³⁰ The premiere of Grig's opera "Peer Gynt," with Nikolai Roerich's decorations, took place in Moscow in 1912 (Roerich 1996).

peasant; nor is he the so-called servant of the people, i.e. the government, who acts on behalf of the people. Kavalero is “the intelligentsia layer in between [*intelligentskaia prosloika*]” who is to be re-melted into a New Man or be crushed by him.

Like Peer Gynt, Kavalero must drink the potion, the ideology of the masses, made of Andrei Babichev’s excrements, which figure prominently in the opening lines of the novel. He must learn to see kindness in cruelty; poetry in bigotry, and so on. He must accept Volodia as the Tom Virleerlee of his dreams.

2. 7. 2. Mozart and Salieri: Genius and Villainy Made Compatible

Volodia is said to be born out of the music of the tolling bells and to “enter into” Kavalero in the first part of the novel. Listening to the tolling bells, Kavalero distinguishes the sound of the big bell, “Tom-m-m,” and the sound of smaller bells, “Vir-leer-lee,” which combine, in his imagination, into a name of his ideal self, a talented and ambitious Western youth, Tom Virleerlee. “Some ‘Tom Vir-leer-lee’ was hovering up in the air [...]. Tom Virleerlee entered into me [*pronik v menia*] in one of the beautiful mornings encountered by me under this [Andrei’s] roof. The musical phrase turned into a linguistic one [*v slovesnuiu*]. I imagined this Tom very vividly/lifelike [*zhivo*]” (Olesha 1977, 54-55).

Kavalero, the intelligentsia layer in between the anvil and the hammer of the Revolution, appears to carry out Aleksandr Blok’s advice to listen to the music of the Revolution (Blok 1980, 280-90) in “The Intelligentsia and the Revolution” (1918). Furthermore, he undertakes to translate it into beautiful words: “The musical phrase became a linguistic one [*muzykal’naia fraza stala slovesnoi*].” Rather than live-entering Volodia, Kavalero lets Volodia live-enter him and, literally, possess him; the sexton, or the bell ringer, who “coins” the sounds

for Volodia's theme, is implied to be possessed by devils [*besilsia zvonar'*] and also to be in charge of plates and dishes (Olesha 1977, 54), like Andrei Babichev. The sound of the big bell, Tom, is associated with Andrei; the sound of smaller bells, Vir-leerl-lee, is associated with the countless Volodias, faceless, replaceable, lacking individuality, but so enviable in their freedom from conscience and from individual responsibility, blaming the cruelty of the Revolution on the historical clock face, and calling it generosity/kindness (Olesha 1977, 100).

Olesha finds a clever solution to the question asked in Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri*: "Genius and villainy are two things incompatible, are they not [*ne pravda li*]?" In order to make genius compatible with the cruelty of the Revolution, cruelty must be called kindness; villainy must not be recognized as villainy, but dissolved in the euphonic name: Tom Vir-leer-lee. The fluttering man, Lilienthal, got killed; and the bell tolls for him with the name of the New Man, Tom Virleerlee; Volodia.

Olesha is trying to convince the reader and himself that KavaleroV lost Valia to the New Man, Volodia, due to KavaleroV's being a defective button missing an ear, not listening to the music of the Revolution, as had been advised by Blok. Valia is associated with music in the novel: she is imagined by KavaleroV standing over the washing basin (instead of Andrei), "running her fingers through the clavichords of water [*perebiraia klaviaturu vody*]"; she also appears to KavaleroV as "carried on air by the sound" in the episode of his nightmare after the soccer match (Olesha 1977, 53; 137).

KavaleroV's unrequited love for Valia is like Salieri's unrequited love for music. Only the place of the Covering Cherub, Mozart, is now occupied by the round and rosy "cupid," the food ministry director, Andrei Babichev, who is heralding the coming of the New Age "on the

threshold of two epochs. He is putting up airs, he is already halfway there; *he is a genius, a cupid*, hovering over the gates of the new world with a scroll,” says Ivan about Andrei, advising Kavalero to assassinate Andrei (Olesha 1977, 98; italics added). The former kind of genius, the Mozart of the past, is turned into a Salieri: the “fluttering name” of a young man who cuts his own throat, like a madman in Peer Gynt, is also reminiscent of Salieri, who, according to the journalist gossip, has attempted suicide by slitting his throat with a blade.

“Genius and villainy are two things incompatible,” thus runs the leitmotif of Pushkin’s *Mozart and Salieri*. As noted by Irina Surat, it is not as much a statement as a question in Pushkin’s play (Surat 2007). “Genius and villainy are two things incompatible, are they not?” Mozart asks, and Salieri, after poisoning Mozart, reiterates this maxim, also in the form of a question, “What if he is right, and I am not a genius?” (Pushkin 1948, 132; 134). In *Envy*, Olesha entertains the possibility of the following peculiar answer to that: villainy is not villainy; or rather: cruelty is not cruelty in terms of “the entire clock face”, and not in terms of “the short distance from one mark on the clock face to another.” This is the philosophy upheld by Volodia, “the Edison of the new age,” who is fascinated with geometry, like Salieri with algebra (Olesha 1977, 101).

In sync with the Russian Modernist acceptance of Salieri as a new type of artist, “a solemn master of things,” as Mandel’stam calls him (Mandel’stam 1993, 231), or one of the “masters, and not long-haired preachers,” as said by Maiakovskii (Maiakovskii 1958), *Envy* approves of the hard working Salieri, who attains the genius of Mozart; in Bakhtin’s terms, “coincides with him, as it were”. But at the same time, the Mozart of the past, the Covering Cherub, is parodied and also discredited as Salieri the murderer. Moreover, features of both,

Mozart and Salieri, can be found in Kavalеров as well as in Andrei Babichev, leaving it unclear who is a Mozart and who is a Salieri; who is the envier and who is the envied in the new world.

The language of the novel is writhing, struggling with itself, in trying to accept Volodia's "wisdom" of the clock face. On the one hand, Volodia and Andrei (especially Andrei) are presented as being on the side of the music, and Mozart as the "God of music." On the other hand, their "mozartness" is undermined, either openly, through parody (as in Ivan's ironic description of Andrei as a "cupid") or discreetly, in the particular word choice within the semantic fields that surround the heroes. Ivan carries around the pillow held "by its ear," and the pillow looks like a pig; so does Andrei's head, which, when lit from the bottom, reminds Kavalеров of a clay piggy bank [*svin'ia-kopilka*]. Andrei, in turn, calls Ivan a pig/swine [*svin'ia*] (Olesha 1977, 23; 84).

In the beginning of the novel, Andrei is presented as Mozart and Kavalеров as Salieri. Reflecting the myth of Mozart as a spontaneous man-child, Andrei resembles a boy and has a spontaneous, yet physiologically predetermined, urge to sing. Andrei's "Mozartian" qualities are undermined and admired by Kavalеров, the narrator, at the same time: "Mornings, he sings on the toilet. [...] The urge to sing is a reflex in him" (Olesha 1977, 7). "He is washing up like a boy: trumpets [*dudit*], dances around [*pripliasyvaet*] [...] splashes water on the straw mat. The water scatters on the straw in full, pure droplets"; "He looks like a grown-up fat boy" (Olesha 1977, 8-9)³¹. The "full [*polnye*]" and "pure [*chistye*]" droplets of water are notes, because the

³¹ Andrei is also likened to a horse, and the straps of his binoculars look like horse reins [*vozzhi*] (Olesha 1977, 8-9; 39; 137); in other words, he is presented as hardworking, like Salieri, and far-seeing.

same terms are customarily applied in musical notation, referring to the length of the note and the quality of the musical intonation: “pure [*chistaia*]” as opposed to “dirty/false [*griaznaia/fal’shivaia*].” As has been mentioned earlier in this section, Valia is likewise washing up in the basin, “running her fingers through the clavichords of water.”

Yet, the “purity” of Andrei’s musical droplets is compromised through juxtaposition with the physically repulsive widow *Prokopovich*. Her last name is phonetically close to Andrei *Petrovich*’s patronymic; she is also washing up in the basin, and black strands of hair float in it, reminiscent of Volodia’s black hair (Olesha 1977, 20; 23; 55). Anichka is fat like Andrei Babichev; she chomps [*chavkaet*] and snores [*khrapit*], and reminds Kavaleroov of a volcano, just like Andrei (Olesha 1977, 9; 135). Babichev not only produces the sausage, but also looks like one, and so does Anichka, who also feeds cats [*koshki*] with guts [*kishki*] in her kitchen; Babichev’s sausage is referred to as a “piece of gut [*kishka*],” which comes out of some “mysterious incubators,” as if from Andrei’s own colon [*kishka*] in the opening lines of the novel (Olesha 1977, 7; 16; 27; 36).

Mozart in Pushkin’s play is likened to God by Salieri, “You are a God, Mozart, and you do not know it.” Curbing Salieri’s pathos, but accepting the praise, Mozart turns it into a friendly joke. “Really? Maybe so; but my divinity is starving [Pravo? Mozhet byt’, no bozhestvo moe progolodalos’].” This is followed by Salieri’s invitation to a dinner where Salieri secretly plans to poison Mozart. (Pushkin 1948, 127). In *Envy*, Mozart’s hunger is transformed into Andrei’s gluttony (Olesha 1977, 10)³², and Kavaleroov, after being thrown out of Andrei’s apartment,

³² See more on gluttony and power in LeBlanc 2001, 220-37.

threatens to murder him (Olesha 1977, 63) thus acting like a Salieri; but, unlike the Mozart of Pushkin's play, Andrei is a God of music with a fist, according to the post-Revolutionary philosophy that "kindness must have fists."

Andrei pounds his fist on the railing of the balcony or on the table (Olesha 1977, 10; 99), and "the God of music is pounding his fist" at the poorly playing musicians in the beer-parlor, as observed by Ivan (Olesha 1977, 94). The feud between the old and the new worlds is represented by Andrei and Ivan's both licking their fists, first Andrei, then Ivan, while eating: Andrei, after tasting a slice of his newly produced proletarian sausage, and Ivan when munching on his favorite lobsters (Olesha 1977, 80), a symbol of regression because lobsters walk backwards.

But Andrei's fist looms larger than Ivan's: it is mentioned more often, and it is more powerful. The pounding of Andrei's fist is implied in the sound of "bottoms being pounded out [*gde-to vybivaiut dnischa*]," uncanny, because at the same time Kavalero is walking, confused, in the dark and balancing on beams and other unstable surfaces of the (socialist) construction site, in his eccentric pursuit of Andrei to apologize for calling him a sausage-maker. In that scene, Kavalero is also walking in the dark labyrinth, "as if inside an ear": in Andrei's ear, one may assume; a large enough ear to hear and appreciate the music of the Revolution. It is probably the same ear, in which Andrei Babichev digs with his pencil in the self-abandon of his evening work for the welfare of the state (Olesha 1977, 14).

The pounding of the bottoms from under Kavalero's feet is uncanny for those who side with Kavalero in his defense of individuality; in the fragility of his "rustling bow." For those who side with the drum and the pounding fist of the collective, with the music of the

Revolution, masochistically welcomed by Blok, the scene is not uncanny: it must be funny and entertaining, because Kavalеров “deserves” to be scared, belittled, and wiped off; simply because, being from the old world, he does not belong in the new one, either physically or ideologically. For the same reason, Ivan should be shot, according to Andrei. To this, “the black-haired youth on the portrait [Volodia] is smiling; a whole cage of teeth he is showing off, like a Japanese” (Olesha 1977, 33).

It may be argued that Andrei’s words about shooting, the psychiatric ward for Ivan, and so on, are just words and that Andrei is kind at heart. After all, he speaks with compassion to his brother; he is tender, and intelligent, and capable of self-reflection. Yes, but most of the textual evidence supporting such claims is crammed into a few pages as if they were allocated specifically for proving Andrei’s goodness. He speaks kindly to Ivan a couple of times but his compassion is condescending. In his eyes, Ivan is a drunkard and a madman; mostly a madman.

Ivan is a madman in Andrei’s eyes for not wanting to join the Bolshevik cause, for clinging to poetry and imagination, and for wearing a different hat than Andrei. The latter wears a German Tirol hat; the former, a Chaplinesque bowler. “Why are you wearing a bowler,” asks Ivan, “Are you a junk-man [*star’evschik*] or an ambassador?” (Olesha 1977, 82). Ivan is both. As a junk-man [*star’evschik*], he represents the old [*staryi*] world, refusing to dispose of it; for him ‘old’ is not necessarily ‘junk.’ He is also an ambassador, a messenger of culture, just like Kavalеров with his “rustling bow,” but Andrei turns a deaf ear to both of them.

Yes, despite the pure and clear droplets of water scattered around Andrei by Kavalеров’s secretly infatuated vision, and despite the Mozart-like divinity and Salieri-like love of hard work, Andrei Babichev is also deaf. He may be deaf like Beethoven, the disciple of the historical Salieri

and Lenin's favorite composer. Only the image of a round and rosy cupid, liking sausages and licking his fist, does not quite compute with Beethoven, the herald of the Romanticism. Besides, Andrei's deafness is selective.

Andrei pays attention to speeches *not intended* for him, and so does Ivan who is 'looking for a hero' (Olesha 1977, 16; 89), like a professional writer or a secret spy³³. He also hears insults, while immediately turning blind to the one who insults him: in other words, his rage is blind (Olesha 1977, 40; 84). He may hear a call for help, although in the next moment he withdraws help and sympathy, "quite cynically," as Kavalero says (Olesha 1977, 22), and it is not a coincidence that Andrei's morning exercise is done on a straw mat [*tsynovka*], phonetically close to cynicism [*tsynizm*]. If the remark about cynicism issues from Kavalero's mouth and can be dismissed by the reader as envious, the textual support is Olesha's own, implicit, and deliberate: the two words, '*tsynizm*' and '*tsynovka*' have no other roots in Russian that would sound phonetically close, besides 'zinc [*tsynk*]' and its derivatives. In other words, every morning Andrei 1) sings on a toilet and 2) exercises in cynicism.

Kavalero and Ivan are also cynics, yet of a different kind. Kavalero carries a beer mug in front of him as if search of the human being, like the Greek cynic Diogenes (positively connoted and implicit cynicism); makes libelous remarks and vulgar assumptions about Andrei (negatively connoted and obvious cynicism); Ivan attests himself as "the king of vulgarians [*korol' poshliakov*]" (positively connoted in the Christian Orthodox paradigm: he is a Christ-figure and a God's fool); advises young couples not to marry and for everyone to break up with

³³ See chapter 3 on the image of the writer as a secret spy in Konstantin Vaginov's

interpretation of live-entering.

loved ones (negatively connoted, but positive as a satire on Andrei's declared disregard for family), wants to use Kavaleroov as an instrument of fratricide (negatively connoted and implicates Kavaleroov as a Smerdiakov from Dostoevskii's *Karamazov Brothers*), and so on.

By making it hard to tell which kind of cynicism, good or bad, is associated with each character, Olesha lumps the fighting camps together. Is Kavaleroov fighting "for tenderness, for pathos, for individuality," etc., or not? Is Andrei a cynic more like Diogenes or more like Smerdiakov? There is a big difference; and if the author of *Envy* cannot tell the difference (which seems to be the case), it is very hard to locate his "outside" point of view. If everyone in the novel considers himself and everyone around a cynic (save for the silent Valia), does it mean that, to recall Salieri, "there is no truth on earth/in the novel's world," nor there is any "truth on high," that is, outside the novel's world? If cynicism pervades the entire novel, there can be no envy, because envy presupposes the existence of an enviable value.

The value in question may be "the glory/fame [*chuzhaia slava*] of the other." Kavaleroov, thirsty for personal glory/fame, is portrayed negatively, as a Salieri who is out to murder the Mozart: "I will kill you, comrade Babichev" (Olesha 1977, 63). At the same time, Kavaleroov acts childishly, i.e., in the vein of Mozart, trying to get Andrei's approval, just like Salieri in Pushkin's play: "What do you say? Is it good? [*Chto zh? Khorosho?*]" (Pushkin 1948, 127). Kavaleroov is desperately trying to get Andrei to listen to him. He would like to have been born in Europe, where "people like the other person's glory/fame." "In our country, there is no way to achieve personal glory/fame. True, isn't it? [*Pravda ved'?*]." Pushkin's Mozart was asking a similar question in relation to villainy and genius, but differently phrased, "Genius and villainy are two things incompatible, is it not true?" (Pushkin 1948, 128). In reversing Mozart's "Is it not true?"

[*Ne pravda li?*]” and making it “True, isn’t it? [*Pravda ved’?*],” Kavaleroov reveals himself as a Salieri. But he also exposes the new world as envious, and himself as the victim of this envy, because this is precisely how envy manifests itself: in the dislike of the other’s getting famous/glorious.

Andrei writes, “To comrade Prokudin: Make candy wrappers (12 samples) according to the customer [*zakazchik*] (chocolate, filling), but in a new way.” “An artist brought an advertisement poster ([Andrei] did not like it: he said, the color must be toned-down blue [lit.: ‘deaf,’ *glukhoi sinii tsvet*], and not Romantic (i.e., not ‘*goluboi*,’ the sky-blue)” (Olesha 1977, 13). Russian has two words for ‘blue’: the “Romantic” color, which Andrei does not call by its proper name, is ‘*goluboi*,’ the sky-blue color; Andrei rejects it in favor of ‘*sinii*’: the “toned-down [literally: deaf]” chemical blue, suggestive of inorganic chemistry. The masculine nominative modifier ‘*glukhoi*’ [deaf] is the same as the feminine instrumental ‘*glukhoi*’ in *Mozart and Salieri*, when Salieri speaks about the necessity to poison Mozart: “I was called on to stop him; otherwise we all perish [...], not only I alone, with my toned-down/deaf glory/fame [*ne ia odin, s moei glukhoiu slavoï*]” (Pushkin 1948, 128).

The above passage makes it very clear that the director of the food ministry, the owner of the meat-grinder, gives orders, and the artist [*khudozhnik*], carries them out. This helps explain why, in section 1.5., Kavaleroov seems oblivious of the fact that he is *working* for Andrei Babichev. Unlike the pathetic Kavaleroov, the director of the food ministry, Andrei Babichev, does not care for personal glory. His glory is toned-down by the author, in comparison to what this hero is capable of. Just like Salieri thought it a good idea to pour poison into Mozart’s drink,

comrade Andrei Babichev thinks that inorganic chemistry goes well with food. I rest my case on comrade Ivan's pillow.

2. 7. 3. A Noble Savage with a Clock: Cruelty is Kindness

Нет, не луна, а светлый циферблат /Сияет мне,-- и чем
я виноват, /Что слабых звезд я осязаю млечность? /И
Батюшкова мне противна спесь: /Который час, его
спросили здесь, /А он ответил любопытным:
вечность! (Осип Мандельштам, 1912)³⁴

Olesha puts Mozart and Salieri on their heads and makes them go round, chemical blue and sausage pink, in Andrei Babichev's Buddhist navel of a button (Olesha 1977, 9): a perfect carnival technique, but who envies whom at this vanity fair? The old world and the new world aim at bursting each other's bubble of arrogance [*spes'*]: "We will burst the bubble of the new world's arrogance," Ivan promises Kavalierov; "We will burst the old world's bubble of arrogance," Volodia writes to Andrei (Olesha 1977, 59). The button is the "objective of the camera," but envy escapes this objective; the objective, located in the center of Andrei's stomach (Olesha 1977, 8) cannot tell envy from conscience; cruelty from kindness.

Genius and villainy (cruelty) in *Envy* go round like two hands of the dial clock and eventually merge: Volodia maintains that what seems like cruelty between two separate marks

³⁴ "No, not the moon, / but the well-lit clock face / shines for me, and how am I at fault / that I can sense the milkyness of the delicate stars? // And Batiushkov's arrogance [*spes'*] is repulsive to me: / he was asked, 'What time is it?' / He answered with a peculiar, 'Eternity.'//

on the dial, turns (literally: *turns*) out to be “generosity,” or “richness of the spirit/greatness of the soul³⁵” [*velikodushie*] (Olesha 1977, 101). Andrei is compared to a Buddha and an “idol” (Olesha 1977, 23; 82), Volodia smiles a “Japanese smile,” and the novel ends on Ivan’s “Hurrah!” to indifference [*ravnodushie*, ‘the evenness of the soul’] which is from the same root as generosity/richness of spirit [*velikodushie*, ‘greatness of the soul’] (Olesha 1977, 141).

The confusion between the soul [*dusha*] and spirit [*dukh*] based on their being from the same root in Russian, and the attempt to tell one from the other, become an object of political satire in Panteleimon Romanov’s story, or “study/musical piece [*etiud*]” titled, “The Russian Soul” (1916). Romanov’s story is about three brothers, one, Andrei, a progressive Westernizer, who does calisthenics and observes the clock, and the other two, Nikolai and Avenir, who live a lazy Russian life, bragging about having a soul but, in fact, degrading themselves in apathy and indifference. They are especially inimical to the West, hate its culture and think of it in terms of an infectious disease.

Besides the proximity of its author’s last name, Romanov, to the name of the executed third Babichev brother, Roman (and the name of the tsar’s dynasty, the Romanovs), and the coinciding names (brothers Andrei and Nikolai; cf.: Andrei Babichev and Nikolai Kavalero), there are several other motifs in “The Russian Soul” developed in *Envy*: Andrei’s calisthenics; the clock face [*tsiferblat*]; the Russian appeal to inspiration as an excuse not to work; the rivalry between Moscow and Germans; indifference and stupidity masked by Nikolai and Avenir’s conversations about the “Russian soul,” and their rejection of reason; and finally, the motif of cruelty. In the finale of Romanov’s “etiud,” Avenir asks Andrei, who is departing to

Moscow, to send Moscow his regards and assure “her” [Moscow] that “she” has firm support: the Russian youth, his two sons. At this point, Andrei’s nephew [*plemiannik*], Peter, a fat young man, turns his head around its axis and smiles in an uncanny way, making Andrei shudder: Andrei, in “The Russian Soul,” shudders and recalls that this is how his nephew smiled when he bragged about sending his dog, Belyi [White], after the neighbors’ dogs to kill them (Romanov 1990, 39-64).

In *Envy*, Nikolai Kavalero is compared to a stray dog, and Volodia, Andrei Babichev’s adopted son, who “looks a little bit like Valia,” Andrei’s niece [*plemiannitsa*], smiles; not an uncanny, but innocent (as it were) smile, following Andrei’s indirect call to fratricide (Ivan, the lazy and useless man, should be shot). Just like the uncanny ‘plemiannik’s’ head turns on its axis in Romanov’s “Russian Soul,” Andrei Babichev’s head turns on its axis to threaten Kavalero in *Envy* (Romanov 1990, 64; Olesha 1977, 39). On the textual level, Andrei’s wrath is justified as punishment for Kavalero’s antics, and the function of destruction is delegated to Ivan’s machine, Ophelia: the mad Ophelia, whose head also turns on its axis, pins the enemy of the state, Ivan, to the wall, and scares Nikolai to death (Olesha 1977, 138). On the inter-textual level, however, the reason for Kavalero’s fear is the cruelty of Andrei. The Russian Soul, mocked in Romanov as an excuse for laziness, lack of culture and discipline, xenophobia, indifference, is redeemed in *Envy*; but ever so subtly. The maker of the orders, the dictating proletariat with Andrei, the food minister, as their head, will never suspect a thing. The turning head and the uncanny smile of Romanov’s young lout [*nedorosl’*], dog-torturing Petr, are disassociated from one another and joined again, as Andrei the “big boy” and Volodia “the smiling youth,” the right hand of Andrei (Olesha 1977, 102); Andrei’s pounding fist.

The inner worlds of Volodia and Andrei are painted briefly in three strokes of Olesha's artistic brush; three attempts at "live-entering" (besides the artistically helpless attempt to portray Volodia's inner world from the outside by an anonymous, third person narrator discussed in section 2.6.4 below). These are: 1) Volodia's letter to Andrei; 2) Andrei's thoughts about the sleeping Volodia prior to Volodia's departure to Murom (and framed within it, Andrei's recollection of Volodia's words about cruelty being not cruelty but generosity when viewed on the scale of the clock face), and 3) a few instances of Andrei and Ivan's interaction in real time (which is not always clearly distinguished from Ivan's fantasy) complemented by Andrei's afterthoughts about their interaction.

Andrei's ambiguous feelings towards Ivan (he is angry at times, and at times shows compassion) ring true of brotherly love: Andrei says that Ivan deserves to be shot as a useless person, but he may as well just say it and love him all the same. It is Andrei's reasoning that strikes a false note; and it is this false reasoning, this fallacious dialectic, that is presented in the novel as the higher truth about Andrei; as the grounds on which the author of *Envy* attempts but fails to consummate his hero, Andrei, to the whole. The same falsity translates to Andrei's efforts to consummate Volodia to the whole, as the former is lovingly contemplating the latter who is sleeping at the desk, sitting opposite him. Since this is the only chance Andrei has to talk from the bottom of his heart, let us hear him out.

"At this point, Andrei Babichev's conversation with himself would begin. For a short time only, Andrei would take a break from work and, looking at the sleeping one, think,

What if Ivan is right? Maybe I am simply a layman, and family sentiments [semeinoe] are alive in me? Is he [Volodia] dear to me just because he lives with me from his early childhood; because I simply got attached to him, to love him as my son? For that reason alone? For no reason? And what if he were a numbskull [tupitsa]? That which I live for has concentrated in him. I've been lucky. The life of the new humanity is far away ahead. I believe in it. And I've been lucky. Here he is fallen asleep so close to me [blizko ot menia], my beautiful new world. The new world is living in my house. I adore him [ia dushi v nem ne chaiu]. A son? A supporter? Someone to close my eyes when I die? No, not true! This is not what I need! I do not want to die on a high bed, on pillows. I know: masses, and not a family, will receive my last breath. Nonsense! As we cherish the new world, that is how I cherish him. He is dear to me as my hope made flesh. I will drive him away if I am deceiving myself about him; he is not new, not completely different from me, because I am still stuck in the old up to my gut, and will never climb out. I do not need a son; I am not a father, and he is not a son, and we are not family. I am the one who believed in him; and he is the one who justified my belief.

We are not a family; we are humanity.

So, what does it mean? Does it mean that the human feeling of fatherly love must be eliminated? Then why does he love me; he, the new one? It means that there, in the new world, love between son and father will still bloom. Then I receive the right to celebrate [likovat']: then I have the right to love him as a son

and as a new man. Not all feelings will perish. Ivan, Ivan! Your rage is in vain/you are possessed by senseless rage [*zria ty besishsia*]. Something will remain.

(Olesha 1977, 100-1).

Taken out of context, Andrei's speech can be read as a deliriously splendid love confession: repetitive, self-contradictory, lofty; mad. The Russian expression 'la dushi v nem ne chiau' is hard to translate, first and foremost because we do not know *whose* soul [*dusha*] receives the action of the verb 'chaiat,' which can be approximately translated as 'sense, anticipate, and can't wait [*chaiat'/chuiat'*], all the at the same time.' The expression 'la dushi v nem ne chiau' conveys the idea of an absolute, unconditional, love, which treats the space of the other's soul as sacred grounds not to be trespassed; or as a vast universe expanding far beyond one's own soul. The soul of the loved one is bigger than the soul of the lover, and, at the same time, the lover's soul is embracing the soul of the loved one. Soul [*dusha*] means 'a breathing substance': the lover breathes in and out of the loved one, into and around the loved one, protecting and nurturing, warming and cooling, and ready to expand so as to create the illusions of one's own absence; and the loved one moves freely in the world of the lover and exits at will.

However, Andrei, in his unlimited love for Volodia the New Man, is peculiarly blind to the possibility that Volodia's father may also have feelings. The scene of the eight year old Volodia saving Andrei, the Commissar, from the Whites and running away from Murom for ten years, is rendered in a single paragraph, full of stars and other wonders, with little Volodia fusing with the giant hand of Babichev. Olesha talks about an eight-year old saving the Commissar; I call it the Commissar abducting the eight-year old and making him an orphan.

Andrei and Volodia are said to run from Murom to Moscow with “stars up to their knees” (Olesha 1977, 102), and Andrei is said to be stuck in the old world up to his gut (Olesha 1977, 99). Andrei and Volodia, who “chomp,” are equally stuck in the “masses,” which are likely to be the mesh of blood and guts, but are poeticized by the author of *Envy* as stars.

Interestingly, there is no substantial dialogue between Andrei and Volodia, although the two are facing each other in the manner of the Bakhtinian author and hero. Volodia and Andrei author one another, while being on two opposite sides of the border separating dream from reality; Volodia is asleep; Babichev is awake. Volodia is awake in Andrei Babichev’s imagination, as the latter is contemplating him, while also watching him sleep. Even in this recollection, with a disarmed, sleeping Volodia, Babichev does not dare to answer his beloved adopted son directly. He only giggles, and Volodia (or Babichev’s recollection of him) giggles shyly in response; too much nervous giggling goes on between the two comrades, the two Revolutionaries.

Andrei wants Volodia to be “completely different” from him, Andrei, and also not to be a numbskull; does it mean that Andrei thinks of himself as a numbskull? If not, *who* is thinking in this excerpt? Tearing himself from Volodia, Babichev “consummates him,” concludes that Volodia loves him, and presents this as an argument to the equally imaginary Ivan: “You are wrong, Ivan; not all feelings will die; something will survive” (Olesha 1977, 98-102).

Ivan asserts that Andrei’s love for Volodia, “an unremarkable young man,” is unconditional (Olesha 1977, 83). Andrei believes that love must be based on merit; more specifically, only the New Men deserve love. Volodia deserves love for being a New Man; Ivan does not deserve love for not being a New Man. Instead, Ivan deserves to be shot. When it

comes to Andrei's attention that Volodia, the New Man, loves him, Andrei, unconditionally, that brings relief: if the New Man loves Andrei unconditionally, then Andrei "has the right" to love him unconditionally too; *in addition* to loving him for being a New Man. Thus, *unconditional love is acceptable, on the condition that it receives sanction from the New Man*. People deserve love based on merit; but some people also *deserve* unconditional love, while others *deserve* to be shot. Andrei's reasoning follows the pigs' logic in Orwell's *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

2. 7. 4. The Magic Letter: Seeing Double

Kavalerov, who had imagined Tom Virleerlee and recognizes him in Volodia, places his hysterical farewell letter on Andrei's table, "next to the photograph of [Volodia] whom I imagined as my pal in misery," i.e. betrayed by Andrei, and turns to leave Babichev's apartment forever. At this moment, there is a knock on the door and Kavalerov's materialized dream, Tom Virleerlee who turns out to be Volodia, enters with his "Japanese" smile, shy and looking a little bit like Valia (Olesha 1977, 54-5). Kavalerov greets him with a rather informal "Hey there [Zdorovo]!" and the youth does not find it necessary to answer; he walks past Kavalerov, not saying a word. Then, as if by the wave of a magic wand, a hateful letter written to Andrei by Kavalerov turns, in Kavalerov's pocket, into Volodia's letter!

We never see Volodia leave a letter on the table; he even has an alibi: he walks into Andrei's bedroom, while Kavalerov picks up his own letter. And why would there be a letter, if Volodia has arrived? It is as if, by turning Kavalerov's letter into Volodia's, Olesha wants to show that Kavalerov should love Babichev instead of hating him; should envy the machines and try to emulate them, rather than clinging to the soul. Perhaps, Volodia is Kavalerov's author? But

Volodia is also jealous of Kavalero; and he lacks Kavalero's elegance of style: the letter speaks about various things beyond Kavalero's understanding (machinery, some business matters known only to Babichev and his adopted son), but keeps returning to Kavalero; round and round it goes, repeating Kavalero's name, revolving around it (Olesha 1977, 56-60).

It seems that the letter is meant to open Kavalero's eyes to Andrei, serve as a "consummating moment" to see Andrei objectively. Some facts of Andrei's and Volodia's lives are related only in the letter, once: Volodia's trauma at a soccer practice; Volodia's role in helping Andrei take Valia away from Ivan, other projects by Andrei, besides the Quarter: "Warmth and Power," "Kampfer [German for 'fighter']," and so on. But it is full of contradictions and omissions: we never know, neither from the novel, nor from Volodia's letter, any details about the intriguing story with Andrei's escape from the Whites, with the help of the eight-year old Volodia; nor do we learn anything about Volodia's father's reaction to it, except that he sends his regards to Andrei. Instead of telling us (or the supposedly blind Kavalero) more about Andrei, Volodia acts in the letter as his own author and hero: "I know that many people envy me, and I want to thank you, Andrei," but at the same time, "I am a new generation, you know" and "you [Andrei] are a softy [*sliuntiai*]" (Olesha 1977, 56-60).

Volodia's language in the novel is an unnatural mix of vernacular and lofty literary styles, clearly meant as a device, but very clumsily executed. On the one hand, Volodia spits out vulgarisms and vulgarities: 'Val'ka [pejorative-diminutive for Valia], ' *sliuntiai* [softy; literally, 'one who drools], ' *khitrovanets* [a smart-ass; about Ivan], ' *Vshei napustit* [he will infest the house; about Kavalero], and so on. On the other hand he displays a remarkable erudition and lyrical sensitivity: he mentions "the Egyptian darkness/multitude [*t'ma egipetskaia*]," recalls an

amusing scene of a lamb [*telenok*] chasing a city inspector [*nadziratel'*] smacking his lamb lips as if in an attempt to “chew” on the inspector’s portfolio [*portfel'*]; he speaks about the “remarkably proud, indifferent machinery [*zamechatel'no gordye, ravnodushnye mashiny*], the beasts [*zveri*],” but all of this is from Kavalеров’s arsenal, as Shklovskii was apt to notice. Kavalеров, and not Volodia (who falls asleep on his book) is erudite; Kavalеров, and not Volodia, takes pleasure in juxtaposing opposites: on the airdrome, Kavalеров is musing over birds, fish, flying machines crawling over the same grass that served as the battle field for medieval knights (Olesha 1977, 39); only Kavalеров could compare a machine to a beast, just as he compares Andrei’s groin to a male antelope’s, while also alluding to it as the groin of a producer [*pakh proizvoditelia*] (Olesha 1977, 7-9). By holding on to the letter [*pis'mo ostalos' pri mne*], Kavalеров acts like Ivan who withholds his wonderful machine, Ophelia, from the new world. And just as in Ivan’s case, when Ophelia turns on Ivan, Kavalеров’s letter against Andrei, while being in his own pocket, magically turns on its own author: thanking Andrei and badmouthing Kavalеров, its creator.

More eloquently than any sophisticated words inserted by the author into Volodia’s mouth, or lofty ideas inserted into Volodia’s head, speaks the image of Volodia’s “plebeian” smile on a photograph, in a parenthetical passage directly following Andrei’s casual remark that Ivan, as a useless man, ought to be shot (Olesha 1977, 23). This approving smile of the New Man, “the Edison of our age,” is a rather obvious hint at Volodia’s inner crudeness and cruelty.

2. 7. 5. Slander as Technique

Volodia, the Soviet Tom Virleerlee, is Kavalеров’s ideal self; or so Kavalеров thinks (or wants to think). Andrei picks up Kavalеров on the third day of Volodia’s absence, and Kavalеров

calls Andrei a “savior.” Brought to Andrei’s apartment and put on Volodia’s divan, his first thought is that his legs were cut off (Olesha 1977, 19). Volodia recalls how he was injured in a soccer game, brought to Andrei’s apartment, put on the couch (the very same one) and once settled there, felt that his leg was “heavy like a rail [*tiazhelaia, kak rel’sa*]” (Olesha 1977, 60). Volodia appears at the door as Kavalerov is about to leave. Arriving at the same time as his own letter, it is carried away in Kavalerov’s pocket, which, in turn, finds its way into Volodia’s (Olesha 1977, 56-7).

Volodia can write like a Volodia (in a crude, pseudo-proletarian, pseudo-vernacular) and like Kavalerov, that is, poetically. And this is precisely what Kavalerov brags about in his letter to Andrei in Valia’s description of “your way,” and “my way.” Volodia asks Andrei, lovingly, “Why are you laughing? You think I am asleep?” (Olesha 1977, 98). Kavalerov pretends to be asleep (Olesha 1977, 7) and lashes out at Andrei at [in] the letter: “You, the numbskull who laughed at the rustling bow full of flowers and leaves! [...] What kind of words are *you* preparing for her [Valia]?” (Olesha 1977, 50). Just like Volodia, Kavalerov is asleep while Babichev is awake, and just like Kavalerov, Volodia speaks to Babuichev only in his sleep/letter/fantasy. But in whose sleep?

The Universal Mind [*Razum*] is asleep and breeds monsters, like in Goya’s etching. Andrei’s face, the face of the “clay idol” is about to burst and “spill over, like from a clay bucket [*kak iz burdiuka*].” It is distorted and changes in the same way the evil sorcerer, the father of the innocent female protagonist, morphs at the wedding in Nikolai Gogol’s “The Terrible Vengeance” (1832). In Ivan’s parable, “The Two Brothers” (Gogol, 1976; Olesha 1977, 38; 115), we read the following: “All of a sudden, his face morphed: the nose grew longer and turned to

one side; his brown eyes turned green. They flashed and quivered; the lips took on a blue tint; the chin trembled and became pointed like a spike; a saber tooth projected from his mouth; he grew a hump [cf.: Babichev's stomach], and the Cossack became an old man" (Gogol 1976).

Face [*litso*], countenance [*lik*], and personality/individuality [*lichnost'*] are the most dearly held treasures of the author of *Envy*. The motif of having only half of one's face pervades the entire novel. Andrei has only one face which occupies the lower half since his forehead is missing, which is opposed to Ivan's prominent forehead. Kavaleroov has "half of [his] face anesthetized" by Andrei's slap; Kavaleroov says that in the mirror, when the entire world is distorted and old rules do not any longer apply, is only when one's own face that can be trusted (Olesha 1977, 23-4; 63; 65; 86).

Preserving the face is a matter of honor, even if the rules are changed. The rules are changed so drastically, that Kavaleroov "cannot even distinguish the basics, from which to start comparing." Andrei's laughter at some distortion of these new rules sounds to Kavaleroov "like an explosion of a firework to a blind man." But Kavaleroov is willing to learn the new rules: "I am starting to get used to this Truth [*istina*], against which there is much to say [*s kotoroi mozhno sporit'*]" (Olesha 1977, 25). He even knows how: first, he will write "your way" and "my way," as in the description of Valia. Then he will write simply "this way" and "that way," as in the description of the "famous bell ringer [*zvonar'*]," who "had put many of [Kavaleroov's] mornings to music" and whose "musical phrase became a linguistic one" (Olesha 1977, 54). From this new phrase, Tom Virleerlee emerges and enters into Kavaleroov only to transform, within him, into a proletarian youth, the uncannily smiling, innocent, conscience-free Volodia, for whom "cruelty" and "generosity of spirit"/"kindness" are one and the same thing.

Kavalerov wants to shine, and so does Volodia; he is the goalkeeper for the Moscow soccer team. But instead of Volodia, the German player, “a virtuoso,” Getske shines before our very eyes. The anonymous third person narrator of the second part of the novel openly admires Getske’s game, watching it through Kavalerov’s eyes from the bleachers [*na tribunakh*; literally, ‘on the orator’s podium’]. Just like Kavalerov is at the same time an ordinary spectator on a bench and an implied orator on the podium, Volodia is simultaneously “a team player,” “a complete opposite” of the “dangerous” individualist Getske, and a goal-keeper; he is singled out. Volodia is caring, Getske is cunning; Volodia is a collectivist, Getske is an egoist/individualist. Like Andrei, who “wants to fry all omelets by himself,” Getske always wants to score all the goals by himself: “his presence on the team made the team dangerous,” and Valia is finally impressed when she is watching – not Volodia – Getske! (Olesha 1977, 123-8; 131).

Getske, like Ivan’s Ophelia, “can do everything,” and he is the realization of Ivan’s never realized dream “to sparkle in a feminine way [*blestnut’ etim zhenskimi*].” Each time Getske scores, he runs past the spectators “coquettishly [*koketlivo*].” Getske is a “virtuoso,” like Mozart and Salieri all bound up as one; he does not care about other players, because he knows that he can “score in any team’s gate [*zab’et miahci liuboi komande*].” Getske’s shine becomes unbearable, and with along description of Getske as a star, the anonymous narrator declares him “a slacker.”

Then, a pointless and unfair word game begins: Volodia and Getske are contrasted to one another, and Volodia is said to be “a professional soccer-player [*futbolist*],” while Getske is described as “a professional player/gambler [*igrok*].” Getske is good at soccer and also lucky in

life. So much worse for him. The anonymous narrator wants to see Getske's downfall, but it is easier said than done. Getske is unstoppable. In order to bring Getske down, the anonymous narrator must stop his masterful, dynamic narration of a soccer game, in which Getske is a star, and pull up a record on him. Aha! Getske's background is far from perfect.

The reader learns that Getske, despite being an old and experienced soccer player, "was not a permanent member on any sports organization because he compromised himself by switching clubs in pursuit of greater profit. As punishment, he was barred from participating in play offs. He would be only invited to friendly matches, exhibition matches [*pokazatel'nye igry*], and abroad." Because "he cared little for the team's honor," and "valued only his own success," he was allowed to put himself on display for mere amusement.

Getske's individualism and lack of thought about the team is contrasted, didactically, with Volodia's genuine, envy-free interest in his Moscow team. He also shows an interest in the German's team, asking them (during the game!), "So, what do you think? How are we playing?" Maybe this is why the Moscow team cannot score. The anonymous narrator, not seeing the Moscow team score any time soon, fast forwards the events, and skips to the moment after the game, when the teammates toss Volodia in the air, celebrating. The score remains unknown (Olesha 1977, 127).

The fluttering men get killed. If you want to go up, let your teammates toss you there. Good players are slackers. This is the message communicated to us, from the bleachers/orator's podium by the anonymous narrator, who has learned his lesson. He learned to write "your way," in a dry, didactic, non-empathic manner, and incorporating elements of libel [*donos*] into his writing. Should we call this anonymous narrator Olesha?

2. 8. A Poor Knight Who Lost His Fight against the Sausage King

The Russian Acmeists and Avant-gardists, in their polemics with the Symbolists as founding fathers, embrace Salieri as their Cherub, and emphasize the importance of the technical skill [*remeslo, masterstvo*] which is manifest in a Salieri, over the elusive notion of genius, animating an artistic rarity like Mozart. In “The Morning of Acmeism” (1912-14), Osip Mandel’stam, with Salieri in mind, wrote, “We climb only those towers which we ourselves can build” and spoke highly of him in “On the Nature of the Word” (1920-22) (Mandelstam 1993, 180; 231). Maiakovskii, as a Futurist, challenged all other movements in “The Order to the Army of Arts No 2” (1921), and counted on Masters [*mastera*] to fashion new forms in art as opposed to the “rhymes, arias, and the rosy bush” (Maiakovskii 1958).

Consequently, Salieri is redeemed and briefly reincarnated as a new Mozart (in Mandel’stam’s “Bach”), but after the October Revolution of 1917, still another modification takes place: the individual (authorial) desire, wingless or not, is dismissed in favor of the practical needs of the people. Maiakovskii calls on fellow artists to leave behind “the rose bush” of elite art “before you are chased away with the gun-stocks [*poka vas prikladami ne pognali*]” (Maiakovskii 1958), exhibiting a perfect Stockholm syndrome in siding with the brute force of the gun-stock and with the “masses,” on whose behalf the Bolsheviks shoot those very guns.

One of the gun’s potential targets is the semi-autobiographical protagonist of *Envy*, the “rosy bush” kind of a poet, Nikolai Kavalеров. In Olesha’s novel, he is split violently into three parts. His spirit “flies” momentarily above the dirty sty of a communal apartment complex. His soul is entrapped in the claustrophobic limbo in one of them (Olesha 1977, 139-41), and his dead body passes unseen under the very nose of the reader by means of the government-

owned car of his ideological adversary, the Soviet food minister and sausage-maker, Andrei Babichev, who is supposedly “saving” him (Olesha 1977, 19). But the same Andrei produces the “fat colon [*tolstaia kishka*]” out of the “mysterious incubators” of his governmental machine: the meat-grinder that transforms people into the chomping “masses,” devours the nineteenth century, and “disposes of” feelings, along with their carriers, through his healthy, well working colon of the “exemplary male species,” the colon of the “producer.”

The negatively connoted “pulpieness” of Anichka is of the same semantic rawness as the positively colored “masses” (the people) and the verb “chavkat’ [chomp],” which means “to chomp” while eating or “smacking one’s lips” while sleeping; it also refers to the noise produced by some kind of soggy and mushy substance [*massa*], e.g. dirt or swamp, when someone is walking or drowning in it. Chomping is Andrei’s distinctive habit, and Volodia and Anichka “chomp” as well. Neither Ivan, nor Kavaleroov or Valia “chomp.”

Kavaleroov is repulsed by this “new sort of sausage” and refuses to eat it. He refuses to contribute to the soccer match, to throw the ball back onto the field, on which the “virtuoso,” Getske, must be slandered in order to lose his shine. He is too good; Valia is fascinated by him. She is not, however, enchanted with Volodia. The author decides to help him out.

“The Germans, bile in a non-Russian way [*ne po-russki krasnye*; literally, ‘red’] were leaving the field” (Olesha 1977, 131). The score is 1:0. The last time we checked, the Germans were winning, thanks to Getske, but were not appreciative of him. Getske plays for himself, not an ideal soccer player, but the only way to play for a “virtuoso,” an artist. But if Getske is “scary” and “dangerous,” the artist is humiliated and rushes to take his place in the bleachers [na

tribunakh]. He is afraid to stay alone on the field, because, according to the folk wisdom, “one is not a warrior in the field [*odin v pole ne voin*].”

Everyone is everyone’s double in *Envy*. Andrei the sausage maker is also close to the Germans: he wears a “Tirol hat” and speaks German perfectly, and his communal kitchen is built by a German engineer (Olesha 1977, 11). Ivan Babichev, Andrei’s opponent, emphasizes, in the form of a couplet, that he, Ivan, “is not a German charlatan, / and not a deceiver of the people; / he is only a modest Soviet trickster, / a modern-day wizard // [*ved’ ia ne sharlatan nemetskii, / I ne obmanschik ia liudei; /ia skromyi fokusnik sovetskii, / ia sovermennyi charodei//*]” (Olesha 1977, 98). In the finale, Kavalerov picks up his red suspenders [*krasnye podtiazhki*], mirroring Andrei’s blue ones in the beginning. This red article of clothing is reminiscent of the demonic “red sweatet/robe [*krasnaia svitka*]’ in Nikolai Gogol’s *Dikan’ka’s Nights* (1832). In combination with Andrei’s morphing face and also Andrei’s status as a “scary guest,” Kavalerov is also associated with Andrei’s cause (Gogol’ 1976; Olesha 1977, 115; 119; 139-40). Andrei appears in the beginning of chapter V laughing, after Ivan’s words are quoted at the end of chapter IV (Olesha 1977, 98); is he Ivan’s author? Is he the Devil, testing Kavalerov, in order to turn him into Volodia and return the lost soul/button to the button master, Andrei Babichev?

The blue and rosy pink world of the room goes round in his button; the Whites and the Reds of the Civil War are fused in the perfect harmony of the rosy pink. But the “blood vessels” show through the pink of Babichev’s “delicate china vase,” which looks like a flamingo. Valia is also the vase, but a smaller one. Her tear is rolling down her curvy cheekbone, like down the side of a vase [*vazochka*]. Valia wears “something pink/rosy [*v chem-to rozovom*],” and she

herself is the music in Kavalеров's dream, hovering above the orchestra of musicians, supervised by Andrei Babichev. Valia, who is spoken of almost like one speaks of a meal, is also a sausage: "They will bring her now"; "Have they brought her yet?" It is Babichev who utters the former sentence about Valia, while his later remark concerns the actual sausage. Valia is like a sausage, and the widow Prokopovich is like a sausage, and the widow Prokopovich, in Kavalеров's imagination, says to him, "Come on! [*Valiaite!*]," phonetically close to Valia, Kavalеров's rejecting sweetheart (Olesha 1977, 27-8; 30-1; 137).

The novel betrays a certain kinship to Arkadii Averchenko's bitter satirical piece, "The Twelve Knives [driven] into the Revolution's back" (1921). Olesha's communist, Andrei, has an anti-communist brother, Ivan, who keeps nagging him and addressing him as "brother," in the manner of Averchenko's first person narrator writing imaginary letters to Lenin, mockingly addressing him as "brother" (Averchenko 2009; Olesha 85). Averchenko likens the post-October Soviet Regime to a double robbery, when "the savior" who delivered you from the robbers, "climbs up your back and sits on you, oppressing you with his weight" (Averchenko 2009). The same image of an oppressor sitting atop his back is prominent in the hateful letter Kavalеров writes to Andrei, saying, "You oppressed me; you sat on top of me" (Olesha 1977, 47).

In *Envy*, Olesha brings a "terrible vengeance" (reminiscent of Gogol's) on the rosy bush of poetry, and the rosy dress of the Revolution that betrayed him, and on the rosy-pink sausage that has replaced the Revolution. In conversation with Kavalеров, Ivan relates an episode of graphic violence: when he was thirteen, he battered a girl of twelve who shone brighter than him at a matinee. She was popular, she did whatever she wanted, "the queen of the party," dressed in rosy pink, all frilly and charming. The age of the girl, twelve, corresponds to the

“twelve samples/models” in Andrei’s note to comrade Prokudin, with the advice “not to call this chocolate ‘Rosa Luxemburg’ but come up with something “scientific and poetic” (not romantic).

The rosy pink dress is the same dress worn by the Cinderella-like protagonist of Olesha’s earlier work, a Revolutionary fairy tale for children, “The Three Fat Men,” written in 1924, three years before *Envy*, but published only afterwards. The three fat men in the fairy tale were the capitalists, the gluttons, who ruled the country ruthlessly, oppressed the people, and held hostage “a heir [naslednik],” named Tutti, whom they separated from his twin sister, Suok, and hired a kind and noble, but not too brave Dr. Gaspar to make a doll modeled on Suok, an automaton, like Hoffman’s Olympia in “The Sandman” (1817). Tutti does not notice the replacement. The revolutionary citizens, led by the rifle-maker Prosperro and inspired by the gymnast Tibul, who walks the rope like a Nizschean superhuman, rise against the oppressors; the real, live Suok, Tibul’s disciple and circus actress, in on their side. She finds her brother, the Three Fat Men are overthrown, and Suok, dressed in rosy pink, is hovering above the crowd, passed from hands to hand, like a torch, by the victorious insurgents (Olesha 1965, 123-240).

In *Envy*, there are no insurgents, only the defeated rebels, Ivan and Kavalero. Ivan wants to carry Valia above him, like a torch, but he cannot because in his youth, he battered someone very similar to Valia in appearance, a beautiful girl dressed in rosy pink. Now he wants Kavalero to “slam the door,” “go out with a bang,” and “leave a scar on history’s ugly face/mug” (Olesha 1977, 94). Like Andrei who wears the button, Ivan collects the souls of the past century; he is “looking for a hero” and finds none in socialist Russia (Olesha 1977, 87).

Andrei (diminutive: Andriusha), the big trumpeting boy, is clean from the start: pure and full droplets of water (is it really water?) roll of his floor mat [*tsynovka*], just like Kavalero's caustic and just remarks roll off Andrei's cynical consciousness.

Countless anonymous boys, other hypostases of Andrei, follow Kavalero and Ivan around, appearing from behind the fences and bushes, whistling (Olesha 1977, 103; 108-9), chasing away everything that is of no use to them: "Ophelia," "the rustling bow full of flowers and leaves," "the brain that lies inside Ivan's cranium," under the "clear forehead of a tired human being"; tired of fighting the idiocy of the crowd, tired of having to watch his back, tired of apologizing for his "unclear, imaginative language" to the GPU officer, asking him politely "Is [my language/my thinking] too hard for you?" (Olesha 1977, 87).

The motifs of chivalry, the rose, and the grid in *Envy* are reminiscent of Aleksandr Pushkin's poem, "The Poor Knight" (1829). Pushkin's Poor Knight is courting the Mother of God "improperly," refusing to look at other women and never raising "the grid [*reshetka*]" of the visor from his face; he greets his Beloved in Latin, "*Lumen coelum, sancta Rosa!*" (Pushkin 1959, 248-9). The Biblical motif of roses and lilies, useless but beautiful, is juxtaposed in the novel with the motif of bare necessity. The flowers are made to "envy" the aroma of soup. The Soviet airplane that came to replace the fluttering loner, Lilienthal of Olesha's imagination, morphs "into a gun lock; into a penknife [*perochinnyi nosh*]; into a trampled lilac blossom." Kavalero's face, his most treasured possession, is marked by an imprint of the grid: a grid of the manhole on which he is lying, face down, after being thrown out by the angry crowd; a grid of a "wafer [*vafel'noe*] towel" pressed against his cheek in Andrei's as well as in Anichka's house; and he is

nearly killed by a giant “iron waffle/grid” on which Andrei swings over him, in flight, during the chase on the construction site.

Sitting in front of the chomping Commissar, who stole a Murom worker’s boy and taught him to chomp and crunch numbers not living any extra: “not an extra number!” (Olesha 1977, 59), Kavaleroov shields himself emotionally, his attention sliding over the little letters that “lead a class struggle with the huge letters of the street posters”; a pince-nez that “rides over the nose as a bicycle,” the bicycle of Ivan Babichev’s childhood dream; a blade of a knife, from which salt slides without leaving a trace . It is he, the Russian writer, the salt of the Russian earth, who is sliding off, without leaving a trace, from Babichev’s knife: “the blade glistens as if it were never touched” (Olesha 1977, 10).

Another quiet moment in the novel is when Kavaleroov walks along the alley, on both sides of which sit “beautiful mothers,” nurturing their infants; a nanny is holding an infant “dressed like the Pope of Rome.” “Lonely and persecuted,” “with longing [*s toskoi*],” Kavaleroov “drank this whiteness, which name was milk, motherhood, marriage, pride, and purity” (Olesha 1977, 73). This episode is one of the very few, in which Olesha’s hero speaks not a hysterical language of laceration, but a kind and softened variety, laced with the humor of a Renaissance man. He looks at a little girl wearing a red kerchief, who is standing in a puddle, with a sunflower seed shell on her lip. Under his gaze, the girl realizes that she is standing in a puddle. “Her own clumsiness she ascribed to me and turned away in spite” (Olesha 1977, 74).

For a brief moment, Kavaleroov’s intonation is loving and forgiving. For once, he sees the Revolution not as a fat and terrifying sausage-man sitting on top of him, but as a little and not very well brought up girl, angry in her clumsiness. He sees that he, Kavaleroov, is neither a jester,

nor an envier, but an innocent victim of her spite; and he is older and wiser than her. But almost immediately, the author makes Kavaleroov utter a profanity: "To all of the women in the world, I addressed my words ['bitches']" (Olesha 1977, 65).

Kavaleroov makes "all of the women in the world" responsible for the crimes perpetrated by the "big boy" Andriusha [Andrei]. The grotesque element present throughout the novel is distinctly Gogol's, beginning with Andrei's courting the sausage in the manner Akakii Akakievich is courting the overcoat in Gogol's "Overcoat" (1842) (Gogol' 1959, 143). Andrei's defecation in the opening lines of the novel resonate with the corporeal pun dormant in Akaki's name: *kaka* [poopoo]. Drinking two glasses of milk each day and making a point to exercise in Kavaleroov's plain view after singing on the toilet, Andrei rubs his health into Kavaleroov's face. Andrei's face is a "rose cheeky pot/chamber pot [*rumianyi gorshok*]" and he is very healthy, or as the Russian idiom goes, 'blood with milk [*krov' s molokom*]'.

The "blue/pink" dichotomy in the novel is a shift, a way to deal with the underlying nightmare of the Civil War between the Reds and the Whites. Andrei, the embodiment of the "unclean force," is washed clean of the red, but red occasionally shows through his rosy pink innocence such as the vase at his balcony door, the "red" Germans, whose language he speaks so well and whose national hat he wears, not to mention the sausage-making business. Andrei's other hypostasy is the chomping Anichka, who is "tearing through the guts like an enchanted Princess, with a knife" and replaces "the English pin" on Kavaleroov's red suspenders with a "leathery loop [*petlia*]," suggestive of suicide or gallows.

Andrei is referred to as "the scary guest," "the idol," his face is a "piggy bank" and a "clay pot" (Olesha 1977, 24; 34). This clay pot face is prone to morphing, leaking bodily fluids

“as if from a bucket [*kak iz burdiuka*]”; much like the horrible face of Gogol’s male witch [*koldun*] in “The Terrible Vengeance.” Just like Andrei, Gogol’s witch is hard to catch [*neulovim*] and can be present in many places at once, while Andrei’s evasiveness is connected in the novel with the art of a magician [*fakir*] (Gogol’ 1976; Olesha 1977, 12; 44-5; 119). Just like Gogol’s *koldun*, who steals his daughter and makes her a companion in his evil deeds (Gogol 1976), Andrei also steals Valia and makes her his companion; she appears from his bedroom in the morning, like the soul of Gogol’s Katerina, who returns in the morning from the wizard’s cave, after having set him free (Gogol’ 1976). When Kavalerov is chasing Andrei to apologize, it is said that he is “carried fast forward by an unclean force [*menia ponesla nelegkaia*]” (Olesha 1977, 43), and the church bell tower is occupied by a renowned sexton (cf.: “the remarkable statesman, Andrei Babichev”), in charge of plates and dishes (Olesha 1977, 54).

In sharp contrast to the fierce battle of all the ring and ding on the battle of reason and feelings, the novel’s finale is just as slow and quiet as the knife-watching scene and the alley scene with the beautiful mothers. The Poor Knight cannot fight the mighty wizard, but his redemption is close, and the wind is “rustling in the foliage (as if someone were leafing through the book)” (Olesha 1977, 139).

Leaving Anichka’s apartment after battering her, and having discovered Anichka’s loop, Kavalerov has a moment of epiphany. He is not in love with Anichka, but he is guilty for being ruthless with her. He fails to recognize the Princess in her, enchanted and entrapped in Babichev’s long and loopy “guts.” He did not court her properly but “just took her.” Without saying a word he beats her, just like the previous husband, showing that he is not better than any other “masters” of Anichka, the much-suffering Russian Madonna; and just like the Mother

of God in Pushkin, Anichka takes pity on Kavalero and lets him into her profane, pitiful, communal apartment “Paradise,” along with the cynical and self-denouncing Ivan (Olesha 1977, 133-6). In Kavalero’s imagination, Anichka and Valia fuse into one, into a “mass”/“mesh” as Anichka uses the phonemes of Valia’s name to make her dirty in advance: “Go ahead! [*Valiaite!*]” (Olesha 1977, 28).

Valia is the music, and Andrei is the God of music; sausage is carried, and Valia is carried; Valia faces a danger of being turned into an “incubator,” and the sausage appears “from the incubator,” just like Anichka; Andrei is shining, and the sun is shining, and the sausage “smells like a rose” and “does not rot in one day” (Olesha 1977, 36-7; 83).

Kavalero takes off and throws on the ground the red suspenders, fixed for him by Anichka, “the symbol of his male degradation” and the signal to the hero’s dormant consciousness that Andrei, the unclean force, is somewhere around the corner. Kavalero contemplates suicide, looking at the dirty sty from the top staircase step. This happens to be the last flight of his artistic imagination.

The wind is rustling through the foliage, “as if someone were leafing through a book.” “Two heartbeats” separate Kavalero from freedom, and “life, ugly, repulsive, not his own; alien, forced upon him life, will be left behind” (Olesha 1977, 141). Kavalero’s hands are spread wide and up, like the hands of the crucified Christ or rejoicing Zarathustra; or are they the hands on the dial of Volodia’s historical clock? “He understood the degree of his downfall: [...] he: lazy, unclean, and lusty; all understood Kavalero flying over the sty. He returned; picked up the [red] suspenders” and went back to Anichka’s room.

The setting is claustrophobic and the outcome of the hero's struggle is null. Having begun with the hero's vehement protest against the banality of the Soviet lifestyle, the novel seems to end with its abject acceptance, and a toast to indifference as "the best of all conditions of the human mind" is pronounced, complete with the Soviet equivalent of 'Amen,' "Hurray! [*Ura!*]" (Olesha 2004, 139-152).

2. 8. 1. A Purgatory for the Hero

In "The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity," Bakhtin introduces three kinds of authorship: the religious, biographical, and aesthetic. The religious plane is represented by God as the supreme Author of the universe. The biographical author is the ethical being who is trying to transform the raw experience of life into a work of art and, in the process, becomes involved in the "life-and-death struggle for outsidedness" against the hero (autobiographical or otherwise). This author is forever faced with various ethical dilemmas, forever imperfect and open from within. The aesthetic author emerges when the battle for outsidedness is temporarily won and "consummates" the novel and the hero to the whole. This author is not a living being, but rather a point of view, "the carrier of the intensively-active unity of a completed whole: the whole of the hero and the whole of the work of art [*proizvedeniia*], transgredient to each separate aspect of it" (Bakhtin 2003, 72-95).

To adapt Bakhtin's discourse of the human being as a body, soul, and spirit, in which the soul and the body constitute the whole, while the spirit, surprisingly, "decomposes [*razlagaet*]" the soul (Bakhtin 2003, 175-200), the finale of *Envy* may be viewed as the celebration of the spirit over the body and soul. The hero's body is possibly destroyed in a suicidal act, the soul trapped in the purgatory of reason, and the spirit quietly departing from the book, leaving

unresolved the ultimately cerebral conflict between the two kinds of art, “pure” and “politically engaged,” as equally ungodly.

Kavalerov was “literate” and wanted glory “in this world,” the world of Babichevs, Volodias and Valias. But everything is corrupted in the world of *Envy*. Everyone is equal to everyone, meshed together with everyone else in a rosy pink, beautiful sausage, which one can enjoy in the mental state of a Peer Gynt: the state of blissful denial and gleeful indifference. Similar to the linguistic challenge of Olesha’s Lilienthal, perishing, now in the passive and now in the active voice, for his love of flying and poor engineering skills, Olesha’s novel presents a hermeneutic challenge to the reader. The reader’s nose cannot tell the stench of a corpse from the aroma of a “rosy bush” in *Envy* because a new form of art half emerges from it, created with a gun-stock in the authorial mind’s eye: a dialectical hybrid of a giant sausage that “smells like a rose” in the blazing sun (Olesha 1977, 36). Kavalerov may exit and go back to his creator, Olesha, but part of him will remain to serve his term in the purgatory of the book.

Just like the happy Babichev is putting on his “blue suspenders” in the beginning of the novel, the unhappy Kavalerov is picking up his and finds that they are red. He must wear them. He must go back and apologize to Anichka, because it is not her that he should have been beating up, but Andrei who also used her as a shield. He must pick up and wear the shameful, repulsive red suspenders for dreaming of love and happiness bought at the price of “only a quarter,” as demanded by a charming prostitute (Olesha 1977, 28). He must serve his term of an “ugly, repulsive, not his own, alien, forced upon him life” because he did not transform it though his authorial labors. He agreed to be a hero, manipulated and authored by others, writing “my way” and then “your way,” and then “your way” once again. He must be cast into

purgatory for killing himself rather than carrying out his knightly mission, the poor knight who lost his fight against the sausage king.

The necessity of the hero's religious conversion seems to be the only reliable motif holding together the raw, deteriorating texture of the novel. But these so called "*dukhovnye skrepy*" ('spiritual staples,' a nationalist and chauvinist cliché of Putin's Russia) poke holes in the fabric of the text. There is envy in *Envy*, but it is, for the most part, the author's own envy. It is the envy experienced by someone existing on death row towards the living, the envy of a person burdened with conscience and the accursed "principles" to those who have none, except for the survival of the fittest.

Quieter and quieter, KavaleroV repeatedly asks a single question: "What does it mean?" These are KavaleroV's last words in the novel, before Ivan shouts his forced, insincere, cynical "Hurray!" The aesthetic unity of *Envy* disintegrates both from without and from within. From without, Olesha's "incomprehensible [to the brute], imaginative way of expression" is attacked by the increasing ideological pressure to write "for the people," a newspaper-like, flat, didactic style, bordering on *donos*, shows itself in the narrator's remarks in the soccer match episode. From within, the biographical author's ethical concerns affect and interfere with the aesthetic author, not letting him complete, or "consummate" the work, since the ethical search, according to Bakhtin, is never complete.

Chapter 3. “This Is How One Should Write.” Envy as Live-Entering in the novels by Konstantin Vaginov, *the Goat Song* and *the Works and Days of Svistonov*

The difficulty of an open and straightforward discussion of envy as a social and cultural taboo, and literature’s ways of circumnavigating this taboo, is reflected in the dialogue between Mikhail Bakhtin – a famous exponent of indirect discourse, and Konstantin Vaginov – its virtuoso practitioner. This chapter will discuss Vaginov’s artistic polemic with Bakhtin’s concept of live-entering as possibly, although not necessarily, the only type of author/hero relationship, without the liberating exit into the outsidedness mode. I will also explore how Vaginov intuits the concept of emulation, which has no direct equivalent in Russian, through juxtaposing to literary models of envy known in his time: the envy of Salieri to Mozart, on the one hand, and the “good” and “bad” envy in Hesiod’s poem *Works and Days* (circa 7th century B.C), which is implicit in the title of Vaginov’s novel *The Works and Days of Svistonov*. The impossibility of the “good envy” (or emulation) in the Iron Age after the Revolution is discussed in connection with the author’s anxiety of giving in to envy and becoming a secret spy on his heroes through practicing live-entering.

Konstantin Konstantinovich Vaginov (1899–1934) was a prominent poet and prose writer of the 1920s-mid-1930s, and a friend of Mikhail Bakhtin since 1924. Dmitri Segal, in his seminal article “Literature as Safe Conduct [Literatura kak okhrannaia gramota],” (1984), compares Vaginov’s novels to biological “spores” containing, in a condensed form, a vast amount of cultural information to be of use to future generations after the state’s totalitarian grip on literature and culture is loosened (Segal 1984, 50-155).

Vaginov's literary legacy consists of several poetry collections: *A Journey to Chaos* [*Puteshestvie v khaos*] (1921), *To A. Fedorova* [*A. Fedorovoi*] (1926), and *Experiments in Combining Words with the Means of Rhythm* [*Opyty soedineniia slov posredstvom ritma*] (1931); two experimental works in poetic prose, *The Monastery of our Lord Apollo* [*Monastyr' Gospoda nashego Apollona*] (1922) and *The Star of Bethlehem* [*Zvezda Vifleema*] (1922), and four novels: *The Goat Song* [*Kozlinaia pesn'*] (1926-28; 1929), *The Works and Days of Svistonov* [*Trudy i dni Svistonova*] (1928-29), *Bambocciada* [*Bambochada*] (1929-30), and *Garpagoniana* [*Garpagoniana*] (1932-33).

Vaginov's first poetry publication (not included in any of the above mentioned collections) appeared in the journal *Islanders* [*Ostrovitiane*] in 1921. His poetry was highly regarded by such pillars of Russian Modernism as Osip Mandel'stam and Vaginov's mentor in the poetry workshop "Resounding Shell [*Zvuchaschaia rakovina*]", Nikolai Gumilev. There exist two English translations of two different versions of *The Goat Song* (1926 and 1929), titled, respectively, *The Tower* (translated by Benjamin Sher, 1997, based on the original publication of 1928) and *The Goat Song* (translated by Chris Lovett, 1993, based on a more complete edition of 1991).

According to Anthony Anemone, "Vaginov's life and career can be taken as broadly representative of the experience of an entire generation of Russian writers, educated in the last years of Tsarist Russia but forced to make a career in the radically different social and cultural world of Soviet Russia" (Anemone 2000, 255). Participating in many literary circles of the time but never committing himself to any single one³⁶, Vaginov also belonged to Bakhtin's

³⁶ See: Kibal'nik S. 1996. Konstantin Vaginov i literaturnyi Petrograd. *Neva*, 5: 197-201.

philosophical circle, whose members, as observed by Craig Brandist, shared the tendency to substitute, by way of cryptic discourse, the political issues of the day with ethical ones, and further, to replace the ethical with aesthetic. In Brandist's view, such substitution allowed the Russian intelligentsia of the 1920s to shift their attention from their unfortunate economic and political situation and muse, instead, about their "long-sought after role as the cultural leadership of society" (Brandist 2002, 27-9).

I propose that Vaginov's profusely intertextual and cryptic writing style, besides indicating his superior skill and erudition, results partly from the difficulty of his word-resistant subject: envy. Two novels by Vaginov, *The Goat Song* and *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, will be analyzed in connection with Bakhtin's unfinished treatise of the mid-1920s, "The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity." In place of Bakhtin's merciful author and repenting hero, Vaginov puts a cunning secret spy and a naïve narcissus, respectively. Then an intricate literary game begins, during which the author and the hero repeatedly exchange identities, while their proper names, alienated from the owners, play the same game on yet another, meta- and intertextual level. Each transaction between a voyeuristic author and a narcissistic hero is conducted according to the logic of envy: the dark side of Bakhtin's theoretical concept of "live-entering." On the one hand, Vaginov punishes the envious author by dissolving him in the chaos and cosmos of intertextuality. On the other, he questions the ethical and aesthetic competence of the reader. In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, a creatively appropriated line from Pushkin's last letter, "That's the way to write," subtly indicates the redemption of the author by deeming him competent and, in the last aftermath, envy-free.

3. 1. Misha and Kostia as Floating Signifiers: Vaginov Meets Bakhtin

Vaginov and Bakhtin were engaged in a real-life dialogue when Bakhtin's "The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity" was being written. Bakhtin's often prescriptive approach to the literary process finds its "descriptive" correction, in the form of parody and satire, in Vaginov's novels. Based on Marina Bologova's instrumental discovery that *proper names* in Vaginov fulfill the function of condensed motifs and/or plots and, vice versa, that certain plots/motifs exist solely for the sake of indicating a meaningful proper name (Bologova 2004, 7; 19-24), this chapter explores how Vaginov employs previously existing literary names, plots, and motifs as a backdrop to expose live-entering practiced by the characters in his novels as envious eavesdropping and stool-pigeoning. I argue that Vaginov superimposes the motif of professional envy found in two seminal texts on the subject, Aleksandr Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri* (1830) and Hesiod's *Works and Days* (circa seventh century BC; translated into Russian in 1927), onto Bakhtin's idea of live-entering: a stage of aesthetic activity characterized by the author's mental penetration into the prospective hero, coinciding with him and "temporarily taking his place" (Bakhtin 2003, 106).

Opening the dialogue on live-entering, *the first names* of Bakhtin and Vaginov, in their diminutive form (Misha and Kostia), meet once, on the former Nevskii Prospect, a place loaded with literary allusions. However, one and the same name is applied and reapplied to different characters as a floating signifier a number of times. As soon as the initial bearers of the names Misha and Kostia (Bakhtin and Vaginov) part on the Nevskii, the literary duel begins, and each subsequent transaction between a voyeuristic author and a narcissistic hero is conducted according to the logic of envy: the dark side of Bakhtin's theoretical concept of live-entering.

On the one hand, Vaginov punishes the envious author by dissolving him in the chaos and cosmos of intertextuality. On the other, he questions the ethical and aesthetic competence of the reader. In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, a creatively appropriated line from Pushkin's last letter, "That's the way to write," subtly indicates the redemption of the author by deeming him competent and, in the last aftermath, envy-free.

3. 2. Bakhtin's Live-Entering and Vaginov's Ideal Author

In "the Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity," Bakhtin defines live-entering as the author's relationship to the prospective hero during the initial, preparatory stage of the aesthetic activity, which involves the author's provisional identification with the hero (the other): "I must feel into the other's self, temporarily adopt the other's values and see the world through the eyes of the other; [I must] take his place [...] coincide with him, as it were [...]"³⁷; then, having returned to my own self, I must complement the other to the whole with the surplus of vision available to me from my own place outside of the other" (Bakhtin 2003, 106).

The moments of live-entering and outsidedness do not follow each other chronologically; Bakhtin presents them as two qualitatively different states of mind that intertwine and compete in the live experience (Bakhtin 2003, 107-8). Seeing live-entering as a difficult, almost impossible endeavor, Alina Wyman observes, with some surprise, that what she calls "the Herculean task of live-entering" Bakhtin apparently considers "as something

³⁷ For my current purposes, this is where I draw the line between live-entering and outsidedness (discussed below) in Bakhtin's often protean definitions, whereby he sometimes includes outsidedness into the process of live-entering, as in the just quoted passage, and at other times presents it as a separate phase, as in the upcoming quote.

essentially achievable” (Wyman 2008, 66-7). Outsidedness, on the other hand, requires much effort, according to Bakhtin: “[More often than not] outsidedness has to be conquered... [in] a mortal combat [*bor’ba ne na zhizn’, a na smert’*]” (Bakhtin 2003, 97).

It is this “mortal combat” for the transition from the phase of live-entering to the phase of outsidedness—and the author’s bitter loss in this combat—that takes place on the pages of Vaginov’s first two novels, *The Goat Song* and *The Works and Days of Svistonov*. In the first novel, Vaginov parodically subverts Bakhtin’s aesthetic and philosophical concept of live-entering. In the second novel, the author’s own use of parody, irony, and satire *in the previous novel* becomes a subject of ethical self-scrutiny, which is one of the reasons to read the two novels as a dilogy³⁸.

Cases when either the hero takes over the author, or the author takes over the hero, are discussed in Bakhtin from the aesthetic point of view (Bakhtin 2003, 99-101), but envy as an extra-literary motif behind such cases remains outside of Bakhtin’s frame of reference. Vaginov, on the other hand, appears to draw a disturbing parallel between the voyeuristic elements equally discernable in the spiritually sophisticated live-entering and in the most banal, in its

³⁸ Grouping Vaginov’s four novels into two dilogies, the other one being *Bambocciada* and *Harpagoniana*, has been proposed by Tatiana Nikol’skaia, with the notice that names of certain characters of the first novel resurface in the third and the fourth (Nikol’skaia 1999, 11).

Subsequently, all four Vaginov’s novels have been viewed by scholars as tetralogy (See: Beliaeva, N. 2007. “Russkii roman XX veka: intertekstual’nost’ kak konstruktivnyi printsip.” *Russkoiazychnaia literatura v kontekste vostochnoslavianskoi kul’tury*. Ed. T. Rybal’chenko. Tomsk: Tomsk Univ-ty, 261).

base motivation, act of spying on one's neighbor. Commenting on Bakhtin's somewhat idealistic detachment from the social evils of his time, Konstantin Iusupov notes, "Bakhtin's open dialogue space did not presuppose the voices of a stool-pigeon or a provocateur" (Iusupov 2010, 587). Vaginov lets those voices in, creating an uncanny experimental model of a world as an all-encompassing text, in which live-entering begins as soul-stalking, including perusing the hero's intimate diaries (*The Goat Song*), and ends in the author's imprisonment in his own novel, along with his heroes (*The Works and Days of Svistonov*). The unfortunate plight of Vaginov's authors, portrayed predominantly in a parodic key, demonstrates that the stage of live-entering, if ever truly achievable, may not have a viable exit.

The alternative to the envious, live-entering author in Vaginov is an ideal author who is always outside of the heroes, in contrast to Bakhtin's author who vacillates between stages of live-entering and outsidedness. The embodiment of such an author is the mythical Philostratus³⁹ who accompanies *The Goat Song's* protagonist, Teptelkin, invariably at a distance (Vaginov 1999, 18; 54; 108). Rather than live-entering the heroes, Vaginov's ideal author takes them in, or, perhaps, has encompassed them as organic parts of himself all along. Elsewhere in

³⁹ On the historical and fictional aspects of Philostratus' figure in Vaginov, see editor's notes in Vaginov, K. 1999. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v proze*. St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 513-84, 516 (note 18), and Shukurov, D. 1998. "Germetizm artisticheskogo universuma K. Vaginova." In *Voprosy ontologicheskoi poetiki. Potaiennaiia literatura: issledovaniia i materialy*. Ivanov State University. <http://uchkom.botik.ru/az/lit/coll/ontology.index.htm> (accessed on 16 Dec 2011).

The Goat Song, Philostratus is likened to a giant tree, whose falling leaves are the novel's heroes, "people of the past" (Vaginov, 1999, 74; 97).

Motif of withering and falling leaves in Vaginov echoes similar imagery in *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (The Meditations... 1992, 69) and Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 2005, 101). In *The Goat Song*, Vaginov speaks of his heroes as the "falling leaves" of the past; like in Marcus Aurelius, and unlike in Nietzsche, they do not fall on their own accord. In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, the semi-autobiographical narrator, Svistonov, moves closer to Zarathustra's sentiment when he portrays the people of the past as small and insignificant, while hinting at his own kinship with the wind: "In the settling dusk, Svistonov's voice was gaining in strength" (Vaginov 1999, 167). The verb used in the original, the predicative '*krepchal*,' is typically combined with the subject noun 'wind' [*veter krepchal*] (Denisov and Morkovin 2002) ⁴⁰.

Contrary to Bakhtin's task of live-entering, in *The Goat Song* the semi-autobiographical character named "author" feels the need to purge himself of his heroes⁴¹, as if in order to move

⁴⁰ Cf: "Ia ne liubliu zariu. Predpochitaiu svist i buriu. / Osennii svist i beznadezhnyi svist. //" ("Begu v nochi nad finskoiu dorogoi") (Vaginov 1982, 80).

⁴¹ Not unlike Maxim Gorkii's Klim Samgin, who "lived among people as if among mirrors. Each person was a reflection of Klim's personality at the same time clearly showing him his deficiencies" (Gorkii 1952, 20:108), the author in *The Goat Song* sees his heroes when he looks in the mirror. "I came up to the mirror. The candles were burning out. In the mirror, my heroes could be seen, and, in the next room, I could see Teptelkin standing by the window" (Vaginov 1999, 82).

closer to the tranquility of the imaginary Philostratus. In the “Second Afterword [Vtoroe posleslovie]” to *The Goat Song* (1927), published in 1991, the author-narrator speaks of the time when he:

[...] was neither Teptelkin nor the Unknown Poet, nor the Philosopher; neither Misha Kotikov nor Kostia Rotikov. I was a whole, undivided man... and I sensed a frightening light/world (strashnyi svet) inside. Not *we*, but *I* alone walked all those paths, but then a sudden fragmentation occurred. How can I be sure that I have exited the book, freed myself of my heroes, and exorcised them into the world on the other side of myself? And what will happen if I really exorcise them? Maybe a void, an enormous nothingness will open up, and other creatures, just as sorrowful, will rush into this void and inhabit it?⁴² (Vaginov 1999, 468).

The sorrowful creatures that rush into the author’s void and inhabit it call to mind the parable of the swept house, in which a devil, being exorcized from a soul, returns to it as if to an abandoned house, and, having found it clean and unoccupied, inhabits it along with seven other devils, even more evil (Luke 11: 24-26; Matt 12: 43-45). The author of *The Goat Song* is sympathetic to the heroes who become devils in the eyes of the “new Christianity,” Socialism, which comes to replace the fallen Russian Empire, as had once happened to Vaginov’s beloved Rome.

⁴² Found by T. Nikol’skaia, A. Vaginova, and V. Erl’ in 1982; first published in *Transponans* [Yeisk]. 1984. 2:17 (Nikol’skaia 1999, 579).

3. 3. *The Goat Song*

The Goat Song, having no readily discernible plot, follows the composition principle of Vaginov's favorite *Imaginary Portraits* by Walter Pater (1878). The central plotline of the novel, loosely integrated among the life stories (or rather psychological portraits) of other characters, concerns Teptelkin, a meek and absent-minded professor of literature, in love with the European Renaissance. Teptelkin, like the rest of his erudite and refined Petersburg friends, tries to live his lofty humanitarian dream in Soviet Leningrad, but becomes seduced by the local party member, Kandalykin (last name formed from '*kandaly*, 'chains'), into partaking in the Soviet project, associated in the novel with pedestrian values, philistinism (i.e. happy marriage⁴³), comfort and stability, and political compliance.

"...On the 25th of October Prospect, there are government stores; raise your eyes, and you can see painted houses; feel the smooth pavement under your feet. Kandalykin welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Teptelkin affectionately [*laskovo vstretil Kandalykin suprugov*]" (Vaginov 1999, 101). Kandalykin may feign friendliness, but his grip on Teptelkin is firm and has devastating consequences. By becoming a pedestrian in the literal and figurative meaning of the word, Teptelkin abandons the pagan realm of the "nymphs and satires" that envelops him in the beginning of the novel (Vaginov 1999, 16) and becomes integrated into the "new Christianity" associated in the novel with Bolshevism (Vaginov 1999, 24, 35, 41, 141).

⁴³ Cf.: "What will happen to Humanism [...] if you [the Unknown Poet] go mad, if Teptelkin gets married, if the Philosopher takes up to accounting [...]?" "So you agree [to marry me]?" asked Misha Kotikov as if waking up from a dream. 'Now my philistine days will begin' he sighed" (Vaginov 1999, 97, 128).

In the beginning of the novel, Teptelkin conceives of a fundamental literary and philosophical work titled “The Hierarchy of Meanings,” and, being a great admirer and a subtle connoisseur of poetry, particularly, of the works by his friend, the Unknown Poet (Vaginov’s semi-biographical self-portrait), dreams of the time when he and his colleagues in literary scholarship will make the Unknown Poet’s elitist verses accessible to a wide (popular) audience.

[...] The Unknown Poet, by juxtaposition of words, calls forth a new world for us. We will analyze it, decompose it, translate it into prose, strip it of its imagery, and the future generation, having absorbed the fruits of our labor, will not see the loftily blooming imagery of the new world in his verses. Everything will seem ordinary and pathetic to them in these verses, while today such poetry is accessible only to a few select ones (a seichas tol’ko nemnogim dostupny oni) (Vaginov 1999, 35).

The utopian and ultimately absurd, annihilating nature of Teptelkin’s project reveals itself in the contradiction between his own admiration of the Unknown Poet’s art and the paradoxical need to decompose it, strip it of its imagery, etc., in order to let the broad audience enjoy what has once been poetry. Violence done by Teptelkin’s scholarly analysis to poetry invokes the famous soliloquy pronounced by the archetypal envier of the Russian literature, Salieri, in Pushkin’s *Mozart and Salieri* (1830): “I autopsied music like a corpse” (Pushkin 1948, 123). The tragic contradiction between one’s ardent love, on the one hand, and the destructive impulses inherent, as it were, in this very love, on the other, applies in *The Goat Song* not only to the love of art, but also to the love of one artist to another, and, further, to the (aesthetic) love of the author to the hero.

Among the loosely connected novellas portraying various psychological “types” of the 1920s Leningrad literati, with often recognizable if only creatively transfigured prototypes, *The Goat Song* contains a story about a certain Misha Kotikov, a biographer and literary scholar, who, in his ardent pursuit of the life and works of “a recently drowned poet, artist, and traveler, Aleksandr Petrovich Zaevfratskii” (an allusion to a leading Silver Age poet Nikolai Gumilev, executed in 1921 by the Bolshevik firing squad on a false charge of espionage⁴⁴), collects every petty fact and artifact tied to Zaevfratskii’s biography, sleeps with his widow and former lovers, mastered his idol’s handwriting by closely studying Zaevfratskii’s letters and manuscripts, and becomes his literary epigone (Vaginov 1999, 46-52; 121-129; 132-134).

The gradually built-up confusion, in Misha’s mind, between himself as the author of Zaevfratskii’s biography and Zaevfratskii as his hero, reaches its climax and spills over (from Misha’s self-perception into our own perception of Misha) when the reader learns that not only Misha’s imitative poems, but even the biography (in the form of a neatly stacked index cards with hour-to-hour record of Zaevfratskii’s life) is rendered by Misha “in Zaevfratskii’s own handwriting [*pocherkom Zaevfratskogo*]” (Vaginov 1999, 125-6). Uncanny as it is to write someone’s biography in this person’s very own handwriting, Misha’s whim is further estranged if one recalls that about a hundred pages earlier, in the introductory paragraph about Zaevfratskii, the third-person narrator states that “Zaevfratskii, ever since he turned thirty five,

⁴⁴ See Anemone, A. 1989. Konstantin Vaginov and the Death of Nikolai Gumilev. *Slavic Review*, 48, 4: 631-36.

had been creating his own biography” (Vaginov 1999, 46)⁴⁵. Initially, this introductory quote points towards Zaevfratskii’s “live-creationism [*zhiznetvorchestvo*]”, a philosophy, popular among the Russian Symbolists at the turn of the twentieth century, according to which one should organize (create) one’s own life on the principles of a work of art⁴⁶. In the episode with Misha’s index cards, the other meaning of the expression “*sozdavat’ biografiu*” actualizes itself, namely, ‘to write a biography’ rather than ‘create a life’.

This new context implies a darkly comical possibility of the dead Zaevfratskii continuing to “create his own biography” from beyond the grave, using Misha as his medium.

In thus blurring the line between the author and the hero, Vaginov makes use of Bakhtin’s deliberate refusal, in “The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” to discriminate between the genres of biography and autobiography. “We will consider the biographical genre only insofar as it might serve for self-objectification, in other words, to be an autobiography... The author [of] the biography is closer than ever to its hero; *they may, as it were, switch places*” (Bakhtin 2003, 216-7; emphasis added). More importantly, the mishap of a biographer in *The*

⁴⁵ “A poet Zaevfratskii, ever since he turned thirty five, had been creating his own biography.

With this purpose in mind, he climbed Mount Everest, Mount Elbrus, and the Himalaya, followed by the entourage of luxuriously dressed servants (*v soprovozhdenii roskoshnoi cheliadi*). Oases of all deserts had seen his tent. He set his foot in all exotic palaces and conversed with despots of all colors” (Vaginov 1999, 46).

⁴⁶ See West, J. 1970. *Russian Symbolism: A Study of Viacheslav Ivanov and the Russian Symbolist Aesthetics*. London: Methuen and Co.; Ellis [Kobylynskii, L.]. 1996. *Russkie simvolisty: Konstantin Bal’mont, Valerii Briusov, Andrei Belyi*. Tomsk: Volodei.

Goat Song, Misha Kotikov, who so far has received but scanty attention among Vaginov scholars, is instrumental to a better understanding of the second novel, beginning with its title, *The Works and Days of Svistonov*.

Strictly speaking, none of Vaginov's characters can be reduced to one single prototype (which is why his novels are not *romans á clef* in the usual sense). Moreover, Vaginov's favorite device is to combine two sometimes mutually antagonistic prototypes into one, based on the similarity of their names⁴⁷. In the case of Zaevfratskii, there is a similarly complex play on personal names, which can be decoded through Zaevfratskii's biographer, Kotikov.

Two independent memoirists, N. Chukovskii and M. Bakhtin, identify Kotikov as, respectively, Pavel Nikolaevich Luknitskii and Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev (Chukovskii 1989, 108; Bakhtin 2002, 221). Besides the similarities in their names, both biographers were first to study the life and work of Gumilev and Blok, respectively; in both cases, the memoirists hint at the possible romantic relationship with the poets' respective widows, which gets satirized in *The Goat Song*. In the light of Bakhtin's and Chukovskii's *complementary* opinions above, Struve's notion of Blok and Gumilev as *two complementary names* in the history of Russian poetry (Struve 1964, 40) indirectly contributes to our understanding of Vaginov's unique way of treating last names: by detaching them, as it were, from real-life prototypes and composing a

⁴⁷ This device reaches its apex in the third novel, *Bambocciata*, where a character named Vassilii Vassil'evich Iermilov is a crazy mix of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Ivanov, Vaginov's good friend (see editor's note to 242 of Vaginov's complete prose, 547) and Vladimir Vladimirovich Iermilov, a literary critic engaged by the Soviet repressive apparatus, a Zoilus of the 1920s.

historically accurate “type,” and the same provocative technique is used by his semi-biographical Svistonov in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*.

3. 4. *The Works and Days of Svistonov*

The title of *The Works and Days of Svistonov* has at least three underlying sources. The most easily identifiable one is Hesiod’s famous poem *Works and Days*, translated into Russian anew in 1927, right about the time Vaginov’s first novel was taking shape and a year before his writing the second novel. Although the Russian title of Veresaev’s 1927 translation was *Raboty i dni* rather than *Trudy i dni*, Vaginov, himself a Hellenist and most likely familiar with the Symbolist periodical *Trudy i dni* (1910-1916)⁴⁸, would have no problem identifying the same winged expression from Hesiod in what I believe to be the second source of the title, namely: a passage on the heroic value of the biographical genre in Bakhtin’s “The author and the hero in the Aesthetic Activity.” “One’s organic sense of belonging to the heroized humankind of history [v geroizirovannom chelovechestve istorii] [...] contemplating one’s own *works and days* [trudov i dnei] in it: such is the heroic aspect of the biographical value” (Bakhtin 2003, 220; emphasis added).

It would be fair to assume that both Vaginov and Bakhtin made their allusions to Hesiod independently, had they not been joined, in their homage to Hesiod, by a third party: Pavel Nikolaevich Luknitskii, the prototype of Misha Kotikov in *The Goat Song*, and the first biographer of Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev (the prototype, correspondingly, of Zaevfratskii).

⁴⁸ During his participation in Gumilev’s poetic workshop, *Zvuchaschaia rakovina*, Vaginov – rather superficially - self-identified as a Symbolist: “*la simvolistom svesilsia vo mglu*” (Vaginov 1982, 149).

Pavel Luknitskii's project, which came to a stop in 1927 due to Luknitskii's brief arrest by the Leningrad OGPU [*Ob'edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie*, the forerunner of KGB] and was carried out many years after his death by his wife Vera and son Sergei, had a prospective title of *The Works and Days of Nikolai Gumilev*. Thus, while Bakhtin and Luknitskii each adopted the same winged expression from Hesiod for their own purposes, independently from one another, Vaginov made use of this coincidence in the title of his second novel.

In 1927, Pavel Luknitskii is briefly arrested and released by the Leningrad OGPU, on the condition that he stops his research on Gumilev, who is by that time executed on the false accusations of espionage. According to Luknitskii son, Sergei, OGPU returned to Luknitskii all the materials, "except for a few notes made on the basis of Anna Akhmatova's [Gumilev's first wife] freely given account of certain events, of which Luknitskii was neither a witness, nor a participant" (S. Luknitskii 2002, 13-14). The fact of Luknitskii's being coerced into collaboration with the OGPU to spy on Akhmatova has been made public in 1994 by the defected to the USA former KGB general Oleg Kalugin (Kalugin 1994, 72-79) and tragically compromised Luknitskii's life-long devotion to the memory of Gumilev⁴⁹.

In *The Goat Song*, in his portrayal of Luknitskii as Misha Kotikov, Vaginov forges a metaphorical, anachronistic connection between Luknitskii's research of 1922-27 and Gumilev's death in 1921. In the novel, Kotikov begins his studies of Zaefratskii *before 1921*, "in the year of Spengliarism" (Vaginov 1999, 46), that is, in 1919, which, according to Klaus Fischer, was the

⁴⁹ On the history of Luknitskii's manuscript, see: Bakanova 2000; Gershtein. 2009; Luknitskaia 1988; Luknitskii, P. 2010; Luknitskii, S.2002; Medvedko 2010; Pavlovskii 2009.

year of publication of Oswald Spengler's influential *Decline of the West* (1913) and was referred to by historians as "the Spengler's year" (Fischer 1977, 47).

On the surface, *The Works and Days of Svistonov* presents itself as a meta-textual commentary on the reception of *The Goat Song* by its prototypes – and its first readers – the Leningrad intellectual and literary circles, who, according to the memoir of Nikolai Chukovskii, largely interpreted it as (more or less friendly) gossip in a form of a novel with a key (Chukovskii 1989, 105-8). Yet Vaginov's self-commentary veils more than it seems to reveal.

The collective of gossipers thought of themselves as of true connoisseurs of literature. They would catch a writer and demand entertainment [*dostavit' udovol'stvie*]. [...] 'I recognized!' a gossip would say, slapping the writer playfully on the shoulder. 'Kamadasheva is, no doubt, Ramadasheva, and the structure of your novel is similar to Pavel Nikolaevich's structure' (Vaginov 1999, 191).

Vaginov's position in the previous quote, as to who is ultimately responsible for the inverted perception of the first novel, the author or the readers, strikes me as extremely ambiguous. On the one hand, Vaginov discourages his reader from seeking real-life prototypes of the novel's heroes by dismissing such approach as gossip. On the other hand, he provokes the "gossipy" reading in the vein of *roman á clef* by planting into Svistonov's novel, alongside the made up names of made up characters, Kamadasheva and Ramadasheva, the name and patronymic of a real person: Pavel Nikolaevich (Luknitskii). "'No, no', said Svistonov in such a tone that everyone understood, 'Yes, yes'" (Vaginov 1999, 191).

Tatiana Nikol'skaia's summary of the novel most perfectly illustrates this double bind. "Unlike the unique, bright and talented individuals of *The Goat Song*, the heroes of *The Works and Days*...feign their uniqueness. [...] Svistonov does not spare his heroes, while Vaginov does not spare Svistonov, showing that art not kindled with the love of people destroys its creator" (Nikol'skaia 1999, 11). Are not the vainglorious and gossipy "quazi-literati" of *The Works and Days of Svistonov* the very same "unique, intelligent and bright individuals" portrayed in *The Goat Song*? If they are, then immediately they are not, because they are vainglorious and gossipy, and Svistonov's portrayal of them serves them just. If these are different people, however, then Vaginov's novel *The Works and Days of Svistonov* is not about Svistonov's novel about gossipy literati misreading Vaginov's novel *The Goat Song* about unique, intelligent and bright individuals... and so on.

One may counter that by saying that life is complex and that the very same people can be unique, bright, and intelligent at one time, while being vainglorious and gossipy at another time. Then why portray them as only vainglorious and gossipy in the second novel after providing a much more differentiated portrayal of them in the first novel? And who is responsible for their portrayals, Svistonov or Vaginov? Chances are, Svistonov is not seen by the author as deserving punishment at all.

The gossiper's statement in *The Works and Days of Svistonov* that Svistonov's novel is similar in structure to that of (rather than by) Pavel Nikolaevich – in the original, "konstruktskiiia *vashego proizvedeniia* pokhozha na konstruktsiiu *Pavla Nikolaevicha*" – cannot be easily dismissed. There is a striking parallel between the wordplay in the last names of Kamadasheva and Ramadasheva in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, on the one hand, and the Gogolian

doubles Kotikov and Rotikov in *The Goat Song*, on the other. That the former pair is a direct allusion to the latter can be inferred from the fact that Kamadasheva and Ramadasheva appear in the text only once, in meaningful proximity to the name of Pavel Nikolaevich and to the gossipers' suggestion that Pavel Nikolaevich's "structure" is somehow similar to the structure of Svistonov's novel.

Svistonov's method of picking last names for his novels is explained in the following passage in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*: "...Here and there last names would emerge; they met, shook hands, played chess or cards, vanished and resurfaced again. Then human figures began to make appearances under the last names. At last, under each last name there stood a person" (Vaginov 1999, 232). The imagery of the last name interacting, shaking hands, etc., as if independently from people, is essentially the same as in the Unknown Poet's description of poetry writing in *The Goat Song*. "Poetry is a special occupation, a frightful and a dangerous spectacle. You take a handful of words, combine them in an unusual way, and sit there, thinking about them: one night, and another, and yet another... Then you notice: a hand of meaning is stretched from under one word and shakes a hand that appears from under another word; and the third word is stretching its hand, and an entirely new world opens up behind the words and engulfs you" (Vaginov 1999, 76). Last names in Svistonov's novel obtain new, unpredictable meanings, just like words in poetry according to the Unknown Poet's description; they are, in fact, floating signifiers.

In order to gain some insight into what exactly the gossipers incriminate to Svistonov, and how Svistonov's novel might relate to Misha Kotikov's odd biographical studies in *The Goat*

Song, let us briefly consult the main plotline of *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, which reflects, in a self-parodic light, the process and the consequences of Vaginov's writing *The Goat Song*. According to Ivan Martynov and Anthony Anemone, Vaginov might have been prompted to write *The Goat Song* in response to a sharp and unexpected "conversion" to Marxism of Bakhtin's good friend and also a friend and an admirer of Vaginov, Lev Vassilievich Pumpianskii, in the fall of 1925 (Anemone, Martynov 1989, 93). Chukovskii reports that Pumpianskii, depicted in the first novel as Teptelkin – a fictional last name invented by Pumpianskii himself as a nametag for "mirovaia poshlost' ('worldwide philistinism') – was enraged by the portrayal and ceased to talk to Vaginov as a result (Chukovskii 1989, 108).

In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, Vaginov attempts an explanation, as it were, of why he wrote the first novel and at the same time of why Pumpianskii has a point of being offended by it, based, once again, on Bakhtin's theory of live-entering. The author's conflict with Pumpianski and an attempt to resolve it by suggesting that Svistonov has misunderstood and mal-practiced live-entering is easily discernible in the plot of *The Works and Days*. On the contrary, a parallel suggestion that live-entering as a theory might have flaws that account for the emergence of the envious author, like Misha Kotikov from *The Goat Song* (to whom Svistonov is implicitly compared), is discrete and not presented in the plot other than through an elaborate system of indirect literary allusions.

The main hero of the second novel, Andrei Svistonov, Vaginov's carnivalesque self-portrait, is himself a novelist. He is writing a novel about his contemporaries, one of whom, a member of literati, Ivan Ivanovich Kuku ['coo-coo'], figures under the fictional name of Kukareku ['cock-a-doodle-doo']. The major plotline of the novel illustrates, in a parodic key,

Bakhtin's statement in "The author and hero in the Aesthetic Activity": "The aesthetic approach to a live person anticipates his/her death, predetermines his/her future and makes him/her, as it were, redundant" (Bakhtin 2003, 181). This is precisely what happens in the novel to Kuku, who, upon familiarizing himself with Svistonov's caricature portrayal of him as "Kukareku," feels as if "another person has already lived his life for him in advance, [...] in a pathetic and contemptible way, and [as if] he, Kuku, has no more reasons to go on..." (Vaginov 1999, 195).

Vaginov's parodic allusions to "The Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity" in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, besides the story of Kuku-Kukareky, are multiple and include, for example, a short "novella about a tailor" titled "Novelist-Experimentator" in the beginning of the novel and Psikhachev's desire, in a Dostoevskian key, to be portrayed in Svistonov's novel "with all my stinky episodes [*voniuichi sluchaiami*]." The tailor in the above said novella is an amateur writer who makes it a point to experience everything his heroes would experience in his prospective novel, including falling into the river and being run over by a train. "The condition of the tailor-novelist is critical." The novel "struck Svistonov as a kind of a vague offence" (Vaginov 1999, 157). Psikhachev formulates his request in Bakhtin's terms: "My life, my artfully structured life is going to waste. I cannot write about myself; if I only could, I would not turn to you" (Vaginov 1999, 183). Compare to Bakhtin: "It is the other's being that defines, once and for all, the major plot of my life. [...] My life cannot become such an event; my own life sounds very differently for myself than for the other. [...] I am a condition of my own life but I cannot be its valuable hero"; "My only hope is to find refuge in the other..." (Bakhtin 2003, 180; 196).

Arguing against the reductionist reading of Vaginov's novels as fulfilling in practice Bakhtin's theories, as if Vaginov took them at face value, Anemone makes an important observation that Vaginov "rewrites" Bakhtin's binary opposition between the author and the hero as a triangular model, including the author, the hero, and the Prototype, in *The Works and Days of Svistonov* (Anemone 1998, 57-64). The prototype of the ruthless author Svistonov in *The Works and Days of Svistonov* is Vaginov of *The Goat Song*. Yet Vaginov's first novel is by far not as hopelessly unsympathetic to heroes and prototypes as it is portrayed in *The Works and Days*. Hence stems the ambiguous attitude of the second novel's author-narrator to Svistonov, whom he blames in the main text but exculpates in the footnotes (sometimes, vice versa). Despite the multiple direct allusions to Bakhtin's theory in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, Vaginov's attitude to his hero-author, Svistonov, is highly ambiguous if read through the prism of Bakhtin's theory.

On the one hand, Svistonov is blamed for ruthless treatment of his prototypes as mere material for his novel: "He reasoned that [such attitude] is quite permissible for an artist and [even though] he knew he would have to pay for it one day [,] he did not expect the kind of penance that awaited him" (Vaginov 1999). Then the entire town is sucked into Svistonov's book, leaving a gaping void in the surrounding world. "Svistonov realized that he is forever locked up inside his own novel" (Vaginov 1999, 234). In other words, Vaginov denies Svistonov the outsideness that Bakhtin deems necessary for a true artist.

On the other hand, multiple author-narrator's remarks and footnotes (Vaginov 1999, 194, 196, 201, 232) suggest that the blame for Kuku's pain (at Svistonov's robbing Kuku of his essence by turning him into a literary character) lies with Kuku, who takes Svistonov's art and

Bakhtin's theory too literally. "Ivan Ivanovich! Understand that it is not you that I have exposed in literature, not your soul. The soul, in principle, cannot be exposed. True, I have borrowed some details..." (Vaginov 1999, 196).

In suggesting that a soul may be comprised of *details*, and thus be subject to de-composition, Svistonov emerges as a Salieri, who de-composes music like a corpse prior to composing it. One may suppose that Bakhtin's idea of live-entering [literally, 'living into'] emerges, in a way, as an alternative to Salieri's necrophilia. The fact that Salieri was an important cultural reference to Bakhtin can be inferred from the fact that Bakhtin quotes *Mozart and Salieri* in his programmatic *The World of Rabelais* (Bakhtin 1979, 136). The title of an anti-Formalist article, ascribed to Bakhtin but signed by Pavel Medvedev, "The Learned Salierism (Uchenyi Salierism)" (*Bakhtin pod maskoi* 2000, 6), speaks volumes of how Salieri is perceived, among the Bakhtin circle, as a master of autopsy.

Svistonov's "alibi," his excuse for "borrowing details" of Kuku's soul, is that the writer awards his characters immortality as an exchange for their pathetic, frail life (*vita brevis, ars longa*). "Now, I brought Kuku and his girl together," Svistonov explains to the ideal reader of his novel, a deaf and dumb concubine. "I will soon transport them to a different realm, more real and permanent than this momentous life. There they will live, and, as they lie in their coffins, they will just enter their prime and begin to transform infinitely. Art is extracting people from one realm and then engaging them in quite another sphere" (Vaginov 1999, 167)⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ In the language of the original, the root-related 'iz-vlech-enie [extracting]' and 'vo-vlech-enie [engaging]' are treated by Vaginov as antonyms on a morphological, rather than lexical, level,

Yet the business of extracting people out of life and integrating them into a “quite another sphere” has another, darker meaning in the 1920s Leningrad. The well-known controversy with Pumpianskii (“Kuku,” “Kukareku”), which Vaginov depicts and tries to resolve in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, may conceal a deeper anxiety, which the author cannot fully voice. The difficulty of bringing oneself to speak out about this anxiety manifests itself in the gallery of “small-mouthed” heroes: Misha Kotikov and Kostia Rotikov in *The Goat Song* and Svistonov in *The Works and Days of Svistonov*. According to S. Baldaev’s *Dictionary of Criminal Jargon* (1991), ‘svistok’ is a policeman, and ‘svistun’, correspondingly, is a ‘whistle-blower’ (a negative concept in Russian culture as opposed to its relatively neutral connotation in the United States). By implying that the structure of his/Svistonov’s novel is just like “the structure [read ‘nature’] of Pavel Nikolaevich,” Vaginov hints at the disturbing possibility that, as an author, his ethical and aesthetical treatment of Pumpianskii-Teptelkin-Kuku is in some respect similar to the way Misha Kotikov treats Zaevfratskii in *The Goat Song*: with envy and voyeurism bordering on spying.

3. 5. The Abject Author?

In his critical book on Bakhtin, *Bitter Carnival: Ressentiment and the Abject hero* (1992), Mikhail Bernstein highlights envy as the driving force behind the ambiguous discourse of Bakhtin’s carnival and shows how such discourse can be abused by the “abject” (envious and malignant) hero in order to escape ethical responsibility for the hero’s words and actions.

based on prefixes: ‘iz- [out of]’ and ‘vo- [into],’ similarly to Bakhtin’s linguistic ingenuity in reinterpreting the German ‘*Einfuehlung*’ as ‘*v-zhivanie* [live-entering]’.

The Abject hero... evolves directly out of the wise fools of satiric literature and the holy fool of religious parables. (...) But the Abject hero is also aware of how potentially ludicrous his invocation of such archetypes must appear, (...) of being a meretricious fraud, usurping without authentic title the oppositional rhetoric invented long before by a host of genuinely formidable and inspired outsiders (Bernstein 1992, 30).

In retrospect, Vaginov can be seen as having come up with a type of an abject author. In his two novels, he portrays an author (a Poet, an Artist), who is likewise anxious of – or suspected of – being a meretricious fraud not worthy of his literary predecessors. Thus, in *The Goat Song*, the Unknown Poet has a nightmare about standing in court in front of Dante, Gogol', Juvenal, and Horace as judges. "What have you been doing there, on Earth?" says Dante, rising. 'Have you wronged any widows or orphans?' 'I have not' [the Unknown Poet] answers quietly. 'But I have given birth to an author. I corrupted his soul and replaced it with laughter'" (Vaginov 1999, 67). After questioning the Unknown Poet, what kind of laughter it was, a Gogolian laughter through tears or a Juvenalian satirical laughter, and hearing him say that it was neither of the above, but rather "mundane, everyday kind of laughter," the Unknown Poet is expelled from the pantheon of authors and thrown back to Earth by the angry Dante (Vaginov 1999, 68). In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, the authenticity of its protagonist's, Svistonov's, artistic gift is questioned on the same grounds (of his reductive, disdainful laughter at the surrounding world).

[Svistonov] acutely sensed the world's parodic nature in relation to some unspoken norm. (...) From a poet's perspective, Svistonov had a bit of a

Mephistopheles in him, but, to tell you frankly, Svistonov was not aware of this quality in himself. On the contrary, everything seemed clear-cut and simple to him.

A poet would... counter that by saying that this is precisely what being a Mephistopheles is about: in reducing the world to two dimensions, in treating it with disdain and disgust, and that such attitude not in the least characterizes a true artist (Vaginov 1999, 225).

While Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence concerns the younger Poet's envying his literary predecessors on the aesthetic grounds (Bloom 1973), Vaginov's authors experience "anxiety of influence" on ethical grounds. Much like Salieri in Pushkin in *Mozart and Salieri*, they negotiate the meaning of the maxim "Genius and villainy are two things incompatible" (Pushkin 1948, 133-4). Cf. in Bakhtin's "Art and Answerability": "For everything I experienced and understood in art, I must answer with my entire life..." (Bakhtin 2003, 5-6).

In *The Bitter Carnival*, Bernstein proposes a regularly paced work as alternative to the abject behavior (Bernstein 1992, 184). The same idea is manifest in Hesiod's poem *Works and Days*. For Bakhtin, rhythm is incompatible with "living from oneself," and therefore, with ethics and creativity (Bakhtin 2003, 205). In Pushkin's play, rhythmical, regularly paced life (and work) is incompatible with Mozart. Even when embracing Salieri as a model artist in the early 1900s, the Russian literary imagination still cannot quite absorb the negative implications of rhythm as something mechanical, alien both to life and art. In Vaginov, the mechanical rhythm of Misha Kotikov's work and later, of Svistonov's work, suggests the eerie notion of the merciless state machine, used by the enviers to their advantage.

3. 6. Two Models of Envy: Pushkin and Hesiod

Vaginov's allusions to *Works and Days* are not limited to the title of the second novel; thus, one of his characters in the *Goat Song* bears an impossible last name, Asfodeliev. I see a very high probability that this last name is an allusion to verses 40-41 in *Works and Days* ("ignorant ones do not know that ...asphodel and mallow can be of great use"), especially considering that Vaginov's bitter novels *are* written about and against the onslaught of the "ignorant ones" with their utilitarian (and in that, essentially Salierian) view of art. Additionally, a short passage from Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, quoted in the beginning of *The Goat Song*, is, likewise, about harvest: "The Fall was in full swing, and it harvesting time has come. Everyone in the fields..." (Vaginov 1999, 26).

3. 6. 1. Hesiod on the Russian Literary Scene and in Vaginov's novels

Hesiod's poem is present on the Russian literary scene not only before, but during and after the time of Vaginov's writing his novels. His works have been translated into Russian since the end of the eighteenth century⁵¹. From 1910 to 1916, Russian symbolists (Viacheslav Ivanov, Aleksandr Blok, Andrei Belyi, and others) founded a bimonthly almanac titled, after Hesiod's poem, *Works and Days*, which came out in the publishing house *Musaget* (Lavrov 1984, 191-211; the 1st issue of 1912 is available in the free on-line library ImWerden). It is a well-known fact that Vaginov has shared in the Hellenistic sentiment of Russian symbolists (see, for example, the title of a jubilee article on commemorating Vaginov's 120th birth, "Peterburgskii ellinist [Petersburg's Hellenist]" by O. Rogov (Rogov 2008). In 1927, a new translation of Hesiod's *Works and Days* [*Raboty i dni*] by V. Veresaev comes out of a Moscow publishing

⁵¹ *Isioda Askreiskogo tvoreniia*. 1779. Transl. by A. Fiazinovskii. St. Petersburg.

house, Nedra. In 1930, an immigrant writer Georgii Adamovich, in his article “Sovietskaia kritika,” sneers at a semi-literate Soviet critic, who brands Hesiod a “proletarian poet [*poet-proizvodstvennik*]” (Adamovich 2002, 340). Svistonov’s “sense of the world’s parodic nature in relation to some norm” can be seen, in part, as a reaction to such peculiar transformations of cultural discourse.

3. 6. 2. “Good” and “Bad” Envy in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*

In his pioneering work on envy in the Greek society, *Envy and the Greeks* (1978), Peter Walcot identifies Hesiod’s *Works and Days* as the first text overtly addressing the double nature of envy, one being good and the other “blameworthy” (roughly corresponding to the distinction between emulation and envy in English)⁵². Walcot highlights lines 25-26 as having acquired “a proverbial force as a classical example of professional envy”: “Potter is furious with potter and craftsman with craftsman, and beggar is envious [*phthoneei*] of beggar and singer of singer,” in which ‘*phthoneei*’ is a derivative from the Ancient Greek ‘*phthonos*,’ that is, ‘bad [destructive] envy’, while ‘*zealos*’ defines ‘good [productive] envy’, or ‘emulation’⁵³ (Walcot 1978, 8-10).

Hesiod explains the benefits of productive, emulating envy in the following lines, “A man who has no work in hand, if he should see another / Rushing to plow and plant his fields and put his house in order, / In envy of his neighbor’s wealth will seek prosperity” (Hesiod 2006, 58: 21-23). Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora reasons in Hesiod’s terms when, speaking against “egalitarian envy” and for emulation, he promotes in it “the moral of the ‘work well done’ [...]”

⁵² See: Hesiod 2006. *Works and Days*. Transl. by C. Schlegel and H. Weinfield, lines 11, 23-26, 312-13, 477-82.

⁵³ See Chapter 1 for the details on the absence of a direct equivalent of ‘emulation’ in Russian.

embodied during centuries in the *artisan's guilds*" (Mora 1987, 121; emphasis added). This is also the moral of Salieri in Pushkin's drama: "I based my art on craftsmanship [*remeslo*]; I have become a craftsman/artesian [*remeslennik*]" (Pushkin 1948, 15-17).

3. 6. 3. Spontaneity vs. Regularity in *Mozart and Salieri*

The regularity of Salieri's ascetic life, as he himself narrates it, corresponds to Hesiod's well paced, strictly measured periods of tilling, sowing, reaping, etc. Art is hard work for Salieri, and mastering it presupposes routine. "Difficult is the first step, and boring is the first journey [in art]" (Pushkin 1948, 123: 1: 14-15). By contrast, Mozart is portrayed as careless, impulsive, and instantaneously gifted; in Salieri's opinion, undeservedly. Mozart's moods, predominantly happy, at times take a deep dive, even though he speaks of it lightly. "Imagine... whom? / Me, for instance, when I was younger; / In love – not too much, but slightly, / accompanied by a beauty or a friend: you, for instance; / I am happy... Suddenly – a morbid vision, / a sudden darkness, or something like that.../" (Pushkin 1948, 101)⁵⁴.

The main "morbid vision" Mozart has in the play is of "a man dressed in black," whose eerie, ghostly presence Mozart vaguely senses as he sits down to his last dinner with Salieri (Pushkin 1948, 131: 2:29-30). Salieri, on the other hand, enjoys a kind of perverted lucidity

⁵⁴ Mikhail Bernstein, in *Bitter Carnival: Ressentiment and the Abject hero*, picks up on this purely temperamental difference, although not in connection with Pushkin's drama, when he ironically refers to his own life of a hardworking intellectual as to "deadening regularity and total predictability of my *days*" (Bernstein 1992, 184; emphasis added). "Days" appear to be the word that springs to mind when one thinks of a lifetime project and commitment.

about the upcoming end of Mozart's life (comparable to the "anticipated death" of the hero, in Bakhtin's terms), and possesses, at least at the moment, full control of Mozart's earthly destiny. He is a self-appointed author of Mozart and the best critic of his art, passing judgments on his hero's life, such as "You, Mozart, are unworthy of yourself" (Pushkin 1948, 106), and work: "You, Mozart, are a god, and you do not know it; I know, I" (Pushkin 1948, 108-109).

3. 6. 3. Pushkin as Mozart in the Russian Popular Imagination

According to Ielena Grigor'eva, in the beginning of the twentieth century Pushkin is increasingly mythologized as a Mozart of his own play, with the emphasis on his artistic, light-handed genius⁵⁵ in opposition to Salieri's emphasis on discipline and routine (Grigorieva 2007, 47-60). A rare exception to this trend was the Acmeists' interpretation of Salieri as an artist par excellence. In his programmatic essay "On the Nature of the Word" (1920-22), Acmeist poet, and a great admirer of Vaginov, Osip Mandel'stam stated that Salieri, as a devoted and solemn artist, "a craftsman," "deserves respect and ardent love." In the same paragraph, Mandel'stam makes a prediction that the Symbolist, Futurist, and Imaginist (inherently Romantic) cult of Mozart will soon be replaced by the Acmeist cult of Salieri (Mandel'stam 1993, 231).

Vaginov's texts loom with anecdotes, hear-say and made-up stories [*baiki*]. In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, Vaginov lays bare this device in Lenchka's (Svistonov's wife) letter to

⁵⁵ According to Royce Wates, Mozartian myth includes notions of Mozart as "a child-man, enormously talented but hopelessly immature," "a genius who never revised his work because it was error-free" (Wates 2010, 2). Russian popular notion of Mozart as a child has decidedly positive connotations; see, for example, the cinematic representation of Mozart in *Malen'kie tragedii* (1979, dir. M. Shveitser).

Svistonov, in which she says, “I understand: you need to know what remains in the [collective] memory [after reading the book]” (Vaginov 1999, 193). Based on his apparent fascination in both novels with the phenomena of the collective memory, gossip, and rumor, I believe that Vaginov utilized the popular, readily recognizable archetypes of Mozart and Salieri (criticized by Mandel’stam) to draw a parallel between Salieri’s obsession with Mozart and Misha Kotikov’s “live-entering” obsession with Zaevfratskii.

One of numerous parallels between Zaevfratskii and Pushkin can be found in Misha’s conversation with the curator of the Pushkin House in the chapter “Materials,” in which the curator makes an allusion to “our sun” (cf: “The sun of our poetry fell behind horizon,” the famous beginning in Pushkin’s obituary⁵⁶), and expresses a regret that Kotikov was not born earlier, to “track down, day by day, the life of the genius” (Vaginov 1999, 128). Similar project was carried on by Pavel Medvedev in relation to Aleksandr Blok.

In “Tvorcheskii put’ Gumileva”, Gleb Struve notes: “Gumilev [...] might have felt a kind of envy or jealousy towards [Aleksandr] Blok. However [...] both Gumilev and Blok, so different and not particularly getting along in real life, are, in a way, complementary figures in the history of Russian poetry. [...] Each of them, in his own way, is oriented towards “the sun of Russian poetry”, Pushkin” (Struve 1964, 40). Struve’s notion of Gumilev and Blok as two complementary poets of the Silver age corresponds with Vaginov’s play on personal names of these poets’ biographers, respectively, Pavel Nikolaevich Luknitskii and Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev. Chukovskii identified the former, and Bakhtin, the latter, as a prototype of Misha Kotikov (Bakhtin 2002, 221; Chukovskii 1998, 107).

⁵⁶ See: Andronnikov 1956, 153-209, on the debated Kraevskii’s authorship of Pushkin’s obituary.

Vaginov plays with the amusing coincidences of names and personal stories, which allow him, on the one hand, use real prototypes as the author of the novel with a key would, and on the other, demonstrate how easily “the key” turns into the “off key,” a false lead, proving the distance between art and life, and the absolute surplus of a work of art in relation to the life’s incidental material. Mythologizing Zaevfratskii and his “main” prototype Gumilev as Pushkin-Mozart, while implicitly comparing Kotikov’s (and Luknitskii’s) biographical studies to the envious voyeurism of the “mob” towards the life of a “genius,” the kind of curiosity condemned by Pushkin in his letter to Petr Viazemskii on the loss of Lord Byron’s diaries.

Why do you regret the loss of Byron’s autobiographical sketches (zapisok Bairona)? [...] Leave curiosity to the mob, and be one with the Genius. [...] The mob hungrily swallows confessions, personal notes, etc., because, in its baseness [*v podlosti svoei*], it rejoices at the humiliation of the lofty, at the weakness of the mighty. ‘*He is petty and base, just like us!*’ No, scoundrels: even petty and base, he is not like you – different (Pushkin 1937, 244; emphasis in the original).

Pushkin’s indignation with the “mob” in the above quoted letter is unconditional. Not only the mob’s envious desire to see genius belittled is condemnable; the very fact that the mob dares to compare with the genius is unforgivable. “*On i mal, i merzok – ne kak vy – inache,*” in other words, even at his worst, the genius is not like “you,” the mob. Mandel’stam proposes an interesting explanation of the roots of Pushkin’s unappeasable animosity to the “mob” as the poet’s necessity to keep his *distance* in order to have better acoustic; intimate knowledge of the interlocutor leaves *no room* for poetry (Mandel’stam 1993, 126). This is the

distance Vaginov's Misha Kotikov violates by live-entering "Aleksandr Petrovich" [Zaevfratskii] and acting as his substitute on earth at the same time.

In "the Author and the Hero...", Bakhtin discriminates between the "heroic" and the "everyday [*sotsial'no-bytovoi*]" subgenres of biography. The first includes such aspects as "striving for glory," "personal growth in the loving mind of the other," "the hero's acceptance of the life's plotline [*fabulizm zhizni*]." The second subgenre is characterized by the absence of the heroic human history context, lacks adventurism, but extols, instead, the honest and virtuous day-to-day existence, embraces the mundane and the family (Bakhtin 2003, 220-3). Mixing together the heroic and the everyday subgenres of biography distinguished by Bakhtin (Bakhtin 2003, 220-3), Misha diligently pursues every line of Zaevfratskii's "works" and every move of Zaevfratskii's "days." He collects his handkerchiefs [*nosovye platki*] (Vaginov 1999, 47), invoking in the native reader's cultural memory an idiom 'to dig into one's dirty laundry/in one's nose [*kopat'sia v griaznom bel'e/v nosu*].' He digs into [*dokapyvaetsia do*] the most intimate details of Zaevfratskii's private life, so that his collection of data resembles a secret police report more than a scholarly research.

Like Hesiod's good farmer, Misha is tending to his project methodically and paces it right: "Misha Kotikov glanced at the watch. What a peaceful morning. 'Just to think! I am summoning Aleksandr Petrovich from the other world!'" (Vaginov 1999, 126). In a grotesque, carnival way, Misha is reaping Salieri's rewards for murdering Mozart. He claims control over Aleksandr Petrovich's non-being. In imitating Zaevfratskii's poetry, handwriting, and manners, Misha is the "heir" of the genius, despite Salieri's regret that Mozart would leave "no heir" in art (Pushkin 1948, 128: 1:125). He saws away in Zaevfratskii's bed-chambers.

Year of 1908, May 15, Wednesday, 3 pm. Aleksandr Petrovich had dinner in levropeiskaia hotel. At 5 pm, from levropeiskaia hotel, Aleksandr Petrovich went to the Gostinyi Dvor with levgenia Semenovna Sleptsova (ballerina). He bought her kid-gloves and a ring with a sapphire. As of today (1925, January 5- 6 pm) Sleptsova is a well-preserved brunette. Her breasts are small, shoulders broader than her pelvis; legs, like with all ballet dancers, muscular (Vaginov 1999, 125).

If Pushkin's Salieri is envious, Misha Kotikov, on the contrary, appears to be driven by emulation. However, a number of clues provided by Vaginov lead us to assume that Kotikov's emulation is just as bad as Salieri's envy. Just as Salieri is the author of Mozart, Misha Kotikov starts off as the author of Zaevfratskii; an just like Salieri, he ends up – to quote Bakhtin – as Zaevfratskii's "fraudulent double," effectively replacing his hero with his own authorial persona, "put[ting] on a flesh-mask of the deceased" (Bakhtin 2003, 121). The transformation of his initially noble intent into spying results from Kotikov's utter failure to divorce art from life: Misha takes the task of live-entering quite literally, striving to penetrate and personally live out every aspect of Zaevfratskii's persona, whether spiritual or mundane. "Misha Kotikov has learned everything: how many birthmarks Aleksandr Petrovich had on his body and how many calluses; he learned that in 191... Aleksandr Petrovich had a furuncle on his back; that Aleksandr Petrovich liked coconuts and that he had a hellish loads of lovers but still loved Ekaterina Ivanovna very much" (Vaginov 1999, 49).

A short recourse to Dostoevskii's *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863) helps connect Misha's interest in Zaevfratskii's life, through Gumilev's imagery in "The Life of a Verse" (1910), to Pushkin's letter on Lord Byron's diaries mentioned earlier, in order to understand the

disgust Pushkin, and his literary heirs, feel at gossiping and voyeurism as manifestations of envy and also, by extension, as potential association with the secret police.

In “The Life of a Verse,” Gumilev writes, “In style, God reveals himself in his own creation, and the poet reveals his own personality – his innermost, clandestine, unknown even to himself personality – and allows us to guess about *the color of his eyes, the shape of his hands. This is very important*” (Gumilev 1923, 18-9). By making Zaevfratskii a famous traveler and Misha Kotikov a studious researcher, and adding the motif of Zaevfratskii’s “loving Iekaterina Ivanovna very much,” Vaginov links both heroes to the fourth chapter of Dostoevskii’s *Winter Notes...*, titled, “Chapter Fourth, Not without Use for Travelers” (and Misha’s envied poet, Gumilev-Zaevfratskii, is a traveler).

Opening with a scene of Dostoevskii’s semi-biographical hero, a writer, being followed by secret spies on his journey in Paris, the chapter contains an episode with him, and a married couple, in a situation peculiarly similar to Kotikov’s situation vis-à-vis Zaevfratskii and his widow, only in reverse. In *Winter Notes*, the semi-biographical hero of Dostoevskii, a travelling writer, is followed around by gendarmes and is asked to pose before a married couple, the owners of the hotel he checks in, while they are composing a verbal portrayal of him for the police. In the process of recording the hero’s profession, height and the color of his hair, the couple acts as co-authors, consulting one another silently with their eyes, because “apparently, they loved each other very much.” The scene culminates in an awkward eroticism of their civilian zeal, as the wife approaches the hero to get a closer look at the hero’s eyes. When the hero asks whether it is so important, the wife retorts, “O, monsieur, this is *ne-ces-sa-ry!*” (Dostoevskii; italics added).

The importance of the poet's "color of eyes" and "shape of hands" stated in Gumilev's essay and parodied in Kotikov's peculiar research on Zaevfratskii is additionally revealed as a "necessity" in Vagonov's intertextual allusion to the "loving" couple in Dostoevskii's *Winter Notes*. The motifs of perusing the poet's personal life, along with the motif of necessity [*neobkhodimost'*], connects Misha's research to Salieri, with his utilitarian approach to Mozart, and to Pushkin's indignation with the mob's interest in the details of the poet's life expressed in the above-mentioned letter concerning Byron's diaries. Live-entering comes too close to the voyeurism of a secret spy, combined with the curiosity of the envious mob, who, "in their baseness," wish to see "Byron [not in his poems, but] on a chamber pot."

The only concubine of Zaevfratskii who refuses Misha an interview is Ptichkina ['little bird']. "Stupid, uneducated creature: says that A. P. was a man like any other" (Vaginov 1999, 125). In Pushkin's poem "Ptichka" (1823), the lyrical hero let's free a little bird "on the holy day of spring [pri svetlom prazdnike vesny]," Easter (Pushkin 1947, 280). In *The Goat Song*, Misha writes verses, imitating Zaevfratskii's style, with a "spring celebration in Benares" in them (Vaginov 1999, 126). The spring celebration in Benares, or Varanasi, is significant as a commemoration of Buddha's first sermon "The Wheel of the Law," which he pronounced at the age of 35 (*Buddhist Legends* 1921, 3-7; Gruzalski 2000, 2; Nelson 2008, 94; 99-101). When Gumilev, like Buddha, was 35 years old, he was crushed by the wheel of the Soviet "law": shot on a false charge of conspiring against the government. Pavel Luknitskii could have not been possibly involved in Gumilev's demise, as he begins his studies of Gumilev in 1922. The fictional Misha Kotikov, however, is "connected" to Zaevfratskii's-Gumilev's arrest and death through the narrator's to "the Spenger's year": 1919 in all of Europe, 1923 in Russia. And, according to

Svistonov's definition of art, it is Misha Kotikov, and not the real Luknitskii, who will be remembered.

By giving his second novel, *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, a title similar to the title of Luknitskii's study, *The Works and Days of Nikolai Gumilev*, Vaginov seems to acknowledge the ethical problem, into which he had run with Luknitskii-Kotikov in *The Goat Song*. Implicating Luknitskii's connection with the secret police, which he intuits artistically but to which there is no solid proof, the author eventually finds himself in the position of his own hero whom, he feels, he had "denounced" through artistic exposure. Revealing himself as a denouncer to his own conscience, the author suspects that his true motif could be the very same vice he sought to expose in the other: envy.

3. 6. 4. The Impossibility of "Good" Envy in the Iron Age: Emulation Gone Sour

A famous example of emulation is given in the Life of St. Francis of Assisi in *Scripta Leonis*: "[Brother John] was indeed of such simplicity that he believed himself bound by every single thing St. Francis did. So when St. Francis stood in a church or in any remote place for prayer, he wanted to see and look at him, *so that he might copy all his gestures*. If St. Francis bent his knees or clasped his hands to heaven or spat or coughed he did the same [...] Not long after he died in this holy perfection. Therefore St. Francis used with great delight, *both inward and outward*, to tell of his manner of life among the friars and used to call him not brother John but St. John" (*Scripta Leonis*... 1990, 118).

In Misha's naïve endeavor of perfectly copying Zaevfratskii's handwriting and poetic style, in his painting with Zaevfratskii's own paints and brushes, reading Zaevfratskii's favorite books (Vaginov 1999, 134), and even in his determination to marry Zaevfratskii's widow ("She is

stupid, but Aleksandr Petrovich married her once, so he, Mikhail Petrovich, must marry her too," Vaginov 1999, 127), Misha emulates Zaefratskii religiously. Yet numerous details characterize the deceptively child-like Misha as a cold-blooded representative of Hesiod's "iron age," in which "The evil man his better will subdue by speaking crooked words and swearing oaths upon them too; and shrieking Envy that delights in harming wretched men, with foul-mouthed, hate-filled face shall be each man's companion then" (Hesiod 2006, 63: 193-6).

The leitmotif of Misha as a man of iron can be traced throughout the novel. His imitative poetry is said to be "metallic" and he recites it in a "metallic" voice (Vaginov 1999, 126). His main occupation, aside from literature, turns out to be dentistry, and the descriptions of Misha's doing his dentistry job are painstakingly graphic. "*A tiny electric engine* revved, and a *needle* with a cogged (*toothed*) bulge on a *tiny* thin rubber pipe began to revolve; the *electric light* illuminated the ceiling and *softly fell* [on the floor]; a *piercing light* was *shed onto the patient's face*. In half an hour, the root-canal was cleaned and one could put on a crown." "Misha produced a *tiny* bottle, scooped a few drops of liquid with a *tiny utensil made of steel*..." "He [...] *pressed the crown into the patient's mouth* and, *holding it down with two fingers*, looked out the window. Now, for at least some time, he was free." "He wiped dry the *utensils* and placed them into a *small glassy* cabinet onto a *small glassy shelf*" (Vaginov 1999, 122; emphasis added). "Mikhail Petrovich recalled that [...] again he must *thrust his fingers into open mouths and feel around people's gums*" (Vaginov 1999, 127; emphasis added).

The notions of smallness and softness combine in the above cited examples with the notion of sharpness, pressure, piercing, and steel. Misha's fingers in the patient's mouth are mentioned more than once, in close proximity with "tiny utensil [*instrumentikom*]". Given that

Misha's last name, Kotikov, is formed from a diminutive of 'cat [kotik],’ the resulting association is of a cat with soft paws but sharp claws. The “piercing” electric light, shed directly into the patient's face and mentioned in the same paragraph with the needle spinning on an “electric engine [*elektricheskaia mashinka*],” along with Misha's “thrusting” fingers, invokes an image of torture. The culminating moment ending the session (which begins with Misha's “raising the seat with a patient in it” and ends with his “lowering the seat with a patient in it”) is when, by glancing at the golden crown, freshly implanted into the patient's mouth, Misha gains a word-image for his future poem, a golden plateau. This is when the patient is released, and Misha calls for the “next one”: “One element [of the future poem] was obtained; ‘*Next one!*’ [he called out]” (Vaginov 1999, 122). Pulling a valuable word out of the “patient's” mouth by force, such is the ultimate goal and the true nature of Misha Kotikov's “dentistry.”

Misha *live-enters* his patients in a quite literal sense: by thrusting his fingers into their mouths, his untensils into their root-canals, and inspecting their innermost with the “piercing” light shed directly into their faces. The function of light as a means of torture and penetration may help re-interpret the scene of Misha Kotikov and Kostia Rotikov's initial encounter at the Anichkov bridge (Vaginov 1999, 19) as a momentous intellectual duel between Misha (Bakhtin) and Kostia (Vaginov) on the nature of live-entering.

In *The Goat Song*, Misha Kotikov and his antipode-double Kostia Rotikov are introduced to the reader when they politely “offer one another a lighted match on the 25th of October Prospect,” former Nevskii (Vaginov 1999, 19). In *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, Svistonov and Kuku “walk towards one another under the chandelier light” (Vaginov 1999, 163). The heroes' respective positions invoke Bakhtin's seminal metaphor in “The Author and the Hero in

the Aesthetic Activity”: “We both stand opposite one another in God’s world” (Bakhtin 2003, 114). Several moments unite these two scenes, besides the spatial similarity to the mutual positions of Bakhtin’s author and hero. Both encounters occur very early in the text, as a way of introducing the characters. In both instances, some kind of artificial light is involved: the light of a lit up match in Kotikov and Rotikov’s case, and the light of a chandelier in the case of Svistonov and Kuku. Both scenes feature a gesture or a movement which can be read, I believe, as an actualized metaphor; more precisely, an idiom, which has to do with the economy of human relationships.

Svistonov and Kuku “walk toward each other [*poshli navstrechu drug drugu*].” The latter expression is synonymous, in Russian, with “they worked out a compromise,” “made peace.” Kotikov and Rotikov lit up matches for one another; the slight absurdity of their gestures is supposed to serve as a hyperbola of their mutual politeness. On the level of physical reality, their gestures are redundant: in the absence of the smoking material, which is never mentioned, the only other thing a lit up match does is give light (like the chandelier in *The Works and Days*...). On the one hand, a lit up match helps one’s vision. On the other hand, in the described situation, a lit up match would blind one of the counterparts, while at the same time providing a surplus of vision for the other.

Kotikov and Rotikov’s excessive politeness is pregnant with latent violence. In the exchange between Kotikov and Rotikov, the ambiguity of their gestures, polite and violent at once, hints at the characters’ mutual antagonism and possibly, given that Vaginov’s names are floating signifiers, may signal the ensuing argument between Misha (Bakhtin) and Kostia (Vaginov) about the idea of live-entering.

3. 7. A Purgatory for the Author

By simultaneous invocation of two mutually exclusive literary models of envy, one destructive (Salieri's envy in Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri*) and the other productive, emulative ("the "good Eris" in Hesiod's *Works and Days*) and by parodically superimposing them onto Bakhtin's "The author and the hero in the Aesthetic Activity," Vaginov identifies the blind spot in Bakhtin's otherwise insightful theory of live-entering. Voyeuristic elements of the artist's aesthetic activity can come dangerously close to spying and denunciation [*donos*]. In the process of live-entering as mental introjection, the author always runs a risk of simply projecting his own fears, insecurities and vices onto the hero, especially if this hero is yet another, superior author. This risk is doubly high in the genre of the biography, which may explain the sharp refusal of the Unknown Poet in *The Goat Song* to have one (Vaginov 1999, 69).

Vaginov's prose (and poetry) signals an increasing tendency to the hermetic, cryptic writing, as the uprooting of cultural values in the newly forming society imposes limits on both the writer's target audience (intellectuals educated in the pre-Revolutionary Russia) and on the possibilities of free artistic expression. Because they reveal and extrapolate the subtle subtexts and overall mindset of an artist, literature and the literary science in these circumstances begin to look more and more like a political *donos*: a theme continued and further developed by Vaginov in his third novel, *Bambocciada* (1929-31), which unfortunately exceeds the limits of the current chapter. Peaceful and evenly-paced work, prescribed by Hesiod as an alternative to envy, seems impossible in the 1920s unless the artist collaborates with the regime of various Kandalykins (Bolsheviks). The writer's natural capacity for live-entering makes the latter an

attractive candidate for recruitment by the OGPU, who need countless “man dressed in black” (Pushkin 1948, 131) for stalking Mozart.

And yet, despite his worst anxieties, Vaginov does not give up his poetic license. Like Pushkin’s Mozart, who “would hate to part with [his] work,” Svistonov hates to part with his. No longer split into different heroes (unlike the fragmented author of *The Goat Song*), he “wholly [*tselikom*]” enters the made-alive world of his own creation. In the penultimate chapter of *The Works and Days of Svistonov*, Vaginov and Svistonov re-unite in the yet another inserted “Foreword,” alluding to earlier, similarly misplaced “forewords/prologues” of *The Goat Song*, as Vaginov-Svistonov makes up a pastiche of Aleksandra Osipovna Ishimova’s stories for children from the 1842 issue of *Zvezdochka* [*Little Star*].

The said excerpts from Ishimova prefigure, almost verbatim, the deceptively grim finale of the entire novel, but their tone is drastically upbeat. The parallel, albeit a contrasting one, with the novel’s finale is achieved through the repetition of synonymous adverbs: ‘*totchas*’ [then and now] in Ishimova, ‘*seichas*’ [here and now] in Svistonov. “[In a truly good book] you immediately [*totchas*] recognize people’s faces, physiognomies, habits, and it seems, *you would recognize them right away* [*totchas*], had you encountered them. [...] No matter how many decades or even centuries have passed since writing such a book, its descriptions would remain beautiful [*prekrasnymi*], because they are true to nature” (Vaginov 1999, 230; emphasis added). This runs concurrently with the finale of *The Works and Days of Svistonov*: “Wherever Svistonov went, he would see his heroes. They would have had different last names, different bodies, different manners, but *he would recognize them right away* [*seichas zhe*]. Thus, Svistonov wholly transferred into his own work of art” (Vaginov 1999, 234).

Aleksandra Ishimova is famous for being the last addressee of Pushkin, to whom he wrote before the duel, "Today I happened to open your *History in Stories* and lost myself in reading. This is how one should write!" (In: Pushkin 1999, 509). In making Svistonov copy Ishimova's description of a good book in *Zvezdochka* as the last act of copy-pasting for his, supposedly, weak novel, Vaginov effectively applies to Svistonov, and therefore, to himself (his separate, authorial, self), Pushkin's praise, "This is how one should write."

In the atmosphere of mutual spying, when one's envy could be easily satisfied through denouncing one's neighbor, college, former friend, the Vaginov experiences an anxiety of turning into a spy, become a tool in the hands of the secret police due to his superior gift of live-entering. He also finds himself in a precarious position of a spy on a spy by revealing the possibility of this happening to his own colleague. Yet, by complementing the heroes with the "redeeming aesthetic elements," Vaginov portrays them as "beautiful, because [...] true to nature" and he reveals himself, in the final aftermath, as a competent author.

Chapter 4. “Not Too Much or Quite a Lot?” The Logic of Generosity in the Works of Aleksandr Grin (“The Scarlet Sails,” *Jessi and Morgiana*, “Fandango”)

If Olesha portrays the pain of envy from within the envious consciousness of the author, and Vaginov, in his parodying homage of Bakhtin, conceptualizes this pain as the author’s failure to achieve *outsidedness*, Grin goes against the grain of the entire Russian literary tradition, which had so far focused almost entirely on the sufferings of Salieri and left Mozart out of the equation. Grin’s empathy is always with the envied and his main pathos is to let the best man (or woman!) win. This chapter considers three works by Grin: his “fairy play [*feeriia*]”⁵⁷ “The Scarlet Sails” (1923), his story “Fandango” (1927), which I see as Grin’s literary manifesto, and one of his late and least understood novels, “Jessie and Morgiana” (1929), from the point of view of envy as a form of incompetent authorship. Bakhtin’s concept of authorship in “The Author and the Hero...” is complemented, in this chapter, with Melanie Klein’s theory of the breast envy, the metaphor of the breast standing for creativity (Klein 1957, 39-40).

4. 1. Melanie Klein: Envy Poisons Milk

Bakhtin’s dialectic of the author and the hero can be compared, to a certain extent, to the dialectic of mother and infant relationships in Melanie Klein’s theory of the breast, with the mother being the author of the child. Unlike the reciprocity enjoyed by the author and the hero in Bakhtin, who posits that each individual has “an absolute aesthetic need of the other” (Bakhtin 2003, 130), the infant in Klein experiences an acute envy of the mother (and her metonymy, the nourishing breast) for not being able to reciprocate the gift of life bestowed by the breast. In not being able to control the breast, to receive it and to own it at the same time,

⁵⁷ I adopt Barry Scherr’s translation of the term ‘*feeriia*’ (Scherr 1976, 387).

the infant develops the ambiguous idea of the good and bad breast: it is good when it is present and bad when it is absent. Moreover, according to Klein, the good breast must be capable of reciprocity. Besides providing the infant with the life-source in the form of milk, the breast serves as a receptacle of the infant's anxieties and persecutory complex (the result of postpartum condition): pressed to the breast for physical comfort and warmth, the baby is relieved from the terror of being alone, in the clutches of death, as it were (Klein 1957, 14; 39). Harold Boris, speaking of envy in adult individuals as the result of their entrapment in the infantile stage of psychological development, puts it in strikingly aesthetic terms: patients suffering from envy feel that, as children, "they had been conceived but not *conceived of* [by their parents]" (Boris 1994, 6; emphasis added).

Envy of the breast informs the misogyny of the adult culture, with its stereotypical opposition of two female types, one pliant and controlled by the man (the good breast) and the other independent, threatening and controlling (the bad breast), including such stereotypes as Madonna vs. the whore, fair maiden vs. old hag, a woman-child vs. the vamp, the naïve beauty vs. the spinster-intellectual, and so on (Marsh 1998, 2-41). According to Harold Boris, envying the woman her ability to naturally produce babies and milk, the male consciousness in the pre-feminist era strives to devalue this primary creativity as non-essential and inferior to the intellectual effort and creative ingenuity (Boris 1994, 34). What is at stake is the idea of an undeserved gift bestowed onto woman by nature as opposed to the male achievement for which one must work hard: a conflict very much reminiscent of Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri*.

The idea of envy as poison, which informs Pushkin's play, gains a new, unexpected dimension when seen from Klein's perspective. According to Klein, the infant's envy spoils (in

his mind) the very source of life: the mother's milk. Klein explains the individual's organic inability to take the good in, to enjoy life, by an adult's subconscious anxiety about having spoiled the good breast and the resulting sense of guilt at the very possibility to accept gifts of creativity or happiness (Klein 1957, 15-6; 28-9). Spite (spitting out the milk) finds its theoretical explanation in Klein as the opposite of appetite. This latter theme, prominent also in Olesha, is treated by Grin on the aesthetic level, as opposed to the anti-aesthetic (revolting) in Olesha's *Envy* (see chapter 2 of the present study).

Salieri's well known morbid seriousness as opposed to Mozart's light-heartedness in Pushkin can be thus seen not simply as given difference in temperaments, but also as manifestations of being or not being envious, and this is where Bakhtin and Klein diverge. According to Bakhtin, the state of unclouded happiness, innocence, blissful smile, may characterize the hero as seen from without, but is impossible for the author's self-conscious 'I' during the process of creation. "When I create, I am serious to the extreme [*predel'no ser'ezen*]" (Bakhtin 2003, 204), not because unhappy, but because focused on the task. One may recall Mandel'stam's famous interpretation of Mozart and Salieri, related by Nadezhda Mandel'stam in her collection of essays, *Mozart and Salieri* (1973), as the two complementary modes of the creative process (Mandel'stam 1973, 16-8). Similarly to this model of creativity, Grin often turns to the theme of music as a perfect combination of unbridled fantasy, on the one hand, and somber calculation, on the other.

While, from Kleinian perspective, Grin's preference for essentially asexual, ethereal heroines may be interpreted as envy of the breast, his emphasis on happiness, enjoyment of life, and appetite are quite opposite to such envy. Additionally, the childlike qualities of his

positive heroines are comparable, in Grin, to the traits of the mythical Mozart-child and are in harmony with the modernist view of the childlike artist. What distinguishes Grin from many (if not all) of his contemporaries, is the amount of attention he pays to the inner world of his heroines portraying them, despite all the paraphernalia of “woman-child” stereotype, as complex and self-conscious beings. Grin’s heroines are pure, but they are not naïve: the uniqueness of Grin is perhaps in illuminating this, rarely understood, distinction. Or, rather, they are pure and naïve by choice rather than out of ignorance: “To everything said in these lines the girl stood with her back [*stoiala spinoi*]” (Grin 1993b, 43).

This chapter discusses how Grin’s literary insight into envy allows him to access and, at times, overcome his own, most certainly, unconscious⁵⁸ misogyny (envy of the breast) inherent in the literary conventions both in Russia and in the West, and exacerbated, in Russia, by what Daniel Rancour-Laferriere has termed the “matrifocality” of the Russian culture. According to Rancour-Laferriere, “Maternal imagery permeates all levels of Russian society and culture. To the Westerner, there seems to be an excess of signification about mothers in Russia, and this excess indicates that the average Russian needs to continue dealing, even in adulthood, with the experience of having been mothered” (Rancour-Laferriere 1995, 138).

⁵⁸ Being invited to speak during the 1918 “evening-dispute” dedicated to the question, “Is woman a human?”, Grin delivered a passionate speech in defense of woman, which ran counter to the superficial atmosphere of the evening. Needless to say, the very idea of such debate and participation in still smack of misogyny, especially in Vladimir Sandler’s account of it: “Some third-rate female poet began to prove the opposite in a boring tone and boring words [...]; suddenly [Grin saved the day]” (*Vospominania ob Aleksandre Grine* 1972, 510-11).

Grin's personal view of the role of wife as the husband's surrogate mother, accounted for in both of Grin's wives' memoirs (*Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Grine* 1972, 153-200; 322-403) and in V. Varlamov's most recent biography of Grin (Varlamov 2006) fully confirms this theory.

4. 2. "A Third-Rate Stevenson"

Known first and foremost for his "fairy play [*feeriia*]" "The Scarlet Sails" (1923), which, quite contrary to Grin's will, came to be interpreted in the 1960s, as a kind of a red Cinderella, Grin has enjoyed the status of a cult writer in the USSR between 1960s and late 1980s, and made a second come back in the mid-2000s, but the common opinion of him in the West as little more than an author of popular fiction for adolescents prevails.

The paradox of Grin as a writer is that, while openly admitting his indebtedness to the first- and second-rate Western adventure novels, he emerges on the Russian literary scene as an independent artist with his own, unmistakably unique voice, long before the Revolution of 1917, and remains, until his death of natural causes in 1932, proudly unengaged with the October Revolution (Luker 1980, 43), while actually earning his daily bread by writing. His last days, just like the time of his youth, are marred with hunger and poverty, complete with the anathema proclaimed onto him by the reigning ideology.

Motivating their rejection of Grin's manuscript in 1931, the proletarian publishing house "Earth and Factory" has formulated their refusal in the following terms: "*You do not want to respond to the epoch, and the epoch, which we represent, brings vengeance onto you*" (*Vospominania...1972*, 555; italics added). Seen through the Bakhtinian prism, the Soviet ideology's charge against Grin can be theoretically reformulated as an accusation of non-answerability, a sort of an "alibi in being" (Bakhtin 2003, 19).

On the one hand, the misogynist and colonialist clichés, naively imported by Grin from his favorite childhood readings of Western authors, present a certain limitation of his famous “inventiveness” (praised by Olesha⁵⁹). In this respect he is an incompetent author envious of his heroines and claiming an impossible autonomy from the society/community imagined as a terrifying, possessive mother. On the other hand, Grin’s openly declared *Western-mindedness* provides him with a legitimate way to critically disassociate from the (ostensibly feminine, but essentially male-dominated and paternalistic) “motherland” and assert his own creative freedom, even if branded a “third-rate Stevenson” (Struve 1971, 365), and be exempt from the confines of the Soviet discourse.

It is fascinating to think how many times Russia lost and rediscovered Grin, each time in a new capacity: as a “third-rate Stevenson,” Edgar Poe, or Ambrose Bierce; as a dangerous anti-Russian “cosmopolitan” (Vazhdaev 1950, 257-72) as an embodiment of the vaguely defined Revolutionary Romanticism (Kovskii 1966; *Vospominaniia...* 1972, the “Alyi stiag” foto between pp.208-209); as an author of a dark sexual thriller “Jesse and Morgiana,” and finally, today, as a foreshadower of the ardent partisan of the Ego, Ayn Rand⁶⁰. Grin’s critical reception at home and abroad reveals an interesting paradox: he was stigmatized by some and praised by others

⁵⁹ “They say, sometimes, that Grin’s writing is an imitation of Edgar Poe [or] Ambrose Bierce. How can you imitate inventiveness? You’d still have to invent! He is not imitating them; he is their equal; he is just as unique as they are” (Olesha 1965, 504).

⁶⁰The Russian translation of Ayn Rand’s *Romantic Manifesto* (1962) came out of print in 2011 with a brigantine under the scarlet sails on the cover.

for one and the same thing: inventing an imaginary land of his own, in retrospect named by the immigrant critic Kornelii Zelinskii "Grinlandia" (Zelinskii 1934, 3-35).

While Grin's opponents in Russia and later in the USSR castigated him for escapism, anti-Russian tendencies and lack of class agenda, his adherents, such as Paustovskii, defended him on the same grounds, trying to prove that only time and Grin's own "Romantic" impatience prevented him from entering the ranks of Soviet writers in the full meaning of the word (Paustovskii 1964, 4). Visiting a bookstore in Baku, Georgia, Maiakovskii complains, "There is only one Russian [author] on Baku bookstore shelves, and even that one is Grin" (Mayakovskii 1959, 75). In her *Notes about Anna Akhmatova*, Lidiia Chukovskaia dismissively characterizes Grin's language as to "neither a translation, nor Esperanto" (Chukovskaia 2013, 578). "The flag on the mast of Grin's ship is Anglo-American," warns the vigilant critic, V. Vazhdaev (Vazhdaev 1950, 266). At the same time, critics abroad, such as already mentioned Gleb Struve, or, later, Barry Scherr were rather skeptical towards Viacheslav Zavalishin's praise of Grin as an "anomaly in Soviet literature" (Zavalishin 1958, 112-3), finding fault with his love of action novels and fairy tale plots as, paradoxically, the convenient vessels for Soviet ideology (Scher 1976, 387-99).

In "The Life of Aleksandr Grin" (1964), Konstantin Paustovskii portrays Grin as "frenzied dreamer [*neistovyi mechtatel'*]", whom the old, pre-Revolutionary] Russia "cruelly deprived by taking away his love of the real" (Paustovskii 1964, 3; 15). Vadim Kovskii endorses Paustovskii's position in his *The Romantic world of Aleksandr Grin* (1975), but takes a more balanced approach in his foreword to the 1991 edition of Grin's works, pointing at Grin's apparent "romantic entourage" as a device laid bare. "More often than not, it is not the romantic

‘double-worldlinnes [*dvoemirie*],’ which suggests that the writer, having re-fashioned the reality along the romantic lines, now believes in this imaginary world as in a new reality, but both worlds: the real and the imaginary, laid out in front of the reader like a deck of cards” (Kovskii 1991, 22).

Grin’s misogyny is the reverse side of his struggle to free himself from the clutches of the jealous motherland: the same one that “devoured” Aleksandr Blok⁶¹. The protagonist of the short story, “The Reno Island” (1909), which marks the birth of Grin’s unique style, speaks about “theshort and terrifying name, ‘motherland [*rodina*],’ which should mean ‘a place where one is born [*mesto, gde chelovek rodilsia*],’ and nothing more” (Grin 1993b, 234). In the short story “The Return [*Vozvrashchenie*],” the peasant traveler returns to his northern home to die, but at the last moment looks out the window, unable to suppress the longing for the south; he realizes that the meaning of life is “to find and acknowledge life wherever it is” (Grin 1994b, 333): generosity that was interpreted as treason by vigilant Stalinist witch-hunters during the “anti-cosmopolitan campaign.” In the 1950s, Grin’s books were secretly removed from the public libraries.

Shklovskii’s characterization of Grin’s heroes as “blue on a colorful background” (*Vospominaniia...* 1972, 204), as well as the popular opinion of Grin as a literary sooth-sayer, is slightly misinformed. If Grin was an “escapist” then it should be remembered that he, indeed, *escaped* countless times in the real life: from home, from the Tsarist army, from the Siberian

⁶¹ The image of Russia as a sadistic mother is well known from Aleksandr Blok’s letter to Kornei Chukovskii, “Mother Russia, the little dirty pig, has devoured [me] her piglet” (Blok 1963, 537).

exile, from the SR terrorist organization, and from the company of a professional vagabond who tried to engage him in murder and robbery (*Vospominaniia...* 1972, 444-51).

Grin's favored literary device, the *trompe l'oeil*, the shift of visual perspective, is in some respect akin to Bakhtin's call for outsidedness in authorship. In a draft to "The Scarlet Sails," published separately under the title, "Writing Fiction Has Always Been My External Profession [Sochinitel'stvo vseгда bylo vneshnei moei professiei]," Grin speaks about the nature of creativity as his main interest and describes the process of writing closely to Bakhtin, as meeting of the author and the hero, on the one hand, and the author's being "gone" from the everyday life and immune to its demands and any petty emotional concerns while creating (Grin 1994c, 492-4).

In addition to the already mentioned *trompe l'oeil*, another characteristic feature of Grin's writing is the combination of a deliberately complex, convoluted syntax and rich imagery, on the one hand, with liberal application of tautology and tautological repetition, on the other. These three dimensions (shift of visual perspective; complex writing style; tautology and repetition) seem to be Grin's technique of confronting envy through authorship. Much of Grin's writing can be understood as variations on the Biblical motif in the Book of Matthew: listening, but not being able to hear and looking, but not being able to see (Matt 13:15); but also, on the motif of deafness and blindness as a deliberate choice. One may choose to be deaf and blind to the lowly "truths" (such as gossip, libel, or vulgarity) in order to focus on the eternal and the lofty; and vice versa. The latter is the working of envy; the former, authorship.

In a short allegorical tale, "The Stream [Struia]" (1917), Grin tells a story of a little fish who fell through the crevice in the ground by following the current and grew blind having spent

a long time in the dark underground waters. Longing for light, she finds no words to explain to the local fish who are blind from birth, what light is, and only repeats, “I am telling you: in the light, there is light [*govoriat vam, chto na svetu svetlo*].” Upon contemplating and renouncing her envy to the more lucky fellow-fish, who managed to remain upstream, the little fish regains her eyesight by way of a miracle (Grin 1991, 91-3). The tautological repetition “in the light there is light,” serves the heroine of Grin’s story as a spiritual mnemonic device at the time when the physical eyesight temporarily fails her. In the context of ‘light,’ the colloquial ‘I’m telling you [*govoriat vam*],’ subtly hints at Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, with its repetition of ‘they say’ and ‘I say’ (Matt 5:1-7:29, Luke 6:12-41).

4. 3. The Seer and the Seed: Grin’s “Fairy Play [Feeriia]” “The Scarlet Sails”

In an early draft for the “Scarlet Sails” (1923), Grin’s most renowned work, titled, “Sochinitel’stvo vseгда bylo vneshnei moei professiei,” Grin describes the inception of the “Scarlet Sails” in the form of *mise en abyme*, as a story about a ship with red sails told by his “friend,” a fictional writer, Mas-Tuel, but left unfinished. Upon seeing, in a window shop, a model ship that called to mind Mas-Tuel’s story, the first person narrator feels the urge to “intervene in the story [*vmeshat’sia v etu istoriu*] in order to complete it, as if it *were written* by myself, and then *I would write about it*” (Grin 1994c, 485; italics added). As always, Grin’s tautology (the desire to “write the story” and then to “write about” it) is full of meaning: the story is created twice, first from the inside and then, from the outside: the prefix ‘o- [about]’ being synonymous with the preposition ‘*vokrug* [around].’ In addition to the recognizably symbolic imagery of the “impenetrable curtain between the author and the scene of his soul,” Grin utilizes a remarkably vivid picture of a creative self “wrapped around” the ‘*zamyseľ*’

(incepted idea), while immune to everything that happens within it (cf.: “the intense outsidedness” [*napriazhennaia vnenakhodimost’*] and “decelerating over the experience” [*zamedlenie nad perezhivaniem*] in Bakhtin).

But the curtain has fallen. [...] Then, the artist undertakes truly magical actions. He draws a circle of the prospective work around himself and, being under its protection, becomes invisible. He *fell out* of the society, family, apartment; he is absent from the state and from the planet Earth. The circle [...] repels passions, promises, curiosity, books, and friends; inside of it, the flame of the most intense rage gets extinguished; envy, frozen on the spot; the noise of the battle, silenced; and real live people, whose hands were shaken just yesterday, remain only as dim shadows (Grin 1994c, 485-6; italics in the original).

The plot of “The Scarlet Sails” is modeled on the story of Cinderella, the archetypal tale about envy, according to Ann and Boris Ulanov (Ulanov 1998), who also equate Cinderella’s sufferings to that of Christ. In a small imaginary town of Kaperna, its name derived, according to Kovskii, from the biblical Capernaum (Kovskii 1975, 87), there lives a poor girl, Assol’, with her widowed father, Longren. Having retired from the navy and found his daughter orphaned, Longren dedicates the rest of his life to the “not so easy art of raising a girl” (Grin 1993a, 7) and carves out wooden toy models of real ships and boats for a living. One day he runs out of regular white cloth and makes the sail for one of the toy yachts out of a scarlet silk strip. On her way to sell the toy in Liss, another imaginary town, Assol’ sets the yacht on water in a stream in the woods and, following the escaping yacht, runs into a collector of folklore, and old man named Egl’, sitting ashore the stream, in whose hands she finds the yacht she temporarily lost

from vision. Egl' entertains Assol' with an improvised story, in which she plays the main role: one day, a marvelous ship with scarlet sails will come to Kaperna and a beautiful young captain will take Assol' as his bride to a land far away. Assol' takes the dream to heart and lives to see the ship with the scarlet sails come for her: a young and beautiful captain Arthur Grey, upon visiting Kaperna and hearing the story, acts it out in real life, to the dismay of the envious villagers.

Upon returning home after meeting Egl', little Assol' provides an account of his improvised story, along with the events that frame it, in the conversation with her father; she renders the events in the opposite chronological order (Grin 1965, 16), reminiscent of Freud's and Florenskii's the logic of the dream (Freud 2005a, 306; Florenskii 1996, 41). Egl' is now the character in the story, and Assol', its author (Grin 1993a, 7-65).

It may be argued that the story of the scarlet sails has no easily identified beginning but inconspicuously "sails" into the book as if from another reality. Egl's imagination is born out of Assol's imagination when she plays with the yacht; and her imagination, in turn, is born out of her father, Longren's idea to make the yacht, which combines elements of the real (Longren's firsthand knowledge of naval architecture) with the imaginary brought about by chance (the scarlet sail). Once in plain view, the story is being told, retold, and reinterpreted from different points of view: that of Longren, who takes it as a "kind joke" on Egl's part, that of the villagers, who take it first as a whim and then as madness, and finally, that of Arthur Grey, a young captain, who, upon hearing the story in its vulgarized version, elevates it to its proper, spiritual level and acts it out in real life (Grin 1993a, 38).

Two perspectives, that of Grey and that of Khin Menner, are juxtaposed and contrasted, revealing two views on Assol': Khin's passive and "fruitless" "clinical approach" and Grey's creative and active effort of making Assol's dream come true. Correspondingly, Khin is sitting with his back to Assol', who is passing by the window, while Grey is given the privilege of seeing her face. "'The girl you are describing must be the Naval Assol', said Khin, "Who else could this be? She is half-witted/mad [poloumnaia]'. " [...] Walking along the road, facing [Grey], was the very same Assol', to whom Khin has just related *in clinical terms*" (Grin, 1993a, 36-7; italics in the original).

Assol's gaze renders Menner's account of her invalid and turns the story into the right direction: Grey will now complete the story by making it real and, simultaneously, by taking on the role of its hero, Assol's predestined fiancé.

Grey was serious, like an anatomist. He was patiently sorting out the bundles, moving some of them farther away and others to the side; unwrapped and looked, holding them against the light, such a multitude of scarlet stripes, that it seemed as if the shelf, covered with heaps of them, would set on fire. A purpur wave covered the tip of Grey's boot; on his hands and face, shone a shade of the rose color. Rummaging through the lightweight resistance of silk, he distinguished colors: red, hot pink and rose pink; thick froths of cherry, orange, and brown-red tones; there were shades of all forces and meanings, different in their seeming kinship, like words: 'charming' – 'beautiful' – 'gorgeous' – 'faultless'; in the folds, hints inaccessible to the language of vision were hiding; but the true scarlet color did not present itself to the eyes of our captain for a

long time; everything that the shop-keeper was bringing was good, but did not call forth a clear and firm 'yes' (Grin 1993a, 49; italics added).

Grey's search for the right shadow of red in order to make the scarlet sails is long and thorough, and shades of the color are explicitly equated with the shades of meaning. In Vera Kalitskaia's memoir of Grin, she recalls Grin's proud remark about the above quoted passage, "Note my wealth of vocabulary in describing the color red" (*Vospominania...* 1972, 198). He is "serious like an anatomist," which reveals his literary kinship with Pushkin's Salieri and corresponds with Bakhtin's description of the self's face expression in the moment of creative process as "extremely serious," devoid of any smile (Bakhtin 204); he is speaking "the language of vision," and the strips of cloths are equated with the elements of water and fire at once: everything becomes involved in the act of creation. Grey looks at the scraps of cloths "against the light [*na svet*]", yet it is the light of Assol's gaze that inspired the search in the first place: "in the light of her gaze [*v svete ee vzgliada*]" (Grin 1993a, 36).

Grey can be likened to God in his act of creating out of fire and water; Assol' too has a divine dimension to her. In addition to being a sort of a Christ bride (or, in the symbolist language, the wife clothed in the Sun), she is also capable, in an act of active empathy, to literally "put herself in God's place [*ona vkhodila v ego polozhenie*]" (Grin 1994, 44). This capacity of Assol' is brought up in connection with her feeling remarkably secure about Longren's absences: "She was not tormented by fear; she knew that nothing bad would happen to him. In this respect Assol' was the same little girl who prayed in her own way, saying 'Hi, God' in the morning and 'Bye, God' in the evening. In her mind, such close acquaintance with God was sufficient [...] to avert the trouble" (Grin 1993a, 43-4). Like a competent Bakhtinian

author, Assol' "feel[s] at home in the world of other people" (Bakhtin 2003, 179-80), regardless of the tragic incident at the sea shore, which "made solid the vague sense of alienation" between the villagers and her father (Grin 1993a, 10).

The prehistory of Assol's and her father's tension with the villagers reveals the thin line between envy and the sense of justice, and, at the same time, highlights the literary stereotype of woman as "Madonna vs. the whore" in Grin's work. The father of Khin, the older Menner, refused to help to Assol's mother, Mary, in need other than in exchange for Mary's sexual favors. The poor woman, having rejected his advances, returns home on a rainy night empty-handed and soon dies because of catching cold on her way back. As befits the Cinderella master plot, the mother is dead from the very beginning, having no place in the story. Her life of poverty, her encounter with the older Menner, and her subsequent death are narrated by a female villager, who took care of Assol' after Mary's death and until the girl was "grown enough to step over the door's threshold." At this point, Longren thanks the self-appointed nanny and politely but resolutely asks her to leave. He is now replacing Assol' her mother and "learns the not-so-easy art of raising a girl" (Grin 1993a, 7-10).

Envy of the breast is apparent, although not intended by Grin, in the hero's stubborn refusal of help while admitting that the "art" of raising the girl is "not so easy." As if making sure that Assol', unlike Cinderella, does not have a wicked stepmother, the nanny is dismissed as the most close candidate for this role; the role of the good God-mother, peculiarly, is delegated to two men: Egl', who plants the idea of the scarlet sails into Assol's mind, and Arthur Grey, who delivers the promise. While on some level Assol' can be viewed as an author-

mother “carrying” the embryo of the story to fruition⁶², on the other – and more immediately obvious level – Assol’ is only a passive recipient of men’s fantasies and actions.

On the one hand, Grin’s innovation could be seen in his portraying Assol’s preservation of her dream as a kind of spiritual pregnancy: a deed rather than passive waiting. On the other hand, the absence of the actual mother from the story, with the father readily taking her place, is a pattern with most of Grin’s works, populated with father-daughter families. This tendency can be viewed as one of many manifestations of Grin’s rebellious temperament: rather than sharing into the matrifocal ideology of his native milieu, with its “focus on mother-and-son relationships rather than on father-and-son or mother-and-father” (Rancour-Laferriere 1995, 137), it is father-and-daughter matrix in Grin, with the male (son’s) fantasy of raising his own mother, his own woman, which would be better than the one who raised him.

The essentially Salierian motif of ‘truth-and-justice [*pravda*]’ enters the scene as Longren avenges Mary’s death in the same way Menners let her perish: as an unstirred bystander at Menner’s being carried away by the raging sea on a stormy night. Rescued by fishermen, Menners survives for a few days to tell the story of Longren silent by-standing. Kapernians are most of all shoked at Longren’s silence, which they rightly interpret as spiteful. When asked by Assol’ why the villagers do not love them, Longren answers that “they do not know how to love” (Grin 1965, 9), and in another place Kapernians are described as a vulgar mob, with a taste for “fat, greasy women” and a manner of slapping their backs as a way of courting. “Nothing like love could have possible existed there” (Grin 1994a, 43).

⁶² See in “Sochinitel’stvo”: “The idea of a loving motherly destiny begged itself [*naprashivalas’*]” (Grin 1994c, 488).

“The incident with Menners solidified the so far incomplete alienation [between the villagers and Longren]” (Grin 1993b, 10). Although from the legal point of view the older Menners is not the direct cause of Mary’s death, his fault is implied in the spiritual sphere: Mary dies because of humiliation and despair as much as because of natural causes. The question is, whom to consider the real offender: the crude and simple-minded hero, Menners, or the intellectually refined author, Grin, whose only scenario for an adult woman is to be separated from her husband for months on end and then die at the slightest possibility of a sexual encounter, portrayed in the most repulsive light⁶³.

It would be inaccurate, however, to treat Grin’s essentially symbolist portrayal of the main heroine, Assol’, as one-dimensional. Assol’ is pure, but, contrary to the popular belief, she is not “naïve”: her purity is a choice (as will be clear from her literary “re-incarnation” as Jessie in “Jessie and Morgiana”). Grin does not deny Assol’s sexuality. The sails are “scarlet” after all, rather than pure white. “As a woman, she was unpopular in Kaperna [...]; yet many villagers vaguely sensed that she was gifted more than others, only *in a different language*” (Grin 1994,

⁶³ There is also Grey’s mother, a rigid aristocrat who, nevertheless, becomes warm and loving in the presence of her son. This is one of the rare, if not the only, instance of a mother figure in the entire Grin’s oeuvre, and the mother-son encounter is dedicated to the hero’s individuation. As a young boy, Grey helps a poor female servant in their house to marry her fiancé by providing them, anonymously, with money. We never see Betsy married, only as a bride; and, just like Assol’, she is at some point equated with the suffering Christ (Grin 1965, 18-30).

43; italics in the original). What is missing from the “language” of sexuality “spoken” in Kaperna is the aesthetic and spiritual dimension of love.

Grin invites the reader to look *inside* Assol’ while she is busy working. It turns out that Assol’ has a split identity: “There are two girls in her, two Assol’s, mixed in a remarkable irregularity [*peremeshannye v zamechatel’noi nepravil’nosti*]: one, the sailor’s daughter who crafted [*masterivshaia*] toys, and the other, a live poem [...] She knew life within the confines placed by immediate experience, but saw, above the common phenomena, the reflected light of a *different order*” (Grin 1993a, 42; italics in the original). Asymmetry and irregularity [*nepravil’nost’*] are important traits of Assol’s appearance, in addition to her suntanned skin and dark hair, counter to the classical portrayal of a beauty with “regular [*pravil’nye*]” features.

Asymmetry is akin to real or imaginary injustice, causing envy: she is gifted “more than others,” like Pushkin’s Mozart. At the same time, her daily life is filled with craftsmanship, ‘remeslo’: she is “crafting [*masterit*]” toys, and this is the seed of her ambivalence. In Pushkin, Mozart speaks of his music as ‘*bezdelitsa*’ [a toy, a plaything], while Salieri is the one who speaks about ‘*remeslo*’ [craftsmanship, technical skill]. The splitting of a female heroine into the spontaneous and the cerebral is in embryonic form in “Scarlet Sails,” but it remains as a recurrent motif in subsequent novels and stories.

Knowing the language of the other reality makes Assol’ the target of envy on the part of the low-brow villagers, but *she* holds a more generous view of her surroundings: in Bakhtin’s terms, she has a surplus of vision about them. In a conversation with Philipp, an older villager who trades in coal, Assol’ “translates” her language into his, explaining the value of the dream

and describes his own dream so vividly as to cause him to have a hallucination: he suddenly sees his basket with coal blossoming (Grin 1993a, 59).

The importance of sight/vision [*zrenie*] is emphasized through the motif of the mirror, and here two interesting moments take place. It turns out that, contrary to all expectations, Assol's core narcissism is not in the least damaged by the inimical environment. The villagers' rejection makes her suffer (Grin 1993a, 43), but her relationship to herself (or the soul reflected in the mirror) is caring and motherly⁶⁴. "The reflected girl smiled with the same unconscious smile as Assol'. The smile came out sad. Having noticed it, Assol' got worried, as if she were looking at someone else. She pressed her cheek to the glass, closed her eyes, and quietly caressed the mirror at her face level" (Grin 1993a, 42). The image of Assol' treating her reflection in the mirror with *motherly* love (she got worried; caressed the mirror) is in sharp contrast to the image of a man slapping himself on the face while looking in the mirror in "Fandango" (see section 4.4.3). Self-defacement and/or self-effacement, dictated by the logic of envy to the envied, are not virtues in Grin's world.

Another mirror-like scene is acted out in the dialogue between Khin Menner and Arthur Grey (Grin 1994a, 36-7). Interestingly, Grey's favorite kind of vodka is "khinnaia [(cinchona)": "I am sorry, Captain; I know you love the chincona flavor [*prostite, kapitan; ia*

⁶⁴ One may recall Iurii Zhivago's thoughts on creativity as daily mothering of self in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*: "What happiness it is to [...] emulate God in creating the world anew and, following your own mother, to give birth to yourself, again and again, anew" (Pasternak 1988, 22).

znaiu, chto vy liubite khinnuiu]” (Grin 1993b, 33). The phonetically close ‘Khin’ and ‘*kninnaia*’ point to two possibilities: either Grin suggests that a particle of Khin is in Arthur, on the principle of the yin-yang⁶⁵ equation, or that Assol’ could have been Khin’s bride, had he not missed the opportunity to properly compose the story. In either case, Khin is the first one to see the arrival of the scarlet sails in the finale: has he gone mad, instead of Assol’? Has he been redeemed and transformed into a competent author? It is worth remembering that, in the complementary novel *Jessie and Morgiana*, cinchona acts as an antidote for poison/envy. Perhaps, ‘khina’-cinchona, which is bitter to taste but has medicinal qualities, could signify, when taken homeopathically, creative potential — authorship not taken to its logical end and existing only in its embryonic state as envy.

The major point of the story, the well-known passage about the “seed of miracle,” addresses the question of social inequality, which is dismissed as non-essential: a bold move on Grin’s part in post-Revolutionary Russia.

I have discovered one simple truth [*odnu nekhitruiu istinu*]: the so called miracles must be worked by one’s own hand. When the main thing for a human being is the most dearly held five kopek [*drazhaishii piatak*], it is easy to give him the five kopeks. But if the human soul harbors the seed [*zerno*] of the fiery plant, the miracle, give him/her this miracle if you can [*esli ty v sostoianii*]. You will have a new soul and so will s/he” (Grin 1993a, 61).

Assol’ and Grey receive new souls in co-authoring the miracle: the phonetic and semantic potential of the word ‘*zerno* [seed]’, close to ‘*zrenie* [seein] and its homonym, ‘to

⁶⁵ Grin’s interest in Buddhism deserves special attention, outside of the current study.

ripen/mature [zret'], is fully realized in the idea of vision and point of view; as the precondition of plot maturation and nurturing the "seed" of creativity into a "fiery plant." Grey is "just as [Assol'] imagined" and so is Assol' for Grey (Grin 1965, 74). The line of Khin, missing the opportunity to treat Assol' different than from just a "clinical point of view" and thus losing her to the more creative Grey, imbues the conventional motif of the star-crossed lovers with a new meaning, that of choosing one's point of view. The addendum "if capable," omitted in both film versions of "The Scarlet Sails" (1961 and 1982), is very important as an indication of either fullness or insufficiency of the inner sources of authorship.

The word '*drazhaishii* [the most dearly held]' is phonetically close to '*drozhaschii* [shaking/shivering],' reminding the reader of Raskol'nikov's famous dilemma in Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), "Am I a shaking/shivering thing or do I have the right? [*tvar' ia drozhaschaia ili pravo imeiu?*]" (Dostoevskii 1989). Clutching to the "five kopeks," the self is shivering; like envy is shivering/freezing in Grin's excerpt on the nature of writing quoted earlier in this chapter. By contrast, the 'fiery plant [*plamennoe rastenie*]' of the miracle is the fuel of the soul⁶⁶, which explains Assol's friendship with the coal miner Philipp (Grin 1993b, 39; 59).

The phrase, "to work miracles by one's own hands" allowed Grin to be passed off as an "almost Soviet writer" in the 1960s, perhaps because of the false association with a line from

⁶⁶ Much like in Ayn Rand's "Romantic Manifesto," where she compares art with the "fuel" for the soul/mind; only Grin would object against the image of a car engine (Ayn Rand 1973, 152; 170).

the “International”: “We will seize freedom with our own hands [*dob’emsia my osvobozhden’a svoeiu sobstvennoi rukoi*].” But Grin’s message could not have been farther from the Revolutionary agenda. Following the passage about the miracle is the often neglected passage about the times “when a millionaire buys his secretary a villa” or “the head of the prison guard [*nachal’nik tiur’m*] releases the prisoner on his own volition,” “that would be a true miracle, and everyone will realize how good it feels. But there are simpler kinds of miracles: a smile, a happy disposition [*vesel’e*], forgiveness, and *the right word delivered just in time*” (Grin 1994a, 61; italics added).

The above passage, echoing Assol’s view of God’s world as a house full of guests rather than a battlefield for class struggle, reveals Grin’s ethical and aesthetic position to the fullest: envy is futile because there is more to gain in giving. Acting on the principle of envy is compared to the actions of the beggar, who insists that Longren should wake up Assol’ to give him some tobacco, simply because Longren’s tobacco is “better” than the beggar’s own. Grin does not discuss how the secretary would feel if given a villa; his focus is on the millionaire who will (but should not be forced to) feel good. But one does not have to wait for such improbable times, because one always has a gift to give: a smile, a happy disposition, and, last but not least, the right word delivered on time: the mark of competent authorship.

The effectiveness of Grey’s words is confirmed immediately as his listener, the skipper Panten, decides to apologize to a sailor whom he scolded a day before, and gives him some tobacco. The act of kindness is motivated only by Grey’s speech, because, as the reader learns from the same paragraph, the sailor deserved the scolding (he had lost a bucket in the river), and as for the tobacco, he had gambled it away (Grin 1994a, 61).

In a draft of one of his novels, Grin contemplates his choice of a female character, revealing the familiar stereotypes of woman as either an angel or a demon: “Down with you, monster! [...] I will find my heroine in such state [takoi], in which she herself wants to be: [...] A good girl. [...] She is kind, because her spiritual freshness and a large supply of moral strength is her gift to the others, issuing limitlessly and objectlessly” (quoted in Kovskii 1969, 160).

Grin’s artistic preference for “a good girl” type [*khoroishaia devushka*], of which Assol’ is but the first example, may limit him in the scope of his heroines, polarized along the stereotypical axis of ‘angel’ vs. ‘demon,’ but his emphasis on the limitless and objectless gift of kindness is insightful and corresponds to Klein’s vision of the breast as a self-replenishing source of creativity, equally applicable to both genders: the more ‘milk’ you give away, the more you generate⁶⁷, and the internalized good (the primary good object) translates into the objectless, ever-expanding love of the world, allowing one to freely give, receive, and pass the gift onto others.

4. 4. “Love is Love”: Tautology as a Surplus of Vision in *Jessie and Morgiana*

If, according to Viacheslav Zavalishin, Grin was “an anomaly in Soviet literature” (Zavalishin 1958, 311-12, in Struve 1971, 150), and, in Nikolas Luker’s words, “a spectacular oddity in the Russian literature” (Luker 2003, 195), Grin’s novel *Jessie and Morgiana* (1929) is an oddity within an oddity: a rare and so far unsatisfactorily explained occurrence in Grin’s

⁶⁷ Klein’s view of envy as the major threat to creativity is based on the envier’s desire “to consume all the milk at once, to suck the breast dry” or by damaging it: biting it, poisoning it with excrements, etc. (Klein 1957, 6-7; 9; 40).

oeuvre. The absolute majority of scholarship done on *Jessie and Morgiana* revolves around its radical difference from the rest of Grin's works. This chapter discusses the ethical and aesthetic continuities between the novel and the rest of Grin's writing by focusing on his symbolism of North vs. South as corresponding to envy vs. creativity, respectively, and on his use of tautology and repetition as a means of "correcting" the picture distorted by envy.

The novel has been widely received as Grin's failure and critics congratulated Grin on "returning" to his old technique in the "Road to Nowhere" (1930). Yet no such "return" ever took place, because, according to Nina Grin's memoir and Grin's own account, Grin worked on both novels at the same time (*Vospominania...* 1972, 371). Rather than being a "literary lapse" followed by an alleged "return" to old methods, *Jessie and Morgiana* is an organic continuation of Grin's previous explorations and a perfect complement to his most well-known work, "The Scarlet Sails."

Both works are dedicated to Nina Grin; both were initially conceived as meta-literary comments on the nature of writing, as follows from earlier drafts (Grin 1994c, 482; 532), and, contrary to Lucia Capodipullo's assumption that in *Jessie and Morgiana* Grin temporarily abandons his theme of the "marvelous [*chudesnoe*]" (Capodipullo 1975, 182), he does not. *Jessie and Morgiana* addresses the same theme of the miraculous [*chudesnoe*] as "The Scarlet Sails," only on a more subtle meta-literary level. Thus, one of the characters in *Jessie and Morgiana*, being saved from death and hearing from her savior that she was saved by a miracle [*chudo*], withholds her comment and thanks him merely for "having lifted her up". This last remark makes everything look dull and he feels no more desire to help her; the saved woman (who is

Morgiana's poison supplier) thinks to herself in a bout of "shaudenfreude": you thought I would underscore the miracle [*ty dumal ia podcherknu chudo*]" (Grin 1994b, 113).

Grin scholars remarked on such obvious deviations from the rest of Grin's writing such as the lack of a strong adventure plot, or "novelistic tension" (Capadilupo 1975, 183-8; Sandler 1966, 17), the absence of male character (Capodilupo 1975, 185), the prevalence of a decadent tone "despite the happy ending" (Reviakina 1997, 584), and the intriguing turn to the theme of sexuality: something Grin "studiously avoided" in the rest of his works (Luker 1978, 18). Lucia Capodipulo tried to explain Grin's moving away from the theme of the marvelous towards the theme of crime as "at least a step in the direction of realism" under the ideological, and therefore financial, pressure of RAPP, but contradicted herself in the same work by admitting that crime ("the incident") is not as important in *Jesssie and Morgiana* as the emotions it evokes in the characters and the lengthy conversations it inspires (Capodipulo 1975, 184-7).

Nikolas Luker, musing whether the novel was "an uncharacteristic literary lapse or a new departure," cites the novel's themes of sexuality, luxury, and wealth as strong evidence against Grin's compliance with the reigning ideology (Luker 1978, 18). Vladimir Sandler, in an obvious attempt to get the novel past the Soviet censor in 1966, the year of second publication, states that Grin's ultimate goal in portraying wealth and luxury was to dismiss them as non-essential and to promote simplicity (Sandler 1966, 17), and seconds Kovsky's opinion on Grin's translation of the ethical agenda onto the aesthetic plane, aligning the good with the beautiful and the ugly with the evil (Kovsky 1969, 87). Sandler is still wondering, however, whether "the refined stylist and psychologist Grin wrote this novel with only the goal in mind to show that

envy is repulsive, and that beauty and ugliness have nothing to discuss with one another” (Sandler 1966, 16).

As if in anticipation of such a response from readers and critics, Grin concludes *Jessie and Morgiana* with a statement, which at first take seems strangely inept: “That is all; not much, or quite a lot? As you like it [*komu kak nraivisia*]” (Grin 1994b, 156). The above statement is only seemingly redundant. The value of Grin’s artistic exploration of envy in *Jessie and Morgiana* is in connection with the problem of authorship, and the reader’s choice between “not much” and “quite a lot” contingent upon the choice of perspective (“as you like it”) is very much in sync with Melanie Klein’s theory of envy, in which the infantile envy of the breast affects the adult individual’s capacity for gratitude: no matter how much love and attention has been given to the envier, the latter always finds fault with the gift and feels mocked or cheated (Klein 1957, 19; 26-7). Just as in his more famous novel, “The Scarlet Sails,” one can speak of Grin’s portrayal of envy as a form of failed authorship in *Jessie and Morgiana*, and, just like in “Fandango” (1927), the source of creativity is represented as imbued with the quality of Kleinian metaphysical “breast.” These two motifs come together in *Jessie and Morgiana* to produce a complex and thorough investigation of envy and its relationship to creativity, which is why I see promise in applying both filters, that of Bakhtin and of Klein, to gain a better perspective of Grin’s most intriguing and least understood work.

The novel is structured as a binary opposition between the two highly conventionalized female types, the angel and the demon, and tells a story about the sexual envy/jealousy experienced by the ugly 35-year old Morgiana toward her beautiful 20-year old sister Jessie, and all young and beautiful women by extension. As if to cement the status of inequality

between the two orphans, Grin makes Jessie heir to an immense fortune and appoints Morgiana, who owns only a fraction of those riches, Jessie's legal guardian (Grin 1994a, 6-7). In the beginning of the novel, Morgiana poisons Jessie with a slow-acting substance and, anticipating her death, glimpses a possibility of future love for the dead sister (Grin 1994a, 20). In the end, upon learning that the premeditated crime did not work out and Jessie is being rescued, Morgiana hangs herself in a small room in her mansion, which happened to be there "due to a mistake in the plan" (Grin 1994b, 97; 146-7).

Jessie and Morgiana has multiple inter-textual references to Pushkin's "little tragedy" as well as meta-textual comments on the nature of literary work. Allusions to "Mozart and Salieri" are not limited to the motif of poisoning, which Grin places in the very beginning of the novel and describes as "villainy [*zlodeistvo*], evoking Pushkin's vocabulary in the play. The famous dictum of "Mozart and Salieri," "genius and villainy are two things incompatible" (Pushkin) as well as the "little tragedy's" motifs of music, truth/justice [*pravda*], skill [*masterstvo*], utility/usefulness [*pol'za*], calculated effort vs. childlike spontaneity (the myth of Mozart as a child), the evil presence of "someone in black," and the feeling of great relief at murdering the envied, are reinforced throughout the novel in multiple passages (Grin 1994b, 10, 13-4, 17, 19, 21-2, 28, 29, 30-1, 32-3, 34, 36, 47, 55, 58, 60, 62, 65, 68, 76, 78-9, 85, 110, 112-3, 119, 123, 124, 138, 114, 146, 148-9), classifying Jessie as Mozart and Morgiana as Salieri. Yet if Pushkin's Salieri occupies the central place in the play and scores many points with the reader by speaking the poetic language of his creator, Grin is more interested in the plight of the envied (Jessie) than of the envier (Morgiana).

In *Jessie and Morgiana*, much like in Pushkin's "Mozart and Salieri," an important motif is that of love for the murdered object of envy; just like Salieri, Morgiana anticipates boundless love for Jessie once the latter is dead (Grin 1994b, 20). This brings the aesthetic activity dangerously close to envy, since, according to Bakhtin, "death owns the golden key of the aesthetic act" and "it is possible to anticipate the end of life [of the prospective hero]" (Bakhtin 2003, 183). In place of a Hegelian clash of two individuals' consciousness in mortal combat, which defines their respective roles as the master and the slave, Bakhtin supplants the collaboration of the author and the hero, with the author fulfilling the role of a merciful Christian God. By transposing the aesthetic principle onto the real life experience (the author and the hero meet in real life), Bakhtin creates an impasse, an aporia between a murderous and a merciful author: "The aesthetic approach to a live person anticipates the person's death and renders the person, as it were, redundant" (Bakhtin 2003, 181), but each individual, according to Bakhtin, "has an absolute aesthetic need of the other," exemplified by the voice of the "internalized mother inside of me" (Bakhtin 2003, 133). This explains the "life-and-death battle" the Bakhtinian author must engage in to achieve outsidedness and "free the hero for unrestricted movement in the world" (Bakhtin 2003, 156).

A possible solution to the contradiction between the demand that the hero be dead (or envisioned dead), on the one hand, and the necessity for the author and the hero to "meet in real life" may be Bakhtin's notion that the two phases of the aesthetic activity, live-entering and outsidedness, are neither synchronic nor diachronic, but constantly fluctuate and alternate with one another. The author's relationship to the hero is that of "intense outsidedness" and "responsible live-entering" (Bakhtin 2003, 72-84; 156). Although Bakhtin does not provide clear

instruction of how this can be achieved, the very existence of the challenge, the necessity of constant choice appears to be inherent in the nature of creativity/authorship. Whether one is ready to make a choice between a good and a bad breast (good or bad deed or thought) on the everyday basis or altogether dreads making the choice, defines whether an individual is creative or envious, according to Klein (Klein 1957, 18-19; 39).

The possibility of *Jessie and Morgiana* being two potentialities of one and the same personality, a “good” and a “bad” breast, is implied not only in the traditional motif of the mirror, but also in a mysterious line dropped by the novel’s male character, Jessie’s timid fiancé, upon hearing the (inaccurate) news that Jessie already has a different suitor: “I will always call her Jessie, no matter how life treats me” (Grin 1994b, 104), where the syntactic and morphological ambiguity of ‘her’/‘it’ allows for equating Jessie with life.

Morgiana is shown to have no redeeming qualities in the novel, because, knowing of the existence of the good/beautiful (Grin 1994b, 85), she excludes the possibility of choosing it; craving love, she is consciously unwilling to admit such a need, let alone receive love. Spiteful of the “absolute aesthetic need in the other” ever since her own mother “sketched” her ugly features by looking at the image of a degenerate wolf-like criminal during pregnancy, Morgiana loses faith in ever being loved and rejects the partial comfort of looking “lovable” (*milaya*), if she becomes kind: a compromise suggested by Jessie (Grin 1994b, 8-9).

Rather than undergoing the labor of personal growth by accepting the small good and building on it (Ulanov and Ulanov 1997, 174-6), Morgiana chooses to eliminate the rival through the rhetoric of falsely conceived “justice.” It is Morgiana’s “shameless stripping of the soul” in a detailed and as if detached narration of her own physical and moral ugliness that torment

Jessie the most (Grin 1994b, 11). The kind of poison Morgiana uses on Jessie is said to work “more like a suggestion [*vnushenie*] than a poison” (Grin 1994b, 19), and the ultimate choice Jessie must make is between “yes” and “no” to herself in the face of the misery existing around her. “The ‘no’ said, cut your hair and mortify your flesh [face], be neither a mother nor a wife, because others are miserable; but the ‘yes’ said, “I am what I am; and I accept myself the way I am” (Grin 1994b, 149). Unlike Jessie who can accept herself the way she is (and she is not one-dimensionally good, as will be shown shortly), Morgiana can accept neither herself nor the other. Her strategy is that of invasion: she tries on the identities of beautiful women, such as her sister and as her father’s young lover, the deceased ballerina Kharita Malkolm, but ends up doing herself in (Grin 1994b, 146).

Kharita Malkolm’s death followed after Morgiana’s father, a lawyer by profession, bribed the doctors to convince Kharita that dancing is a mortal danger to her. Locked in a beautiful villa and bathed in wealth, Kharita dances one night, in shimmering, half-transparent cloaks, and disappears forever. The eerie dance is related by a voyeuristic servant. It is unclear how and when she is found dead, and Jessie meets her at some point in a hall of “Calypso” hotel: the ancient Greek mythology converging with the Buddhist idea of “cloak of Maya” (Grin 1994b, 18; 31). Morgiana is envious of Kharita but she inherits her rich wardrobe; Jessie’s living body is Morgiana’s next target, and, while she cannot penetrate and wear it like a dress, she can murder and internalize Jessie. Having ordered transparent poison in a beautiful bottle emptied of its previous content, perfume, Morgiana arranges Jessie’s death aesthetically, while begrudging her sister the fact that “even death comes to [her] in a beautiful bottle” (Grin

1994b, 20; 59; 61-4). Morgiana is the one who compares Kharita Malkolm's house to a bottle of perfume and herself to poison, which has replaced the perfume, Kharita (Grin 1994b, 59).

Thus envy is presented as replacement, invasion, and substitution of positive with negative: a prominent perfume with tasteless water; and the beautiful and desirable Jessie with Morgiana, who "deliberately effaced every sign of her sex, having crossed it out" (Grin 1994b, 9).

When Morgiana spills poison into Jessie's glass of water ("water of Liss," one of Grin's imaginary towns), the water, which had so far been bubbling and sizzling, like "champagne," is described as "dead," although the poison has neither taste nor color. At the end of the novel, when Jessie is rescued from poisoning, the water of life appears to her in the mirror, smoky from sizzling and bubbling, like translucent milk [*dymnuu ot bryzg, kak prosrachnoe moloko*] (Grin 1994b, 31; 149). Morgiana's act of spoiling the milk-like water as well as her acts of vandalism against all things female, including her own feminine identity, which she deliberately "crosses out," run along the lines of Klein's desecration of the breast, but also, as an act of live-entering gone sour: Morgiana invades her victims like an alien, from within, and at some point associates her own identity with the poison: "I myself became poison [*la sama stala iadom*]" (1994b, 59).

Although Jessie is conventionally portrayed as a woman-child, her actual role in the novel is not that of a passive victim. While Morgiana comes out as an unfortunate "author," first of a failed murderous plot, and later, of a staged suicide that, contrary to her plan, works out perfectly, there is plenty of textual evidence of the possibility of her being only a figment of a more powerful authorial imagination: that of Jessie.

Among the many faults Lucia Capodipulo finds with *Jessie and Morgiana*, there is the novel's "unfortunate distinction of containing the only unsuccessful use of the double in Grin's opus, by its heavy handed introduction in Chapter 16 of a second Jessie, a young bride and a new neighbor of the first, who is identical to the first in all aspects except the eye color" (Capodipulo 1975, 183-4; Grin 1994b, 91-2). Capodipulo correctly identifies the meaning of the second Jessie as "the happy life ahead of her despite her poisoning" (Capodipulo 1975, 184), but she misses the presence of an infinite number of doubles in the novel, rather than the second Jessie alone. The difference in the eye color is also significant: closer to the end, when the "first" Jessie is being saved and about to merge with the "second" Jessie, she is being reprimanded for having "bad eyes [*glaza vashi nekhoroshi*]." The latter phrase can be easily read as an allusion to Matthew 6: 22-23, "If [...] your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness."

Turning on the symbolist motif of the mirror, the novel has a very intricate structure as a system of reflections, beginning and ending with Jessie sitting in front of two mirrors, positioned opposite of one another so as to produce an endless hall of mirrors. Jessie's active role as the author of her own adventures is signaled in the beginning by the words, "Whatever she will see in it will happen to her," but it is easily overlooked because of the conventional motivation behind it: Jessie is said to tell her fortune "as any other girl" (Grin 1994b, 5-6). Only at the end of the novel, the mirror is revealed as an equivalent of a "book" (Grin 1994b, 149).

The gallery of reflections, some pleasant and some terrifying, produce countless doubles, each of which performs similar actions (such as sitting at the cliff, throwing stones into

the water, falling down into a pile of leaves and tree twigs and hurting her legs badly, losing and regaining consciousness right around the time when the narration's focus switches from one locale to another, looking at the mirror, and most importantly, writing, drawing, or sketching in a notebook (Grin 1994b, 5; 23; 39-42; 62-3; 65; 67; 99; 102; 108; 123; 145; 147).

Jessie's inclination towards literary experimentation is suggested multiple times through unobtrusive details, such as her propensity for rhyming, her capacity to "inspire words" in her shy fiancée, Detrey, whom she lovingly mocks for having said, at one point, as much as 35 words in a row (Grin 1994b, 152). Jessie lives in the library during the renovation of the house, initiated by Morgiana, and it is said that "the part of the house in which Jessie lived required no renovation" (Grin 1994b, 10-2), in contrast to Morgiana's occupying the "superfluous" room which came into existence because of the mistake in the plan (Grin 1994a, 97). Jessie and her female friend Eva Gardner participate together in a brief battle of sarcasm against visitors, using pretend titles of books, and later, when Eva dismissively refers to Detrey's military rank as "a straight line with a period at the end" Jessie retorts by saying that Eva reminds her of a "comma" (Grin 1994b, 38-9; 43; 73).

The fragmentary sentence addressed by Eva to Jessie in the beginning of Jessie's "illness" (the unidentified effect of the poison), "Your life..." mirror the words written by Morgiana in her suicide note, "My life..." Finally, the episode of Morgiana's taking her own life parallels "the first" Jessie's getting better and feverishly sketching something in her notebook, somehow knowing that her sister is dead. She also knows that Morgiana's suicide was meant to be staged, but succeeded due to chance (Grin 1994b, 22-6; 144).

The suicide is preceded by a visit by the second, “healthy” Jessie, to Morgiana’s house. The second Jessie comes on the invitation of the first, but finds Morgiana instead, because the first Jessie is recovering in Eva’s house. Morgiana notes the different color of Jessie’s eyes. She says that her sister is lying sick elsewhere and wishes that the second Jessie were lying sick right next to the first one. The second Jessie says, “I understood you. But you are wrong [*ia vas ponyala, no vy nepravly*],” which is a comment on the two kinds of truth discussed in the novel (*pravda*, the Salierian word for ‘truth/justic’), and leaves, but her eyes, the two blue dots, remain in the room: the only “supernatural” element in the novel (Grin 1994b, 144).

Thus, Jessie has not one, but at least two major doubles (with multiple others along the way): Morgiana and the second Jessie. This important asymmetry, one Morgiana and two Jessies, can be interpreted with the help of two seemingly insignificant episodes, both of which have to do with appetite and food (according to Klein, bad appetite is a direct consequence of breast envy). In the first episode, early in the novel, Jessie is having breakfast with Morgiana and very graphically spits egg out of her mouth as she is laughing at the thought of a “baby chick that had never come into existence.” Choosing Jessie as his mouthpiece, Grin criticizes vegetarianism as hypocrisy by comparing a vegetarian to a “gentleman in a fancy suit who forgot to put on his trousers” (Grin 1994b, 11-2).

In the second episode, Detrey is cooking fiery-hot scrambled eggs [*plamennuiu yaichnitsu*] for two prostitutes whom he visits with his male friends. One of the prostitutes, named Mercedes and dressed in blue, makes an advance at Detrey and, being (very politely) rejected, throws a tantrum, while the other, named Rosita and dressed in pink, is sitting quite happily in the company of Detrey’s two other friends, making them guess in which hand she has

a walnut. Prudish Soviet critics interpreted the episode as illustrative of Jessie's purity as opposed to the outrageous and vulgar prostitutes. However, the girls' names, Rosita and Mercedes, combined with their dress colors (rose and blue), point in the direction of Jessie as Rosita (compared to "dawn" by Detrey), while Mercedes' "automobile" name corresponds to Morgiana. The description of the "fiery scrambled eggs" sizzling and bubbling on the skillet call to mind the sizzling and bubbling water of Liss: Jessie's drink of creativity. Almost immediately, the narrative returns to Morgiana, with her evil plans, and an "a parte" comment is inserted by the third-person narrator: "The opinion that love and hatred are akin (srodni) is mistaken; its only value is that it makes one think. Love is love" (Grin 1994b, 52-8).

Grin's objection to love and hatred being related emphasizes the contrast between the two sisters, Jessie and Morgiana, and his preference for love is expressed as doubling the word "love" and the name "Jessie" while leaving "hatred" and "Morgiana" out of the picture; the trope constructed on the Biblical principle of "giving to the one who owns and taking from the one who has not." The similarity of the two Jessies is highlighted through the repetition, "love is love," while their difference, in the eye color, is explained closer to the end of the novel: one of the characters who takes part in saving Jessie tells her that her eyes "are not good" (Grin 1994b, 126).

Jessie's recovery begins with her meeting the double with "better" eyes and giving her flowers. In a hurry, she is adding more and more flowers to the bouquet, growing red and "greedy [*alchnaia*]" from excitement; the adjective 'alchnaia,' phonetically close to 'scarlet [*alye*],' provide a semantic link between Assol's dream in the "Scarlet Sails" and the creative "greed" of Jessie in "Jessie and Morgiana." The long catalogue of roses, listed by kind, is also

reminiscent of the cascade of synonyms as Grey's searching for the right shade of red (scarlet) in "The Scarlet Sails" and of cascade of silk and sea shells in the "gift-giving" episode of "Fandango" (discussed below): the unlimited flow of creativity, the opaque milky water of Liss, which Grin, despite the many chauvinist clichés in his work, entrusts, in *Jessie and Morgiana*, to the agency of women.

4. 5. The Orthogonal Man: Remapping *Ressentiment* in "Fandango"

In the rough draft of *Jessie and Morgiana*, Grin wrote: "A plot, naïve and beastly [*naivnyi I zverskii*]: a man or a woman looks in the mirror and his/her life changes forever. What happened? A miracle: the reflection suggested a better course of life, and the former life was shattered" (*Vospominaniia...* 1972, 371). On the surface of it, Grin's belief in the redeeming function of the mirror may seem to conflict with Bakhtin's view of the mirror reflection as a ghostly, "self-appointed double [*dvoinik-samozvanets*]," similar in nature to the third "deviation from author-hero relationships," when the author is his own hero, shallow and "false" because he is self-satisfied; self-sufficient in the negative sense of the aborted spiritual effort to become better (Bakhtin 2003, 117). However, a similarity between Bakhtin's and Grin's aesthetic philosophies, theoretical in Bakhtin and practical in Grin, can be claimed on the level of the aesthetic act transforming the mirror into a book: a medium through which the author disassociates from the hero, even if this hero is the author's own former self.

Many grimaces, accidentally distorted expressions [*mnogo grimas, sluchainykh lichin*], false gestures, unexpected acts [*postupkov*] will manifest themselves in the hero [in the process]. So many veils must be removed from the face [*litso*] of the most intimately close, seemingly well known person [...] prior to seeing

[their] true and wholesome face/countenance [*lik*]. The artist's struggle for a well defined and stable image [obraz] of the hero is, to a large degree, [the artist's] struggle with himself (Bakhtin 2003, 90).

Continuing to work in the Symbolist tradition long after Symbolism was proclaimed dead, Grin treats the mirror as a door to another reality, and face [*litso*] as the second element in the Christian triad, summarized by Konstantin Isupov as the sacred/saintly (*Lik*), human (*litso*), and demonic (*lichina*) hypostases of face. Assol', caressing her own reflection in the mirror; Jessie, choosing between a "yes" and a "no" in the mirror, which is "like a book"; and an abstract, hypothetical man "administering himself a moderate slap on the face standing in front of the mirror" in "Fandango (1927), roughly correspond to these three states of human spirit.

In *Iconostasis* (1922), Pavel Florenskii explains 'face-litso' as a mix of light and shadows, while 'countenance [*lik*]' is pure light; '*lik*' shines dimly through the '*litso*' of each person, as opposed to '*lichina*,' which is a distorted face expression or a mask. (Florenskii 1996, 50-2; 55-7; 136). The dichotomy of '*litso*' vs. '*lik*' [face vs. Face] is parallel to the dichotomy of '*pravda*' vs. '*istina*' [truth vs. Truth], the debated point of Pushkin's "Mozart and Salieri," while the distorted face, '*lichina*,' is a lie.

"There is no truth on earth; but there is no truth on high, either," says Salieri envious of Mozart. In "Fandango," Grin rewrites the debate between Pushkin's composers as a confrontation between the "statistician Iershov" (Grin's version of Salieri) and his opponent, a semi-demonic "Spaniard," named Bam-Gran, who brings gifts crafted by "Spanish [Cuban] girls," reminiscent, in their spontaneous generosity, of Pushkin's Mozart. The earthly truth of

Iershov is the utter uselessness of the “Spaniard’s” gifts (silk, aromatic candles, musical instruments, sea shells and corals) in the cold and hungry Petrograd of 1921. The truth of Iershov is spoken (yelled); the truth of Bam-Gran, the spirit of art, is shown rather than spoken. His beautiful gifts speak for themselves, and their “uselessness” guarantees that they are not a “diabolical trap,” as the statistician Iershov thinks, but an absolute surplus, as in Bakhtin’s theory of aesthetic activity (Grin 1994a, 248-58).

Iershov’s rebellion against the gifts, rendered in a comical key (“Pinch yourselves, citizens! I will pinch myself’s self [*ia sam uschipnus’]*”), is an allusion to Christ’s words in Matthew 13: “Lucky are your eyes: they see, and lucky are your ears: they hear” [...]; “many prophets wanted to hear but did not hear, and wanted to see but did not see” (Matt 13:1-13). The same Biblical text contains other elements important in Grin’s artistic universe and help connect “Fandango” to the previously discussed “The Scarlet Sails” and “Jessie and Morgiana”: the sea, the fishermen, the carpenter, the sunrise, the seed, the secret, the select, and the surplus.

Yielding to Iershov’s rage at the uselessness (and beauty) of the gifts of South, Bam-Gran leaves Petrograd, and his closing statement provides a kind of an answer to Olesha’s sausage vs. rose dilemma in *Envy*⁶⁸ (discussed in Chapter 2). “‘Insane,’ he [Bam-Gran] said. ‘Insane! Have that, which your heart craves, things that make it strain and explode: firewood, and potatoes, and clean sheets, and a wife; take that, but nothing else! [...] We are leaving, senior Iershov, to a country, in which you will never be’” (Grin 1994a 258).

⁶⁸ Interestingly, in yet another story providing the explanation for Bam-Gran’s name, it is also said that his name was born out of the ding of the tolling church bells (Grin 1994b, 312).

4. 5. 1. The Republic(s) of the Southern Cross: Aleksandr Grin and Valerii Briusov

The land of Grin, studied with enthusiasm by Grin's multiple fans, includes nearly thirty cities and towns, four islands, a few villages, rivers, channels, mountain plateaus, highways, and other geographical features. While some geographical names invented by Grin on a purely euphonic basis (Luke 1979, 29-33) bear an unmistakably Western print, and others remind, in sound, of the colonial Orient⁶⁹, their physical description and social atmosphere call to mind Grin's beloved Crimea and even, in the opinion of Vadim Kovskii, the landscapes of the middle Russian plains, including his hated birthplace⁷⁰, Viatka (Kovskii 1969, 239). Ambivalent towards the West but intolerant of the envious restraints imposed onto the individual in his native Russia, his possessive Motherland, Grin makes the North a symbol of rigidity, oppression, poverty, and collective-mindedness; the home of the "leaden abominations of the Russian lives" (Gorkii). Determined to shake Russia out of its "national character" diagnosed, by Fedor Sologub (see Chapter 1 of the present study)⁷¹, with the malady of envy, he turns the map 90 degrees in a phallic, orthogonal gesture: his North is the "leaden swamps" and "conifer trees" of Russia, while South is, recognizably, the world of the colonial West.

The opposition of North and South emerges as a leitmotif of Grin's entire oeuvre as early as 1909, prefiguring far in advance Lev Luntz's call to "go west," in the eponymous

⁶⁹ According to A. MacFie, the dichotomies between East and West have always been fluid in the European literature and culture (MacFie 2002, 14-21), which may partly explain Grin's fascination with the colonial South as a quasi-Western alternative to Russia.

⁷⁰ See more on Viatka in: V. Vikhrov, "Rytsar' mechty" (Vikhrov, 1965, 23).

⁷¹ Grin was an admirer of Fedor Sologub, according to Lucia Capodipulo (Capodipulo 1975, 10).

manifesto of 1922 (Luntz 1975, 147-57). In a short story titled “Reno Island” (“Ostrov Reno”), which marks the beginning of Grin as we know him, and which Nikolas Luker, in the article of the same title, has called “Grinlandia in embryo” (Luker 2003, 195), the protagonist, Gart, shakes off “the burden of the land that has a short and fearsome name, ‘motherland’ (Grin 1993a, 234). The same sentiment permeates Grin’s short stories, such as “The Flying Ship” (“Letuchii korabl’,” 1909), “The Long Journey” (“Dal’nii put’,” 1913), “The Return” (“Vozvraschenie,” 1917), “Ships in Liss” (“Korabli v Lisse,” 1922), and in Grin’s two novels dedicated to N. N. Grin: “The Scarlet Sails” (“Alye parusa,” 1923) and “Jesse and Morgiana” (“Dzhessi i Morgiana,” 1928). In “Fandango” (1927), it is represented by the anachronistically “Spanish” Cuba, sending “useless” but heartwarming gifts to “far away Northern sisters” in Petrograd.

“Fandango” can be viewed as Grin’s creative “swerve” (Bloom) from Valerii Briusov’s dystopian story, “The Republic of the Southern Cross” (1904)⁷², portraying a catastrophic collapse of an international society governed by a planned economy and the Orwellian principle of sham equality. The downfall is caused by a strange malady, *mania contradicens*.

It begins with fairly feeble symptoms, generally those of characteristic aphasia.

The stricken, instead of saying "yes," say "no"; wishing to say caressing words,

they splutter abuse, etc. The majority also begin to contradict themselves in

their behaviour; intending to go to the left they turn to the right, thinking to

raise the brim of a hat so as to see better they would pull it down over their eyes

⁷² Grin addressed Briusov as “Dear and deeply respected [‘*glubokouvazhaemyi*’] teacher” in the letter from December 28, 1914 (*Vospominaniia...* 1972, 480-9).

instead, and so on. As the disease develops contradiction overtakes the whole of the bodily and spiritual life of the patient, exhibiting infinite diversity conformable with the idiosyncrasies of each. In general, the speech of the patient becomes unintelligible and his actions absurd. The normality of the physiological functions of the organism is disturbed. Acknowledging the unwisdom of his behaviour the patient gets into a state of extreme excitement bordering even upon insanity. Many commit suicide, sometimes in fits of madness, sometimes in moments of spiritual brightness. Others perish from a rush of blood to the brain. In almost all cases the disease is mortal; cases of recovery are extremely rare (Briusov 2009).

Briusov's humor is evident in listing, among other symptoms of the dangerous illness, such a peculiar one as lowering the hat instead of raising it; but his vision of a society, in which one's desire to contradict or say 'no' instead of 'yes' is regarded as a psychiatric illness is chillingly prophetic.

Orchestrating the downfall of his imaginary Republic of the Southern Cross, democratic in name but tyrannical and oppressive of the individual in essence, Briusov appoints a character named Horace DeVille (as in 'Horatio,' and 'Devil') to serve as a volunteer who organizes the exodus from the oppressive pseudo-Paradise. "The name of Horace Deville should be written in letters of gold among the most famous names of history. [...] Hundreds of thousands owe their escape to Horace Deville, as, thanks to his energy and organising power, it was possible for them to leave." DeVille is also credited as the primary source of the narrated events: "The diary

of Horace Deville was discovered, with its regular chronicle of events from the 28th of June to the 20th of July” (Briusov 2009).

Setting his story in the cold and starving Petrograd of the early twenties, Grin starts where Briusov leaves off: with the collapsed economy and deteriorating morals, although, unlike in Briusov’s anti-utopia, wheels of the governmental apparatus run smoothly, even in the absence of horses eaten up by the hungry citizens (Grin 1994a, 233). “The diary of Horace Deville was discovered, with its regular chronicle of events from the 28th of June to the 20th of July (Briusov 2009); Grin’s story begins in December, but switches immediately to July. “In winter, when face grows dull, and, hands in his pockets, man runs frenetically [*diko*] about the room, glancing at the cold stove, it is nice to think about summer; because in summer, it is warm. My imagination etched a magnifying glass for me [*zazhigatel’noe steklo*] and a sun above my head. Let’s say, it is July” (Grin 1994a, 230).

If the dynamics of Briusov’s story develops from enforced harmony to violence, destruction, and entropy, Grin’s emphasis in “Fandango” is on the liberating “chaos [*besporiadok*] of pleasure, the true order [*poriadok*] of our nature,” which ensues when Bam-Gran and his delegation begin to unpack the gifts (Grin 1994a, 254-5). Bam-Gran’s Cuba is an imaginary place, to which one can travel in an altered state of consciousness (Grin 1994a, 273-9).

Both texts lend themselves easily to a Freudian reading, in which the polar notions of Id and Superego are intimately connected to the geopolitical East and West. However, if Briusov, in “The Republic of the Southern Cross,” carries out Dostoevsky’s dream of smashing the Crystal Palace and realizes Konstantin Leont’ev’s anxiety of the entropic chaos associated with the

homogenization of western society (Leontiev 1965, 267-71), Grin eulogizes the essentially colonial western 'South' (his imaginary "Cuba" is still owned by Spain in 1927) contrasted with the infantile, rigid, and anal Russian 'North.' The repeated tropes of 'crossing' and 'cutting across,' combined with the positive image of the 'South' in "Fandango," create a positively charged alternative to Briusov's dark symbolism of the Southern Cross.

4. 5. 2. Envy as the Distortion of Face

Grin's description of the effect of hunger is similar to Scheler's description of ressentiment. Max Scheler's theory of *ressentiment*: a feeling of impotence and envy characterized by a shift in value perception (Scheler 1998, 41-2). In his groundbreaking *Ressentiment* (1912), Max Scheler defines *ressentiment* as a "lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions and affects which, as such, are normal components of human nature: [...] revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract, and spite" (Scheler 1998, 29). According to Scheler, envy does not lead to *ressentiment* if, instead of repressing this feeling, one tries to obtain the envied possession "by means of work, barter, crime, or violence" (Scheler 1998, 31).

Warning against non-discrimination between the notions of 'envy' and 'desire,' Scheler emphasizes the delusion that lies at the core of envy. "Desire and non-fulfillment does not lead to envy until it flares up into hatred against the owner, until the later is falsely considered to be the *cause* of our privation. Our factual inability to acquire the good is wrongly interpreted as a positive action *against* our desire – a delusion which diminishes the original tension" (Scheler 1998, 35; emphasis in the original). Scheler does not explain the mechanism by which hatred against the owner of the coveted good "flares up", nor does he specify the chronological order

in which the flaring up of hatred and the delusion of the wrong accusation occur. However, a few pages later he re-introduces the notion of “delusion”, this time codifying it as the “*ressentiment* delusion”.

[...]We must discuss one general aspect of the philosophical problem of value which is extremely important for an understanding of the *ressentiment* delusion. It is the question of the *fundamental relation between value consciousness and desire*. [...] When we feel unable to attain certain values, *value blindness* or *value delusion* may set in. Lowering all values to the level of one’s own factual desire or ability [is not] to be confused with the conscious act of resignation [...]. A man who “slanders” the unattainable values which oppress him is by no means completely unaware of their positive character. It is not as if they simply “did not exist” in his experience. [...] The phenomenological peculiarity of the *ressentiment* delusion can be described as follows: the positive values are still felt as such, but they are *overcast* by the false values and can shine through only dimly (Scheler 1998, 40-42; emphasis in the original)⁷³.

⁷³ Aesop’s fable about the fox and the sour grapes is commonly cited as an illustration of this Scheler’s idea. As Harold Boris reminds us, “in this fable, the fox was unable to reach good sweet grapes”, so “he [the fox] modified the terms of the experiment. The original terms were something like this: I, a hungry fox, want to reach sweet good grapes. The fox [...] used denial; the terms of condition then read: I, a hungry fox, cannot reach bad sour grapes” (Boris 1994, 12-3).

By placing hard work, barter, crime, and violence on the same level, Sheler seems to fall under the hypnosis of Nietzsche, whose negative view of Christianity as “the most delicate flower of resentment” (Nietzsche 1996, 400-1) Scheler is trying to rectify. Based on Scheler’s own vivid metaphor of the *ressentiment* delusion, the true value (of consciously refraining from crime and violence) shines dimly through the overcast implication that assuaging one’s envy through violence or crime is somehow preferable to catching the disease of *ressentiment*. Grin, on the other hand, straightforwardly cites the Ten Commandments in his invective against hunger.

I dread hunger; I hate and dread it. [...] Hunger is the distortion of human face. It replaces a *real* thought with a false one. The image/countenance [*obraz*] of this thought is similar, yet of a different order [*s drugim kachestvom*]. ‘I remain honest,’ says a person who had been starving hard for a long time, ‘because I love honesty; but I will kill (steal, lie) just this once, because it gives me the opportunity to be honest. [...] But this is not as bad [...] as when a thoroughly made up [*zagrimirovannaia*] doll, looking just like me (you, him), arrogantly forces the soul out of the weakened body and cheerfully runs after her piece of pie, believing, all the while that she [the doll] is that very person whom she caught in her clutches [...] Recently, I encounter strangely constructed people, with a very lively [nostalgic] memory about 1/8 ounce of oats. This memory has refracted itself through the Romantic prism/in a Romantic tone [*prelomilos’ u nikh na romanticheskii lad*], and I do not understand this musical vibration. It is

as if [...] a person, standing in front of a mirror, administered himself a moderate slap in the face (Grin 1994a, 231-2).

The motif of distortion/refraction, central to Grin's artistic universe, is being counterbalanced in the very beginning of the story by a tautology: the re-establishment of truth. Grin links the motif of envy with the motif of distortion as early as 1917. The picture drawn in his poem "Distortions" is that of a dark cold night, which begins with a falling/diabolically laughing star, and ends with Cain running to Abel, ax in hand (Grin 1994a, 231-2). The Biblical story of Cain and Abel, an archetypal story of envy, which also, underlies the motif of "brotherhood" of Pushkin's "Mozart and Salieri." Grin's evocation of musical imagery (1/8 of oats, harmony [*lad*], and musical vibration) lies on the same plane.

As if in a polemic with Maiakovskii's "Good!" (1927)⁷⁴, but in agreement with the earlier Maiakovskii, who openly preferred the warm South to the cold and hungry North in "To Russia" (1919), Grin re-affirms his love of warmth as opposed to privations: "The Inuit joys [*eskimosskie radosti*] are alien to my heart" and makes a direct lunge at Gorkii: "With 30 dollars in one's pocket, everyone felt that "man [*chelovek*] — eto zvuchit gordo" (Grin 1994a, 231; Maiakovskii 1978a, 358-434; Maiakovskii 1978b, 135-6).

Tautologies amass as the narrator keeps repeating words "good" and "bad" in close proximity throughout the first several pages, and later, in dismissing "the great national artist Gorshkov" (phonetically close to Iershov), says to the "Chekhov-like" owner of the picture, who takes offense: "Why get upset? What is bad is bad [*chto plokho, to plokho*]." Gorshkov's

⁷⁴ See also: Shklovskii's praise to the hunger of early 1920s in "Po povodu kartiny Esfir' Shub" in *LEF* 1927, 52-3.

painting portrays a “leaden Northern landscape, with two crows on the snow” and is opposed, by the narrator of “Fandango,” Aleksandr Kaur, to a painting of a sunlit room, which later proves to be a magic portal to the residence of Bam-Gran. The admirer of Gorshov’s art dismisses the picture of a sunlit room as kitsch. As soon as he steps out of the room, a peculiar sensation, “a shift of the center of composition,” overcomes Kaur. The painting gains a third dimension and allows him a visit to Bam-Gran as a break from the starving scenery of 1921 Petrograd (Grin 1994a, 239-40; 258-60; 273-8).

4. 5. 3. “Everything Turned Upside Down and [...] Fell into Place”

Kaur’s last name is formed from the same root as the color of a brown horse [*kauraia loshad’*], and horses are destroyed and eaten in the starving city: this fact is not stated directly but rather implied in one citizen’s “reasonable reply as to why people are walking in the middle of the road: ‘Because there are no horses’” (Grin 1994a, 233). Just like horses, people of Kaur’s intelligence and imagination become extinct in the society that has called Cain to the axe. The truth of the sun-lit room, which he visits only for half an hour (possibly under the influence of a drug), liberates the narrator from the nightmarish ‘poryv [rapture/laceration]’ of Gorshkov’s nationally acclaimed gloomy landscape: penetrating into the depth of this painting, Kaur finds its snow made of a piece of dirty cotton with two flies previously seen as crows (Grin 1994b, 274).

The motifs of horses, snow, crows, ‘poryv [rapture],’ and the artist’s visual perspective, and two geometrical terms: a perpendicular and a cone [*konus*], phonetically close to the Russian ‘horse [*kon’*],’ cutting through the everyday reality in Grin’s “Fandango” are traceable to Maximillian Voloshin’s biography of Vasilii Surikov, *Surikov* (1916), “the great national artist”

parodied by Grin in the character of Gorshkov. In his book, Voloshin relates his conversations with Surikov; particularly, a story about a crow on the snow, which gave the impetus to Surikov's painting, "Boiarynia Morozova" (1887). The painting is dedicated to the subject of schism [raskol], and Morozova as the female martyr after whom it is named. Discussing the plot and composition of the painting, Voloshin mentions the cone [konus], which visually cuts through the crowd, talks about the 'poryv [rapture]' of Surikov's work depicting, literally, the death drive of the Russian people represented in the martyr's being taken on the sleigh away from the spectator, to exile and sure death. Voloshin praises Surikov's skill at portraying the Russian crowd, which, according to Voloshin, is more diverse and challenging to paint than a Western crowd, whose faces are homogenized. Voloshin rationalizes this observation by stating that the Western crowd is held together by the formulaic European laws, which, in his view, serve as a surrogate, collective conscience, while the Russian crowd is diversified according to each individual Russian conscience, rooted in the spirit rather than the letter of the law, in the grace of the Eastern Orthodox religion (Voloshin 2008).

Grin appropriates Voloshin's 'cone [konus]' as a magical cone of light, a key to Bam-Gran's realm⁷⁵, which Kaur receives from the hands of a gypsy girl, a sort of a muse. Her hand is covered in soot and is "so black that one could use it as a copying paper [in a typewriter]" (Grin 1994b, 265). To the stifling constraints of the national pastime, comparing Russia with the West, Grin opposes the freedom of creativity, embodied in the gypsies, the messengers of Bam-Gran. In a tavern, Kaur listens to a group of drunken and tearful Germans, who keep ordering one and the same Russian romance, "Take a Pity on Me, My Dear [Pozhalei ty menia,

⁷⁵ Grin knew Voloshinov in Crimea (*Vospominaniia...* 1972, 245-6).

dorogaia].” Tired of the whining national motif grotesquely uniting Russia and the West, Kaur orders the orchestra to play “the vibrant fandango,” which mysteriously “always sounds in [Kaur’s] mind whenever [he is immersed in thought],” and every time gypsies appear to be nearby (Grin 1994a, 232-5).

Having spoken a little longer in their outlandish tongue, of which I knew only that it is one of the most ancient languages, the gypsies turned into a side street [*svernuli v pereulok*], while I kept walking straight., contemplating my encounter with them and recalling past encounters like that. They [the gypsies] were always *orthogonal* [*vrarez*] to every mood; always cutting straight *across* it [*vsegda priamo* *pereseкали ego*]. These encounters would always resemble a strong colorful thread, which one could always see in the finishing of a fabric/material [*v kaime odnoi materii*], which name presently escapes me. Fashion would change the print, the shine, the thickness and wideness of this material; the market would assign an arbitrary price; people wear it now in the spring and now in fall, cut and sewn differently [*na raznyi pokroi*], but it would always contain this same thread of many colors. Just like gypsies, all in themselves, the same today as yesterday: guttural [*gortannye*], black haired creations exciting a vague sense of envy and [suggestive of] wild flowers (Grin 1994a, 235; italics in the original).

In his objectifying and alienating gypsies as “guttural, black haired creatures,” Grin follows the line of Pushkin’s “Gypsies [Tsygany]” (1823); but at the same time, deviates from it. While the Romantics of the nineteenth century eulogized the wildness of the gypsies for its own

sake, Grin views them as the messengers of art, and particularly, of literature. The “material/fabric,” which name Grin’s protagonist has forgotten, is the ‘ethereal fabric/high matter [*tonkaia materia*’ of authorship. Genres and tropes change as the “fashions” in Kaur’s monologue, and “the market” assigns “an arbitrary price” on that, which is priceless: creative genius. Like Salieri, Kaur is envious of the Gypsies, the vessels of music, “the vibrant fandango”; unlike Salieri, he works as a “translator [*perevodchik*]” from the language of the “despicable necessity” into the language of art.

By italicizing the words ‘across’ and ‘cut across,’ Grin emphasizes the ‘trans’ in ‘translator.’ On the one hand, Kaur as the writer-‘translator’ is subordinate to the higher truth [genius], which he is *expressing*, to the best of his translator’s skill, but not *producing*. On the other, he is cutting across/trans [*pere-vodit*] the habitual, without regard to fashions of art or pressures of the everyday life privations. The orthogonal lines of the Southern Cross allow to consummate “the statistician Iershov” to the artistically sensitive Kaur, the horse. Kaur’s saying that “every one of us has a bit of Iershov in him/her [*v kazhdom iz nas sidit statistic Iershov*]” is a pun on Maiakovskii’s words, “Every one of us is a little bit of a horse [*vse my nemnozhko loshadi*]” (Grin 1994a, 256-7).

Kaur is also a kind of a horse, by way of his rare last name reminiscent of the color of horse skin. The horse has symbolized suffering in the Russian literature since Dostoevskii (cf.: an episode of the cruel and senseless beating of a horse in *Crime and Punishment*), but a horse also represents the power of artistic imagination, a Pegasus of the Ancient Greek mythology. The same life experience that leads “the statistician Iershov” to “spit into the ocean” and “make

a cigarette out of a rose” out of spite, leads Kaur to appreciate the useless sea shells, “these flowers of the ocean bottom,” for their existence beyond any practical purposes.

Much like in Bakhtin’s “Art and Answerability,” the ethical and the aesthetic planes are brought together without entirely fusing, but rather, in a criss-cross fashion, like two rays of truth, in the unity of Kaur’s responsibility. The horizontal, earthly truth, represents Iershov’s mode of vision; the vertical, that of art and Bam-Gran. Kaur, whose first name, Aleksandr, is the same as the author’s, responsibly takes over for an incompetent translator during Bam-Gran’s visit to KUBU and has a hard time keeping up with the two-way translation, but tries his best (Grin 1994a, 250).

Just like in other works by Grin, women are acknowledged as the ultimate source of creativity, along with the unfortunate clichés associated with them, this time, colonialist clichés. Bam-Gran brings the gifts, but the gifts themselves, besides being from the bottom of the ocean, are also crafted, *and signed*, by the authors: twelve “Spanish” girls, whose names are embroidered on a beautiful hand-made carpet, send their love to the “far away Northern sisters.” “The delegation entered KUBU as a comb enters a shock of hair” [delegatsiia voshla v KUBU kak greben’ v volosy], invoking the image of a rich hairdo of a Spanish girl. The motifs of cold and warm are supported by multiple allusions to Lermontov’s translation of Heine’s “Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam” (1827), the patterns of frost on the window pane, which resembles of the coastal palms, and by the humorously depicted reaction of the crowd to the gift of incense (“aromatic candles”): “Candles are good. [...] Maybe, they also brought us soap?” (Grin 1994a, 249). The latter can be seen as Grin’s humorous allusion to Lermontov’s “Farewell,

unwashed Russia,” given that the episode also contains a reference to Lermontov’s “In the wild north, a lonely pine is dreaming about a palm [Na severe dikom]” (Lermontov 1956-1957).

Having retained his faith and values despite all the hardships Grin experienced in his life, he evolved from teenage rebelliousness against “the terrifying word ‘motherland’” in “The Reno Island” to a mature composer, in the full sense of the word, a competent author with a serious message and a capacity for soft, forgiving humor. “Why should I hide the good if it exists in my soul?” asks Detrey in “Jessie and Morgiana” (Grin 1994b, 102).

Grin knew the dark side of life and did not hesitate to portray it, but his ultimate course has always been ‘al sol’ (towards the sun, which is the meaning of Assol’s name in “The Scarlet Sails”), not “in the leaden marshes of the North,” but “under the free banner of the South” (Jessi and Morgiana). While his Spain in “Fandango” is anachronistically colonial, and his carpet-making Spanish girls are stereotypically timid and self-belittling (“forgive us, the unlearned Spanish girls”), their power of creativity is still the strongest impression left in the aftermath, and the finale is delivered by the narrator’s long lost wife, who had no voice throughout the story but has the last word, consummating into wholeness the split hero, who is lost in space and time, with a casual statement that, nevertheless, sounds like a magic incantation:

“Everything turned upside down and in upside-downness fell into place” (Grin 1994a, 282).

Conclusion

A profound crisis of identity, vivid imagination, attention to detail, and the peculiar optics that allows turning small things into big and big things into small, unites the modern notions of envy and authorship. As summarized by Sergei Averintsev, the concept of authorship emerges gradually in the course of historical development, undergoes various changes and obtains the meaning of an independent, self-initiated, and self-directed creative activity only in Romanticism. At the same time, two types of “objective contradictions” involved in the category of authorship become especially acutely felt: one between the personal and impersonal factors contributing to the aesthetic activity, and the other between the “artist” and the “human” on the level of the author’s personal identity (Averintsev 2003).

Bakhtin’s triple concept of authorship, on the religious, ethical, and aesthetic planes, provides a solution to the above problem through what can be viewed as a reworked and improved version of Symbolist’s life-creation. To the spontaneous, irresponsible, “Dionisian” ideas of life-creation as either a series of fleeting moments [*migi*] or, on the contrary, as a well-rounded work of art, complete in itself⁷⁶, Bakhtin adds the notion of responsibility for the other, mercy/redemption of the other, and reciprocity: each has an absolute aesthetic need in the other, and no one is complete in him/herself. In doing so, the philosopher also prefigures René Girard’s later discovery of the triangular desire, but without the young Girard’s pessimism about it (the late Girard, as has been said in Chapter 1, approximates Bakhtin’s optimism about the need for the other).

⁷⁶ As described in Khodasevich’s “The End of Renata” (Khodasevich 1997, 7-18).

Among the three authors analyzed in the current study, Olesha, the pioneer of the topic of envy, is lucid enough to discover the Girardian mimetic desire and even try to resist it. But having no firm point of reference outside of the “my” and “your” worlds he portrays in his novel, he is unable to break away from his biographical self and enter the head of the mysterious and frightening other. The author of *Envy* never reaches the state described by Bakhtin as *outsidedness* except through the suicide of the hero, but the sense of claustrophobia and dead end in the finale are prominent.

Vaginov, on the contrary, is very much aware of the danger to get “stuck” in the state of live-entering, which, according to Bakhtin must always be temporary. Vaginov’s authorial self, his fictional author, is perpetually obsessed and possessed by countless heroes he had unsuspiciously live-entered. This might be the cause of Vaginov’s innovative technique, far ahead of his time, of misplacing the proper names of the heroes and letting them tell other stories on multiple levels, while the heroes also freely move, meet, and “shake the hand[s] of meaning,” just like the words in his *Goat Song*. Vaginov is a most competent author who turns his talent inwards yet still manages to create a whole universe and remain outside of it through infinite compassion for his heroes, who are both immortalized and redeemed through the meticulous portrayal not only of their own time, but of other epochs around them. As Bakhtin said, the background can denude as well as clothe the hero; and Vaginov is a master of both.

If Olesha portrays the pain of envy from within the envious consciousness of the author, and Vaginov, in his parodying homage of Bakhtin, conceptualizes this pain as the author’s failure to achieve *outsidedness*, Grin goes against the grain of the entire Russian literary tradition in showing the damage to the envied rather than the suffering of the envier. Bakhtin’s

ideal of the author and hero meeting each other's "aesthetic needs" takes place on the pages of Grin's novels, to the greater or to the lesser satisfaction of the reader: "Give or take, however you like it [*nemnogo ili mnogo – kimy kak npravitsia*]" (Grin). Grin openly imitates Western literary models, but remains original and inimitable in his own manner. The logic of Grin's works is that of generosity and surplus, and he is not concerned with the size of his talent or fame, but with his responsibility to cultivate within himself the gift of creativity; to grow worlds out of the "seed of a fiery plant called miracle" (Grin 1993b, 61). The task of authorship is to grow a plant out of this seed.

Bakhtin's triple model of authorship (religious, ethical, and aesthetic) allows us to see envy as authorship in embryo, a not-yet-competent [*neumeloe*] authorship, which has potential to become competent, given the envier's will. The Russian verb 'umet' means at once 'to know how' and 'to be able to'; unlike the Latin-based noun *nekompetentnost'* ['incompetence], the Russian-based 'umenie' has a positive connotation of the potential to learn, and is synonymous with 'awkwardness [*neukliuzhest', nelovkost'*],' which is rather positive in the light of Bakhtin's 'nezavershennost' [*imperfection', incompleteness*].'

The authorial self is supple, but not weak; strong, but not hardened. It is strong because it can withstand loneliness and rejection, let the hero go and not imprison him/her in the rigid triangular desire theorized by Girard. This self is supple, because it gives and receives, creates a surplus yet knows when to withdraw, like the good breast conceptualized by Klein. It lives neither entirely in the present, nor solely in the future unlike Briusov's "pale youth with the

burning gaze” (Briusov 2008), but in the “rightful non-coincidence with oneself,” incessantly converting the presently felt void of envy into the forward-oriented surplus of authorship.

So far, I have used Bakhtin’s theory much like Olesha’s Andrei Babichev used the meat-grinder: trying to choose only those aspects of Bakhtin’s early theory that supports my vision of envy as a form of an incompetent authorship. Future researchers may wish to address those moments in “The Author and the Hero of the Aesthetic Activity,” “Art and Answerability,” and “Towards the Philosophy of the Deed,” which contradict such view; in particular, where does Bakhtin really draw the border between ethics and aesthetics? If God is the Author, does it not imply that ethics and aesthetics, as well as art and religion, are mutually translatable?

Bakhtin’s idea, expressed in the “Towards the Philosophy of the Deed,” that only love has the power of productive deceleration over the subject, of “sculpting” every detail in the process of loving [*miluiuschii*] contemplation, gave impetus to my thought that envy is creativity in embryo. Envy possesses the ability to create an elephant out of a fly, or reduce greatness to dust; but it does not have enough patience to let the “fiery seed of miracle” grow into a plant. How would that correlate with Harold Bloom’s notion that the stronger the poet, the stronger the envious stimuli? Is this discrepancy the result of envy’s evasive, word-resistant nature? Or is it because prose is written differently than poetry? Perhaps, poetry’s highly condensed nature allows for a speedy conversion of envy into love? After all, Osip Mandel’stam has confessed his love for the world in terms of envy: “I secretly envy everyone, and with everyone I am secretly in love [*la kazhdomu taino zavidiu i v kazhdogo taino vliublen*]” (Mandel’stam 1993, 59).

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Indiana University sponsored summer program, SAILS (Studying Alternative International Languages and Spanish), Gary Indiana Public Schools Corporation, Gary, Indiana: Russian Language and Culture, 2004-2008

Department of English, East-West University, Chicago, Illinois: ESL Writing I & II; ESL Grammar I & II, 2006

HONORS: Certificate of Recognition, 17th International Student, Postgraduate, and Young Scientists Conference "Lomonosov," Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, 2010

Graduate Student Travel Award, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2009

Dean's Scholar Award, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2008-2009

ACTR Annual Membership Award, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 2009

Certificate of Excellence and Commitment, SAILS (Studying Alternative International Languages and Spanish) Gary Indiana Public Schools Corporation, Gary, Indiana, 2005; 2007

Dobro Slovo Honor Society Award, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2005

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