# MARGINAL VOICES: SERGEI DOVLATOV AND HIS CHARACTERS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LENINGRAD LITERATURE OF THE 1960s AND 70s

by

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August 2001

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

In spite of the growing interest of Russian and Western scholars in Sergei Dovlatov and his art, his place in Russian literature has not yet been clearly defined. His position as a writer in Russia in the 1960s and early 70s was ambiguous due to his opposition to the traditional Soviet canon and rejection by the current literary establishment. However, he later gained recognition and popularity as an émigré writer in the United States. The concept of 'marginality' colours his biography and art, for his life itself was a succession of marginal experiences and marginality is the key topic of his writings.

Marginality unifies Dovlatov's art. This is evident in his marginal status as a writer in and outside the Soviet Union, and in his writing which uses the underappreciated short form of narration (the novella and short story), develops a non-traditional conversational style, pursues the themes of non-conventional behaviour and introduces eccentric characters.

However, it is not possible to discuss Dovlatov's status as a marginal writer without contextualizing his life and art in the ambience of the entire generation of Leningrad writers of the sixties. Writers and poets such as Brodskii, Goliavkin, Gubin, Vakhtin and Ufliand do not only represent the culture of Leningrad's artistic non-conformists, they are also Dovlatov's prototypes and protagonists. Apart from their marginal status, all these writers shared the determination to make independent choices in life and in art. They refused to be viewed as marginal authors by the dominant canon, which disregarded their works as insignificant. Here as well marginality emerges as a literary concept and a behavioural model, shaped by societal norms (the positive type of citizen or official Soviet writer) and traditional canons (the Russian didactic tradition or Soviet ideological writing). This literary concept includes an orientation towards American literature, the creation of marginal characters and themes as well as an exploration of different styles.

The works of writers of the Leningrad circle laid the foundation for the emergence of a literary phenomenon such as Dovlatov. It is in delineating this context that this dissertation demonstrates Dovlatov's original approach to marginality, as well as the way he turned his life experience into literature and became a spokesman for neglected fellow writers and citizens.

# VOIX MARGINALES: SERGEI DOVLATOV ET SES PERSONNAGES DANS LE CONTEXTE DE LA LITTÉRATURE DE LENINGRAD DES ANNÉES 1960 ET 1970

## Résumé

En dépit de l'intérêt croissant que les chercheurs russes et occidentaux montrent pour Sergei Dovlatov et son art, sa place dans la littérature russe n'a pas encore été clairement définie. Sa position comme écrivain dans la Russie des années 1960 et du début des années 1970 était ambiguë à cause de son opposition au canon soviétique traditionnel et son exclusion des organismes littéraires officiels. Toutefois, il a ensuite obtenu reconnaissance et popularité lorsqu'il a émigré aux États-Unis. Le concept de 'marginalité' caractérise sa biographie et son art, car sa vie elle-même fut une succession d'expériences marginales et la marginalité est le thème central de ses écrits.

La marginalité unifie l'art de Dovlatov. Ceci se manifeste dans son statut d'écrivain marginal à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'Union Soviétique, ainsi que dans ses écrits, qui utilisent des genres narratifs sous-estimés (le récit et la nouvelle), développent un style conversationnel non traditionnel, représentent des comportements non conventionnels et mettent en scène des personnages excentriques.

Toutefois, pour définir le statut de Dovlatov en tant qu'écrivain marginal, il est indispensable de considérer sa vie et son art dans le contexte de la génération des écrivains de Leningrad des années 1960. Des écrivains et poètes tels Brodskii, Goliavkin, Gubin, Vakhtin et Ufliand ne représentent pas seulement la culture des artistes non-conformistes de Leningrad, ils sont également les prototypes et les protagonistes de Dovlatov. Outre leur statut marginal, ces écrivains partageaient la même volonté de conserver leur indépendance dans la vie et dans l'art. Ils refusaient d'être perçus comme des écrivains marginaux par le canon dominant, qui méprisait leurs oeuvres. La marginalité apparaît ici encore à la fois comme un concept littéraire et un modèle de comportement, déterminés par des normes sociales (le citoyen ou l'écrivain soviétique exemplaire) et des canons traditionnels (la tradition didactique en Russie ou l'écriture idéologique en Union Soviétique). En tant que concept littéraire, la marginalité implique un attrait pour la littérature américaine, la création de personnages et de thèmes marginaux, ainsi que l'exploration de styles différents.

Les oeuvres des écrivains de Leningrad ont préparé le terrain qui a rendu possible l'émergence d'un phénomène littéraire tel Dovlatov. C'est en délimitant ce contexte que cette thèse montre la conception originale de la marginalité chez Dovlatov et explique comment il a transformé sa vie en littéraire et est devenu le porte-parole des citoyens et écrivains négligés de son époque.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The framework of this study took shape over a period of several years when I was fortunate to observe the development of the literary careers in the West of the former Leningrad writers Dovlatov, Brodskii, Efimov and Maramzin, as well as changes in the literary situation in Russia in the nineties. A great source of inspiration for the study were the conferences on Brodskii's and Dovlatov's art held in St. Petersburg at the editorial office of the literary journal *Zvezda* in 1997 and 1998.

This study would not have been possible without the assistance, advice and encouragement of many people. It is to them that I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation.

I am very grateful to Prof. Laura Beraha, my thesis advisor, who devoted much time and effort to this research. She provided me with vital criticism, extensive help with the articulation of many versions of my chapters and countless guidance on linguistic matters. I am deeply obliged to Marina Swoboda, PhD for her genuine interest, professional advice, insightful suggestions and unfailing support. Many thanks to Prof. Paul Austin, Chairman of the Department, for his helpfulness and readiness to discuss many questions related to my topic. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Tat'iana Patera for her kind understanding, much needed encouragement, generosity in sharing her knowledge and help with some stages of the research.

My special gratitude to Eric Lozowy, Ph.D. and Tatiana Bedjanian of McGill Library for their assistance.

I am lucky to have dear friends who read through my chapters carefully and offered many useful suggestions. Sarah Kadarabek, Krystyna Steiger and Nicola Philpott helped with proofreading and editing this thesis. Mary Sweeney was indispensible to all stages of this research and writing. Her insights on multiculturalism were very illuminating, her friendly comments helped significantly, not to mention her affection, words of inspiration and comfort in the most difficult time. Sergei Iamaletdinov deserves special thanks for providing invaluable help with the final stages of the thesis - formatting and printing. His dedication helped me a great deal.

I owe much gratitude to my husband Marek Daniluk who helped with all the technical difficulties I encountered, and I could not have devoted so much time to this study without his support and that of my son Misha. I would also like to thank my parents in St. Petersburg, Irina and Innokentii Pakhomov, for their enthusiasm for my work and their constant flow of information on cultural matters in St. Petersburg.

I would like to express my appreciation to Andrei Ar'ev, the editor-in-chief of the St. Petersburg journal *Zvezda* for his involvement and assistance. Thanks also go to Prof. Ksana Mechik and Igor' Pekhovich of Moscow Taganka Theatre for their input. As well, my acknowledgements go to all those who granted me an interview: Vladimir Ufliand, Vladimir Gubin, Valerii Popov, Viktor Goliavkin, Igor' Sukhikh and Aleksandr Genis.

## A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION.

Proper names appearing in the English sections of the text are transliterated according to the modified Library of Congress system, i.e. without the diacritical marks and ligatures required by the strict style.

Citations and source references are given in the original Cyrillic with my own translations from Russian into English, unless otherwise indicated.

# MARGINAL VOICES: SERGEI DOVLATOV AND HIS CHARACTERS IN THE CONTEXT OF LENINGRAD LITERATURE OF THE 1960s AND 70s

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# Introduction
# FROM WRITING ON THE MARGINS TO TRIUMPHING OVER MARGINALITY.

For some readers in today's Russia, Sergei Dovlatov represents one of the literary geniuses of the late twentieth-century Russian prose, but "not quite literature" and "not Russian literature" for others. The controversy arises in part from the peculiarities of Dovlatov's literary biography. While living and writing in the Soviet Union in the sixties, he was not recognized as a writer. He gained popularity as an émigré writer in the United States of America. Moreover, for some Russian readers who traditionally expect literature to portray remarkable heroes facing life's most dramatic challenges and assisting in moral improvement, Dovlatov's choice of marginality as the major topic of his art and expressed in a non-traditional style presents a dilemma.

The conceptual framework of this research revolves around the notion of marginality in reference to Dovlatov's art. It discusses the conditions guiding the formation of Dovlatov as a marginal writer in Leningrad in the sixties, including both his development as a writer whose main focus is on marginality and his new and original way of dealing with the issue of marginality. The thesis will also demonstrate the elusive nature of the phenomenon that is marginality, and the ways that the writer overcame it in his career and art.

Twentieth-century literature is known for its affinity for the marginal, the exile, the 'other.' Many writers experienced marginalization in their lives and created "narrative[s] of unsettlement, homelessness, solitude and impoverished

independence."[1] At the same time marginality is a fluid and time-dependent phenomenon. What appears marginal in a certain place at a certain time may not be so in a different place and at a different time. In art marginality inevitably raises the issue of canonicity. The two are co-dependent terms. They are sensitive to, and defined by, shifts and fluctuations in each other's boundaries. Theirs is an aggressive interdependence. The canon is defined by its exclusion of the marginal, and marginality questions canonicity and attempts to destroy it. Both are subject to reversal. Dovlatov's rise from obscurity to the front ranks of popularity shows that that the canon has been supplanted by what was once marginal, which has itself even undergone canonization.

Russian literature of the twentieth century abounds with examples of writers marginalized in their careers and by their choice of character and theme. The Socialist realist canon imposed throughout most of the Soviet period proved to be especially fertile ground for marginality. In a society where collective consciousness was enforced, people with highly individualized awareness were left at the margins of social life. There, they constructed new realities for themselves through their art - their writing was rejected for reasons that had nothing to do with art itself. The national literatures of the Soviet Republics, various minority literatures (feminist, religious writings), and individual authors at odds with the state's ideological and aesthetic trends were all excluded from the official canon. Leningrad literature, though rich in talented authors (Akhmatova, Zoshchenko, Kharms, Dobychin, Shvartz and many others), was relegated to second place with respect to the official literature of Moscow and given the status of insignificant local literature. From this perspective, it still appears unrecognized and understudied. The period of the sixties

[1] Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989) 12.

was marked by the sudden emergence of young talent in both poetry and prose. However, most Leningrad writers of that generation remain relatively unknown to the broad reading public outside the city of Leningrad. To a significant extent this is the legacy of the exclusionary tactics they were subjected to decades ago in the form of severe criticism, rejection by editorial boards and publishing houses, as well as harassment from the authorities including, in some cases, persecution and expulsion from the country. Marginalization, then, is of primary importance to Leningrad literature in general, and to Sergei Dovlatov in particular.

Very few discussions about Leningrad marginal writers of the sixties can be found in either Russia or the West, even though these are important authors who feel that they form a distinct school in Russian literature. Well known in their own city, the names Goliavkin, Grachev, Vakhtin, Bitov, Gubin, Vol'f and Valerii Popov would not all be automatically recognized even by a serious student of literature. Very few of their works are available in translation. To a large extent, Leningrad literature of the sixties still remains on the margins of Russian literature of the twentieth century.

What does it mean to be a writer on the margins of literature, yet still part of the 'big' literary picture? Why did this happen to an entire generation of talented writers and poets? How is a writer's art affected when the official centre denies both the artistic value of his work and the very fact of his existence? Finally, how is it possible for a writer such as Dovlatov, who experienced and experimented fully with marginalization, eventually to surmount the notion of marginal in his life and in his art? The primary objective of this study is to seek answers to these questions, by examining how the phenomenon of marginalization in Dovlatov's work evolves, from its apex to its complete subordination.

Of this generation of young Leningrad writers, Sergei Dovlatov is the quintessential marginal. It is he who best embodies the phenomenon of marginalization. By becoming an émigré writer, he explored its most severe consequences, making marginality the key theme of his art and turning the entire experience into a success story. He is the only Leningrad writer of that generation to have achieved very great recognition, and, albeit posthumously, enjoys enormous popularity. As a émigré writer, he made his voice audible to both the Russian public and to American readers. He became a professional writer in the United States, and during his twelve years in New York published twelve books in Russian. His works were translated into English[2] and were acknowledged by American critics. The American press noted Dovlatov's appeal to the sophisticated readers of the *New Yorker*;[3] the "brusque, straightforward American quality"[4] of his prose, concluded that "America can use a great satirist,"[5] called him "our man"[6] and his emergence on the American literary scene a "triumph!"[7] Dovlatov's stories were published in prestigious magazines such as *New Yorker*, *Partisan Review* and *Grand Street.* His prose was appreciated by the leading Russian and American writers of our time, such as Nekrasov, Iskander, Aksenov, Brodskii, Josef Heller, Kurt Vonnegut and Irving Howe.

In Russia a three-volume collection of Dovlatov's prose came out in 1995, but his art is only now attracting the attention of theatre and cinema. His personality and

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[2] See available in English translation: *The Zone* (1985); *Ours: A Russian Family Album* (1989); *The Compromise* (), *The Invisible Book* (1979); *The Suitcase* (1990), *The Foreign Woman* (1991).
[3] Roger Cohen, "Sergei Dovlatov, 48, Soviet Émigré Who Wrote about His Homeland," *The New York Times*, Aug. 25, 1990, 10.
[4] Karen Karbo, "Known by the clothes he wears – or steals," *The New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1990, 10.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Eva Hoffman, "Tales from Russia, with Affable Understatement," *The New York Times*, Apr. 22, 1989, 16.

skill inspired his contemporaries to create several memoirs: *Мне скучно без Довлатова* [I Am Bored Without Dovlatov, 1997] by Rein, *Довлатов и окрестности* [Dovlatov And His Surroundings, 1999] by Genis, *Когда случилось петь С. Д. и мне* [When S. D. And Myself Happened to Sing Together, 2001] by Pekurovskaia.

In the nineties Dovlatov's writing attracted the attention of literary scholars and critics, ranging from Sukhikh, *Сергей Довлатов: время, место, судьба* [*Sergei Dovlatov: Time, Place, Fate*, 1996], to anthologies of critical essays - *Малоизвестный Довлатов* [Poorly Known Dovlatov, 1996], *Сергей Довлатов: творчество, личность, судьба* [*Sergei Dovlatov: His Art, Personality, Fate*, 1999]. Renowned researchers who have dealt with various aspects of Dovlatov's works include Loseff, Lipovetskii, Vail' and Genis, Novikov, Eliseev, Kulle, Kurganov and others. This critical response reflects the multifaceted nature of Dovlatov's art, which poses various questions on thematic, structural and stylistic levels and presents scholars with a unique challenge. Work has been done on the narrator's role in his prose, the development of the theme of 'little people' in Russian literature, the continuation of the tradition of the Russian literary anecdote, and on matters of genre.[8] Critics are puzzled by Dovlatov's apparent simplicity and laconic style, by the ostensibly non-Russian quality of his subtle humour and by the genre classification of his writings.[9]

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[8] See Igor' Sukhikh, *Sergei Dovlatov: Vremia, mesto, sud'ba* (St. Petersburg: Kul'tinform Press, 1996); Victor Krivulin, "Poeziia i anekdot," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, ed. Andrei Ar'ev (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Zvezda," 1996) 382-86; Efim Kurganov, "Sergei Dovlatov i liniia anekdota v russkoi proze," *Sergei Dovlatov: Tvorchestvo, lichnost', sud'ba*, ed. Andrei Ar'ev (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Zvezda," 1999) 208-24; Viktor Kulle, "Bessmertnyi variant prostogo cheloveka," *Sergei Dovlatov: Tvorchestvo, lichnost', sud'ba*, 237-48; Mark Lipovetskii, "I razbitoe zerkalo," *Sergei Dovlatov: Tvorchestvo, lichnost', sud'ba*, 266-77.

[9] Alexandr Genis, "Na urovne prostoty," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 465-74.

This study offers one more possible approach to Dovlatov's art. The writer's own biography is an incredible story of a voyage across geographical, national, ideological, linguistic and cultural boundaries. His favourite subject is marginality; and the genre and style of his prose are outside mainstream literature. It therefore seems only logical to investigate the notion of marginality as the cornerstone of Dovlatov's creative work.

Chapter One of this thesis explores the history of the notion of marginality. It starts with the field of philosophy and traces perceptions of marginality in the writings of Aristotle, Nietzsche, Freud, Derrida and Foucault. From philosophy the discussion turns to debates on marginality in various fields of knowledge such as sociology, anthropology and political science. The question of canonicity arises with regard to the literary and linguistic aspects of marginality, because canon represents an automatized centre and conditions the existence of the marginal. Canon creation is viewed with respect to Western culture, as well as to Russian and Soviet literatures. While the canonical centre determines the marginal, the marginal searches for ways to withstand exclusionary practices. Theories of Postmodernism have refocused attention on decentering, "deterritorializing"[10] and the innovative role of marginal writings. Formalist and Bakhtinian ideas modeled on practices of decentering may provide some insight into the subversion of the centre and elimination of the marginal. These perspectives can be helpful in understanding and suggesting a framework for margin–centre dynamics, as well as in the analysis of marginality. The system offered in this chapter distinguishes between internal (created by the artist) and external (imposed upon the artist) marginality in order to evaluate the position of Leningrad writers of the sixties, as well as the unique place of Dovlatov.

[10] The term was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1986) and is often used in post-colonial debates.

Chapter Two concentrates on the internal aspect of marginalization. On the extraliterary level it describes the circumstances of self-marginalization by Leningrad writers, such as the opposition of eccentric personalities to the idea of a collective, the adoption of non-traditional lifestyles in order to subvert the norm of conventional conduct and the image of a writer. On the intraliterary and linguistic levels the Leningrad writers try to supplant current canons. In their search for new ways of expression they turn to the Western canon. They experiment with a condensed conversational style, new types of marginal characters (average people) and original themes such as: individual independence; the impact of quiet, solitary rebellion; the autonomy of the creative process; and the freedom of existence on the margins of society.

Chapter Three focuses on external factors, because the internal aspect of marginality is interdependent with the external side. It is caused by, and results in, external marginalization. It defines the priority of extraliterary marginalization based on territoriality (Leningrad vs. Moscow) and ideology (dissident vs. official Soviet). Moreover, it indicates how the intraliterary and linguistic factors (rejection by the official canons as expressed by misrepresentation by the media and the refusal to publish) are subordinated to extreme measures of external marginalization such as the imprisonment and expulsion of writers.

Thus, by analyzing the marginalization of Leningrad writers in the sixties, Chapters Two and Three determine the circumstances which led to the emergence of a writer like Dovlatov. The story of his life and his art is inseparable from that of the Leningrad milieu. Dovlatov was the youngest writer of that generation, a newcomer to their literary seminars, salons and groups (for example, the Urbanites). The chapters in question establish the background for the main argument of the thesis,

which is that in pursuing his unique experiment with marginality, Sergei Dovlatov evolved from a marginal writer to a recognized writer on marginality.

In the chapters that follow (Four and Five) I address Dovlatov's perception of marginality before and after emigrating to the United States. Chapter Four discusses external and internal marginalization in terms of Dovlatov's legend as a marginal writer, a legend created by his contemporaries (its external aspect) and by himself (its internal features). It also introduces marginal characters found in Dovlatov's early prose, written in Leningrad and during the time of his military service. In these writings the marginal experience reflects the particular state of a person who occupies the position of an outsider in his own country and among his own people, who accepts this position with dignity and preserves his individuality by keeping to his solitary world. It also presents marginality as a form of compromise, a "zone' of freedom between collective and private, official and alternative.

Chapter Five discusses one of the most extreme forms of marginalization – emigration. Dovlatov depicts both the Russian émigré community in New York and multiethnic American society. His perception of marginality changes radically with his immigration experience. It evolves into a transitional phenomenon that unifies the opposing concepts of centre - margin and success. Just as Dovlatov himself crossed over the border to reach out to a diverse audience, his characters leave the borders of their native land to find greater personal freedom by joining the brotherhood of multiple strangers on foreign margins. Marginality can be the key to success if one accepts and exercises the freedom inherent in the margins in order to advance and reach out for centricity.

Thus, the hypothesis of this study is that marginality is a complex cultural factor that can be approached through a literary framework which integrates the

creation of marginal characters, the development of a neglected genre and the establishment of a non-traditional style of writing. This is shown by the example of Sergei Dovlatov's life and art, which seems to be his way of dealing with his marginal position as a writer. Indeed, the pursuit of marginality brought him to a central position in literature, in terms of both recognition and popularity.

The research strategy involved the following steps:

1. Literature review

The first step was a preliminary review, evaluation and synthesis of current literature on 'marginality' in the related disciplines of philosophy, sociology and anthropology. This review and synthesis helped to situate the project within current fields of knowledge.

2. Comparative method

Comparing perceptions of marginality in various disciplines and at different times allowed me to trace theoretical patterns in literary-historical systems, to study the dynamics of the development of the notion of 'marginality' and to broaden understanding of the concept. These comparisons concern those aspects of marginality revealed in many fields of knowledge, particularly as they relate to Russian literature. Similarities can be observed between the literary situations of the American 1920s and Russian 1960s. Valid thematic and stylistic analogies can be found between American writing from the beginning of the century on and Leningrad prose of the sixties.

3. Data collection

Information needed for this research was gathered from local (St. Petersburg) literary journals and from recent dissertations and publications available in the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library of St. Petersburg. An essential data source

was Dovlatov's personal archives, kept in the editorial offices of the journal *Zvezda*. Information was also gathered through qualitative interviews with writers and scholars living and working in Russia in order to obtain a full picture of writers' experience with marginalization. Interviews were conducted in May 1998 with Goliavkin, Gubin, Ufliand and Valerii Popov, as well as with Sukhikh, a professor at St. Petersburg State University, with Genis, a well-known literary critic, and with Dovlatov's sister Ksana Mechik-Blank.

Material from some of these chapters was presented at the Conference of the Canadian Association of Slavists in Sherbrooke, Quebec, in June 2000. Work on this project inspired publication of an article "Наш человек в *Нью-Йоркере*" [Our Man In the *New Yorker*] in the anthology *Сергей Довлатов: творчество, личность, судьба* [*Sergei Dovlatov: Creative Process, Personality, Fate*, 1999].

Certain conventions appear to be attached to the subject of 'marginality' in reference to Dovlatov and Leningrad writers of the sixties. The research does not investigate Moscow writing of the same period, though some similarities in theme and in a general orientation towards the West may be found in Aksenov's writing. The study focuses primarily on Leningrad prose writers, though Leningrad poets are mentioned and quoted in the course of the discussion. It is in the life-styles adopted these writers, and reflected in their prose, that the process of marginalization of the Leningrad cultural elite is most clearly revealed.

A major difficulty encountered during this project had to do with text dating. Most of the stories examined, though written in the sixties, were never published then. Some were published later in the seventies and eighties, and the year when they were first written is noted in the publication (as in Maramzin's case). For most, however, such as stories by Vakhtin, Gubin and Dovlatov, it is not possible to provide

the dates when the stories were written. Instead, publication dates are supplied in the footnotes.

Referenced work in the bibliography includes publications by Leningrad writers, Russian and English critical works, as well as general-knowledge publications on the subject.

This dissertation offers a new approach to one of the most interesting social and cultural issues of the twentieth century – marginality. It tries to determine the relationship between a writer's identity and the emergence of new trends in writing. It draws attention to a neglected area of Russian writing – the Leningrad literature of the sixties. The results of this study can be applied to general theories of literature and to the history of Russian literature of the twentieth century.

> Всю [...] жизнь меня инстинктивно тянуло к ущербным людям — беднякам, хулиганам, начинающим поэтам.
>
> Сергей Довлатов.[11]

> All my life I have been attracted to people on the decline – to poor people, hooligans and new poets.

## Chapter 1
## MODELLING MARGINALITY

Sergei Dovlatov's art is primarily concerned with the question of the marginal - as reflected in his own life and in the biographies of many writers of his native Leningrad milieu, and, ultimately, as overcome by his professional success. In his works he provides numerous accounts of various aspects of marginality, attributing to it, among other things, an excluded position, an illusive nature, a challenging character and a liberating force. He not only depicts a considerable number of marginal literary characters (for example, his fellow writers such as the journalist Bush or the émigré Marusia),[12] but also casts his own life as a fictional example of marginal experiences, such as military service in labour camps or emigration. Dovlatov's treatment of marginality stands out as unique, combining an original outlook on the problem with presentation in a style not often seen in Russian classics.[13] Before dealing with Dovlatov's approach to marginality, I will offer a brief account of the history of the discussion on marginality.

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[11] Dovlatov, "Chemodan," *Sobranie prozy v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Limbus-Press, 1995) 299.

[12] The examples here refer to *Remeslo*, *Kompromis*, *Inostranka*. See Sergei Dovlatov, "Remeslo," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh,* vol. 2, 5-155; Dovlatov, "Kompromis," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1, 173-325; Dovlatov, "Inostranka," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh,* vol. 3, 5-101.

[13] Fellow writers and critics agree that Dovlatov presents his topic in a non-traditional way. He uses a loose structure of narration: integrating individual anecdotal stories under the rubric of 'novella,' mixing chapters or parts of chapters with non-fictional material (biographical data, newspaper

The word *margin* came to Modern English from the Middle English *margine*, the origin of which can be traced to the Latin *margo* [a border, edge, brink]. *Marginal* is defined as being opposite to *central. Centre* means "the point around which anything revolves; a place considered as the middle or central point of activity, headquarters."[14] As the opposite of *central*, *marginal* may logically imply a place which, or a person who, is unexciting, insignificant or unworthy of attention. Thus, *marginality* is a dependent concept: it cannot exist without an established *centre*.

The English word *mark* has an etymology similar to that of the word *margin*: it is derived from the same Latin root *margo* and also has the archaic definition of "a boundary, border, or borderland."[15] *Mark* is described as "a visible trace or impression on a surface;" it has a meaning of "importance, distinction, eminence," as well as of "impression" and "influence." Since derivations often incorporate reversals of meaning, the kinship of the two definitions indicates the mobility of *marginal* as a concept.

The term *mark* adds meanings of "significance, sovereignty and originality" to it. The significance of *marginal* stems from a reversal of privilege in signs (*centre* loses its status as a privileged sign, *marginal* acquires it). This fact defines *marginal* as a relative concept, one whose nature changes over time. The term is applied to

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clippings), repeating certain stories in various chapters and novellas. His major novellas could be linked into an integral idiosyncratic whole – the life-story of a marginal writer. His cast of characters includes real-life persons identified by name (Brodskii, Dovlatov's family members, editor Turonok) and fictional characters (Marusia and Rafael'). His style is compressed and devoid of literary pretension. Marginality is treated with gentle irony, calling for understanding, tolerance, and acceptance as a natural and universal phenomenon.
See Iosif Brodskii, "O Serezhe Dovlatove," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh,* vol. 3, 355-362; Lev Loseff, "Russkii pisatel' Sergei Dovlatov," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh,* vol. 3, 363-371; Mark Lipovetskii, "I razbitoe zerkalo," *Sergei Dovlatov: Tvorchestvo, lichnost', sud'ba*, ed. Andrei Ar'ev (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Zvezda," 1999) 266-76.

[14] *Webster's New World Dictionary*, ed. Victoria Neufeldt (New York: Prentice Hall, 1994), 827; *Webster's New Twentieth-Century Unabridged Dictionary,* 2nd edition, ed. Jean Mckechnie (New York: Collins, 1972) 293.

[15] See *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 828.

individuals, organizations or movements which, by their behavior or status, differ from what is regarded as accepted, normal, or traditional. *Marginal* is often synonymous with *peripheral* or *eccentric*. In everyday use *marginal* generally means excluded, suppressed, insignificant. At the same time, marginal individuals or movements often play a resistant, revolutionary, pioneering, or memorable role in history; they act as a vital, innovative force for the progress of society. Thus, *marginality* bears certain contradictory features – suppressed and vital, excluded and pioneering, insignificant and memorable.[16] Given such complexity, *marginality* can be approached from various angles, such as those developed in the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology and literary studies.

The discussion of *marginality* and *centrality*, and the social division their opposition implies, dates as far back as Aristotle. To be sure, Aristotle himself did not use the terms *centrality* and *marginality*. He discussed the phenomenon of the marginalization of certain members of society without actually defining the process. It is not my intention to re-evaluate Aristotle, but rather to trace certain aspects of the modern approach to literature found in his theory. It seems important to go back as far as Aristotle's writing due to his influence on the Western tradition of thought and the challenge it received in literary and cultural studies.

In *Metaphysics* Aristotle introduces the opposition between a *universal* and *substance*. *Substance* is prior to all other categories and is presented as an individual quality. *Universals* embrace many things, while *substance* is peculiar to a thing. For Aristotle *universals* have no separate existence. *Universals*, or secondary *substances*,

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[16] For more on the subject, see Sneja Gunew, *Framing Marginality* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1994); Susan Castillo, *Notes from the Periphery* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Winfried Siemerling and Katrin Schwenk, ed. *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1996); Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996); Katrin Schwenk, ed. *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1996); Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996).

do not exist independently; they are subordinate to individual *substances*. While the example of a pure *substance* is God, the world as characterized by Aristotle is a hierarchy of the highest *substances* and other existing things. Reality is seen here as stasis, and *substance* is resistant to change. Nevertheless, *universals* are presupposed by change and can change themselves. According to Ross, Aristotle revealed:

> The dominance [...] of the idea of the infima species, the notion that there are fixed combinations of characteristics which form the core or the nature of all the individuals in which they are present, and that these alone are what nature seeks to secure and to perpetuate. All differences of less importance and permanence than these are deemed unworthy of the name of form, and treated as a result of the union of identical form with different matter.[17]

Therefore, Aristotle's notions of *substance* and *universal* can be correlated with *centre* and *marginal*. For Aristotle there are intelligible individuals who form the centre of society and who are identical in their qualities (*substances*). Other individuals, different and insignificant, are of *universal* nature. Only those who occupy a central position have access to Truth. Those other individuals inhabit the margins of society; they cannot achieve Truth on their own.[18] Thus, Aristotle breaks society into *centre* and *margins*. Moreover, for him *marginal* and *central* are not only spatial coordinates, they are related to a value system. The *centre* contains truth values; whereas the *margins* are restricted in their self-expression.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between various types of justice, among them political and non-political justice. The former can exist between free and equal members of society (*centre*), which excludes women, children and servants (*margins*). Oppositions such as husband/wife, father/child, master/servant represent different types of relationships, those based on subordination. The core of

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[17] W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Routledge, 1995) 34

[18] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. C. Kirwan. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 280-83.

the opposition is power/ powerlessness and it divides society into at least two groups, pitting a superior, powerful *centre* against inferior, powerless *margins.*[19]

Aristotelian philosophy in general views society as a hierarchical organization; it defines the centre as a place of significance for citizens; it establishes the association of good only with the centre; it promotes the idea that Truth is available only to those who occupy the centre, and marginalizes entire societal groups by introducing the oppositions listed above. At the end of the nineteenth century Aristotle's concept of hierarchy came into question, and the perception of *centrality* and *marginality* started to change.

It was Friedrich Nietzsche who, in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Birth of Tragedy*, attacked Aristotle's model of society and the idea of a centralizing Truth. Nietzsche indicated that far from being naturally privileged by knowledge of the Truth and therefore in an automatic position to govern other structures, the centre must work to exercise control and manipulate existing power structures.[20]

The next step in destroying the Aristotelian structure of society and power was Sigmund Freud's challenge to his system of binary oppositions. He demonstrated that oppositions such as sanity / madness, conscious / unconscious, rational / irrational and order / chaos are hard to define, and that the boundaries between them are not obvious and subject to dispute. That showed that Aristotle's power distribution was based on arbitrary oppositions and so was misleading.[21]

Jacques Derrida continues the debate about *centrality* and *marginality* in such works as *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* and *The*

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[19] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. D. Ross. (New York: Camabridge UP, 2000).
[20] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil" and "The Birth of Tragedy" in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (New York:The Modern Library, 1968) 202-203, 33-52.
[21] See *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Modern Library, 1938).

*Parergon.*[22] Derrida broadens the definition of centrality by specifying that the centre not only leads, directs and organizes a structure, but also sets limits on the activity of all members of the structure. While the centre determines the rules of order for everyone, it claims exemption from both rules and order alike. In *The Parergon* Derrida rethinks the concept of the border or frame and examines what is excluded and included in the formation of an aesthetic opinion. He underlines the importance of margins:

> No 'theory,' no 'practice,' no 'theoretical practice' can be effective here if it does not rest on the frame, the invisible limit of (between) the interiority of meaning (protested by the entire hermeneutic, semiotic, phenomenological, and formalist tradition) *and* (of) all extrinsic empiricles which, blind and illiterate, dodge the question [...][23]

Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* and *Madness and Civilization* studied power relations in society and the processes of marginalization. In his estimation the centre uses not only the power to repress, but also the power to provoke. According to Foucault the position of individuals in society is the product of power relations, and the effect of power produces peripheral subjects.[24]

*Centrality* and *marginality* have also been debated in the field of sociology. Scholars such as Edward Shils and Stein Rokkan in *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* view the *centre* not as a spatial phenomenon, but as a cultural one with an entire set of traditions and values, beliefs, customs, and religion. For them the *centre* exists as a central value system governing the distribution of roles and rewards, and determines the individual practices of structuralizing and methods of

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[22] Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) 279-84.
[23] Derrida, 24-26.
[24] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. C. Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980) 98-100; *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York:Vintage Books, 1979); *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).

supervising inherent in any given society. *Marginal* refers to anything that challenges the values upon which a given culture is based.[25] Thus, *marginality* has been treated as an evaluative concept (significant vs. insignificant), a power distribution element and a potentially subversive force.

In the past few years the theory of *marginality* has attracted considerable attention in social anthropology and in gender studies.[26] The focus is on how one culture reacts to another. The problem of alterity is raised and expressed in the statement "we have history, they have myth."[27] At the same time marginal individuals are seen to maintain their otherness: the realization of the other is the assertion of the conviction that an individual can exist outside power relations.[28]

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[25] Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago:U of Chicago P, 1975) 3-11.

[26] David Sibley offers an object relations theory which concentrates on the relationships between the self and the social and material world. From birth a child interacts with various objects learning to separate them from himself or herself; the same perception is formed towards other persons. Melanie Klein studied an emerging sense of border as a social and cultural process. The sense of border formed in early childhood develops within a particular culture, which affects a person's perception of self and other, as well as his or her feelings about difference. Scholars Julia Kristeva and Elizabeth Gross explain the formation of the feeling of difference as an urge to distinguish between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, 'us' and 'them.' This is why the discourse on marginality in social science focuses particularly on colour, disease, sexuality and nature. For references see David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Melanie Klein, *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1975); Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: B.Blackwell, 1987); Elizabeth Gross, *Feminist Challenges:Social and Political Theory* (Boston:Allen & Unwin, 1986).

[27] See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1988) 23.

[28] The question of marginal identity and its formation has also been analyzed in urban planning. The link between marginal identity and spatial position is established through the influence of the external environment on behaviour. This is seen in works on residential choice among ethnic and minority groups (Smith, 1987; Turner,1979), ethnic group formation (Jackson, 1980; Fox, 1977), segregation and the separation of urban space (Alba, 1991; Herbert, 1976). More recent works look at the way that individuals influence the external environment through the creation of symbolic systems which intercede between the person and external physical space. The transformation of physical space by the individual then occurs simultaneously with the transformation of his/her cognitive space (Altman, 1994).

In political science most theoretical treatments of centrality and marginality are grounded in neo-Marxist conceptions of restricted power or the power of class. According to neo-Marxist models, minority groups are marginalized by their limited access to general public information, space and institutions, rather than their exclusion from them. Poverty, and minority group segregation, is the result of this dependency cycle. (Friedmann, 1973; Song 1993; Harris, 1996).

Thus, various fields of knowledge approach marginality from slightly different angles. Together they contribute to the definition of marginal figures as outsiders with respect to certain cultural, ethnical or geographical structures. The process of marginalization appears to be linked with ideological positions held on basic power structures, race, social class origin, gender and geographical factors.

Literature has always been closely involved in discussions of marginality. Historically new tendencies emerged first as marginal, contradictory phenomena (thus, secular literature replaces sacred scripture, or folk art yields to a more rational tradition). Furthermore, marginality is directly related to questions of canon, its own status or admission to its ranks, and canonical literature. Bloom in *The Western Canon*, while discussing the canonization of writers such as Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes and others, insisted that the most essential quality of the Western canon is aesthetic supremacy and originality.[29] Therefore, the canon represents

> a choice among texts struggling with one another for survival, [...] the choice being made by dominant social groups, institutions of education, traditions of criticism, or [...] by late-coming authors who feel themselves chosen by particular ancestral figures.[30]

At the same time, once fixed, the canon becomes dominant, approved and celebrated, and as a result becomes a frequently repeated catalogue of works. In effect, it determines the centre, establishes its selection criteria and introduces discriminatory, even exclusionary practices against works which fail to qualify. Because marginality exists only in relation to canonicity, indeed centrality, it can be said to stand for non-canonized, rejected and controversial writing.

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[29] See Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994); Henry Louis Gates, *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992).

[30] Bloom, 20.

In the context of Russian literature, the canon was formed mainly in the nineteenth century and tended, in keeping with the dominant critical trends of that time, to favour realistic and didactic writing. What makes the Russian literary canon different from its Western counterpart is its social function.[31] Compared to Western literature, Russian literature tackled a wider range of topics and was addressed to a broader public. Canonized writers came to symbolize national greatness. Literature combined features of both fictional and non-fictional writing, and served as a forum for theological, ethical, metaphysical or political debate. Whether works of literature were chronicles of saints' lives or folktales, civic-minded texts of the eighteenth century, sociological novels of the nineteenth century (Herzen, Turgenev, Chernyshevskii, Dostoevskii, Tolstoi), or the later ideological writings of Socialist Realism, the texts were enshrined in the critical canon for having been said to provide moral instruction, exemplary life patterns and an uplifting positive outlook. The writer was assigned the role of a prophet or a teacher. Editors and readers rejected those who did not conform to this tradition. For example, modernist writers (Symbolists, Acmeists, Futurists) at the turn of the twentieth century opposed the existing canon, as well as the tastes of editors and readers, by choosing aesthetic over didactic principles. Their adversarial stance was intended to demonstrate independence, artistic creativity and the liberating force of art itself. Subsequently, modernist writers were excluded from the general didactic canon, because neither their art nor their lives could fulfill didactic functions.[32] Furthermore, after the October Revolution, Russian literature was assigned the propagandistic duty of

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[31] For a detailed analysis of the historical tradition and interrelations of canonicity and history, see Gary Saul Morson, *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986)131-34, 285-300; Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2000) 3-24.

[32] See Jeffrey Brooks, "Popular Philistinism and Russian Modernism," in Gary Saul Morson, *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies,* 90-111.

creating official myths and promoting Marxist-Leninist theories. This, according to Clark, aggravated the "conflict between the individual and society," where a writer was forced to overcome his "spontaneous" reactions towards events and to develop a "conscious" (politically correct) approach. [33] As a result, writers and works of art which opposed state policy and preserved their individuality were relegated to the margins of official literary structures.

In general the Russian literary canon may be viewed as standing in a sort of opposition to the Western canon. In other words, marginality is relative not only to the centre, but what constitutes the centre changes with literary time and place. Moreover, what is marginal in the Soviet canon is central to the later dissident canon.

Questions of centrality and marginality have been widely debated in postmodernist studies since the end of the 1970s.[34] When the question of *marginality* is treated in literature, the focus seems to be on the writer's marginal personality or lifestyle, on the creation of eccentric characters or on a non-traditional style of writing.

Postmodernist and postcolonial debates demonstrate acceptance of the fact that positionality (where one stands in relation to what one says) is central to the construction of knowledge.[35] This approach tries to identify the relationship between conceptual categories (such as ethnicity or gender) and expression through writing. Positionality reveals its own mechanism in action: traditionally, governing elites see themselves as providers of sacred values and establish the criteria for centrality.

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[33] See Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual,* 15-44.

[34] For example, see C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); B. Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York:Methuen, 1987); L. Hutcheon and M. Richmond, eds., *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fiction* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1991); G. L. Clark, D. Forbes and R. Francis, eds., *Multicuturalism, Difference and Postmodernism* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993); J. Pivato, *Echo: Essays on Other Literatures* (Montreal: Guernica Editions, 1994).

[35] See more on this subject in Gunew, *Framing Marginality,* 1-24.

Texts which do not conform to these criteria are relegated to a peripheral status. Factors underwriting non-conformity – gender, race, social class, geographical origin, ideological or sexual orientation – refer either to an author's personality or to the content of a literary work. Literary theory often delineates such oppositions as *major / minor* literature, *national / migrant* writing and *mainstream / sub-culture*. Within these oppositions the second element is perceived as marginal. What is usually considered *major* literature is the traditional, canonical literature in the *main* language of society (*major* language). *Minor* literature can refer to literature that is written in a language (*minor* language) different from the dominant language of the population, or to literature that authors of a minority group produce in a *major* language. This distinction alludes to the study by Deleuze and Guattari (1986), who made use of Franz Kafka's experience as a Jew writing in Prague to distinguish between a *minor* literature (in a *major* language) and a literature of minorities (written in a *minor* language).[36]

*National* writing denotes literature that symbolically defines the culture of a state or community. *Migrant* literature is viewed as transitory and not rooted in any one place. It often deals with themes, characters and events whose relevance is outside a traditional state or community literature.[37]

*Mainstream* culture is characterized as an active and recognized trend. The term *mainstream* applies to cultures whose ideological constraints are covert, mediated or somehow mitigated; Soviet Socialist Realism made such constraints overt and ostensibly monolithic. *Subculture* often exists as some kind of underground

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[36] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986) 16-30.

[37] For more on this subject see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 174-200; Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990) 1-7; 291-322; Sneja Gunew, *Displacements: Migrant Storytellers* (Geelong, Vic.: Deakin UP, 1981) 14-37.

movement. The opposition *mainstream / subculture* slightly overlaps with the opposition *major* literature / *minor* literature, the difference lying in the subterranean character of the first, which has to deal with hidden, sometimes illegal texts. *Major mainstream* literature creates canons, decides what constitutes the centre and what moves to the margins. Thus a *marginal, minor subculture* can be described as an oppositional culture by writers who feel marginalized, suppressed or excluded as a result of their peripheral status vis-à-vis a canon or the history and politics of a work's reception. Scholars working on marginality agree that it cannot be reduced to the mere fact that certain writers or literary works are excluded from the centre and relegated to a peripheral position.[38] Discentered elements tend to form their own circles to resist and to fight the oppressing centralizing powers. Moreover, according to Gunew, "the exclusions and marginalization of certain writings in fact frame the conditions of existence of those other writings which are included."[39] It is in this sense that dissident literature may be said to 'frame' Soviet official literature. Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of "*deterritorialization*" of the dominant language by minority languages.[40] This could refer not only to language but also to literature. Once diluted with various *minor* literatures, *major mainstream* literature loses its aura of superiority and universality and forfeits an exclusively central position. *Migrant* literature then serves to deconstruct nationalism based on selected images, which are grouped around common descent, heritage and language. For example, Iskander's ironic approach to Abkhazian/Russian confrontations or to any

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[38] See Wolfgang Hochbruck, "Cultural Authenticity and the Construction of Pan-Indian Metanarrative," in Winfried Siemerling and Katrin Schwenk, ed. *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1996) 19-28; John Lowe, "Humour and Identity in Ethnic Autobiography," *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text*, 75-99.
[39] Gunew, *Framing Marginality*, 28.
[40] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 25.

form of national prejudice in *Сандро из Чегема* [Sandro from Chegem] discredits the Soviet attitude towards other national cultures.[41]

Bhabha applied psychoanalytic techniques to text analysis while studying the authoritarian role of colonial discourse. She supports the idea of the production of 'otherness' as the production of stereotypes, where stereotypes present false images, and manoeuvering between them creates a sense of difference. There can be no opposition between colonizer and colonized, Bhabha claims, because the two are intermingled.[42] That is, *marginal* is not just the opposite of *central*, it can only exist in relation to *central*. One causes the other and results in it as well.

Marginal writings often play an innovative and revolutionary role. As Kronfeld notes in *On the Margins of Modernism*:

> Writing from a marginal position can destabilize the norm of the literary and linguistic system by marking the unmarked, charging the neutral, colorizing the colorless, particularizing the universal.[43]

For instance, Siniavskii's skeptical and paradoxical writing not only questions and deconstructs the phenomena of Russian social and cultural experiences, but also challenges traditional assumptions about them.[44]

Marginal texts tend to employ a different style from that identified with a *major* language; they aim, in effect, to decentralize canonical language. Kronfeld observes that the language of marginal works is oriented primarily towards oral popular sources, which a writer can use to demote the *major* language. Traditionally,

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[41] See Peter Vail' and Alexandr Genis, "Diadia Sandro i Iosif Stalin," *Sovremennaia Russkaia proza* (Ann Arbor: Ermitazh, 1982).
[42] Homi Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative," in D. T. Goldberg, ed. *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990) 183-209.
[43] Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996) 72.
[44] Examples can be found in Siniavskii's *Unguarded Thoughts* (1966), *Strolls with Pushkin* (1975), *Ivan the Fool: A Study of Russian Folk Faith* (1991) and other writings.

authenticity has been linked with speech and the subject that is brought up in a conversational manner.[45]

In the context of twentieth-century literary criticism, works of the Russian Formalists (1914-1930) such as Tynianov, Jakobson, Shklovskii, Tomashevskii, Eikhenbaum, Zhirmunskii, Brik, Vinogradov as well as Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) may be treated as a significant contribution to the study of marginality. In fact, the Formalist method, as well as Bakhtin's theories, were marginal for their time and appeared as a reaction to traditional literary criticism (the ideological tradition of Belinskii, Dobroliubov and Chernyshevskii). The Formalists laid the basis for a new treatment of language and literature, giving priority to form over content.[46] The Formalists addressed marginality as well. They emphasized the interdependence of all linguistic strata, both canonical and noncanonical. This fact supports the relativity argument mentioned earlier. They introduced their model of the dynamics of the literary process, which could be interpreted in terms of the present discussion of the relationship between centre and margins. Thus, marginal writing rebels against the centre by entering into alliance with other peripheral writing. As well, trying to disengage the study of literature from other disciplines, the Formalists determined that "[t]he subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality, but literariness (literaturnost')."[47] This statement changes the distribution of central and marginal positions in literature: it decenters literary canons that are based on extraliterary criteria (nationality, politics, geography) by insisting that the difference between

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[45] See Kronfeld, 1-56, 81-113.

[46] See *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays,* trans. L. T. Lemon and M. J. Reis (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965); *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views,* eds. L. Matejka and K. Pomorska (Ann Arbor: Uof Michigan, 1978); Mikhail Bakhtin and Pavel Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics,* trans. A. J. Wehrle (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978); Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965).

[47] Roman Jakobson, *Noveishaia russkaia poeziia* (Prague: Tip. Politica, 1921) 11.

literature and non-literature has to be found not in subject matter, but in the mode of presentation.

Another important aspect of Formalist theory that plays a significant role in altering and decentering canons is the concept of '*automatization*' and '*deautomatization*' of discourse as developed by Tynianov, Jakobson and Shklovskii.[48] A large portion of any communication is automatic and makes use of numerous set phrases. In the Russian literary language, which historically combines elements of Church Slavonic and vernacular Russian, at least two distinct types of discourse tend to fall into readily apparent positions: 'higher' literary vocabulary is deemed to be central; while 'lower', colloquial vocabulary is assigned the status of marginal. The discourse system establishes strong norms for the operation of these structures (automatization). The process of deautomatization by means of challenging normative rules, experimenting with lexical and grammatical material ensures the stylistic vitality of discourse and stresses the interdependence of all literary strata. Widespread experimentation in these areas may be observed in the ornamental prose of the 1920s. Automized discourse tends to fight new deautomizing attempts. Such were the campaigns in the 1930s which tried to eliminate folk styles and even some folk genres. That is why the publication history of Sholokhov's *Тихий Дон* [Quiet Flows the Don, 1928-1940] shows the gradual standardization of its language over successive reprintings.[49]

In linguistic terms a special stress is laid on semantics. A word is seen to be more than a representation of an object, for it constitutes an object in its own right

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[48] See Iurii Tynianov and Roman Jakobson, "Problems in the Study of Language and Literature," *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist View,* 79-81; Victor Shklovskii, "Art as Technique," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays,* 12.

[49] See Ernest Simmons, *Russian Fiction and Soviet Ideology: Introduction to Fedin, Leonov, and Sholokhov* (New York: Ungar, 1958) 163-252.

with a variety of different meanings. This ability of words to convey different meanings enables the Formalists to present literary language as a unique mode of discourse with multiple meanings. The Formalists decenter the position of the author in the text by downplaying the importance of the author in favour of the artistic *device* (прием). In the latter view, literary works aim to draw attention purely to themselves, to their stylistic properties rather than to the writers' personalities and their messages.

The Formalists opened another channel for decentering in their treatment of genre. According to Tynianov in *Архаисты и новаторы* [Archaists and Innovators,1929] it is impossible to supply a static definition of genre, which should rather be considered a temporal and historical phenomenon that constantly displaces itself.[50] Genre is placed on a borderline which on the one hand blurs, and on the other hand emphasizes, the distinctions between literature and history or life itself. It exists in constant motion, shifting in literary evolution. It connects a literary work to previous traditions in art and at the same time, moves ahead, detaching itself from its predecessors. Thus, theoretically any text can be placed on the borderline in relation to a tradition or canon. Tynianov points out that any " literary work is eccentric," because while measuring itself against the centre and retaining the memory of it, it tries to move into and usurp the central position. [51] For Tynianov the literary centre and margins achieve a particular dynamic relationship by destroying and simultaneously constructing each other. When a literary centre (genre or literary work) is dismantled, it moves to the periphery and the new centre is formed on the foundation of the old centre or with reference to it. This process produces

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[50] Iurii Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1985) 30-48.
[51] See Tynianov, 36.

countergenres to genres, brings counternarratives into mainstream culture. Margins play a decentering role here, performing the function of deautomatization of a canon. In this way Tynianov's conception of literary dynamics ensures a continuous, rejuvenating process in the arts. In effect, margins intend to exclude, to threaten the stability of the centre. This demonstrates their covert subversive function which is related to the earlier discussion about the relationship between 'mark' and 'margin.'

The scholar whose role in the discussion of marginality may be seen as decisive was Mikhail Bakhtin. In Bakhtin's concept of discourse, no word can be taken by itself; it must be employed in a particular context – not only linguistic, but also historical and cultural.[52] Bakhtin states that language not only reflects but actively shapes reality; even a multiplicity of changing realities. Language is perceived as a multileveled system made up of many dialects, discourses and genres in constant conflict with one another. In "Эпос и роман" [Epic and Novel, 1941] and *Слово в романе* [Discourse in the Novel, 1934-35], Bakhtin shows the conflict between the centripetal and centrifugal forces existing within a language.[53] The conflict tends to privilege one discourse over others and to use the centralizing discourse as an instrument of political strategy and social hierarchization. Here the earlier discussion of power relations in Foucault's conception can be recalled. Just as some individuals occupy marginal positions in society as a result of power distribution, certain discourses shift to the periphery and cannot in Aristotelian terms achieve or express Truth. Thus, the question of power and the role of language are combined in the process of creating centre and margins. Illustrating his idea, Bakhtin

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[52] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986) 15-21.

[53] See Bakhtin, "Epos i roman (o metodologii issledovaniia romana)," *Voprosy literatury i estetiki: Issledovaniia raznykh let* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1975) 447-83; Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 423-434.

compares the structure of epic and novel. He describes the epic as monological and authoritarian in its worldview, while the novel is reflective of multiple discourses and a diversity of views. This opposition –monologue versus dialogue – takes one more step towards decentering to affect the author whose monologic authority, enshrined in traditions of the epic mode, is considerably eroded. In [Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity, 1924] Bakhtin explains how self is inseparable from other; the other completes the self and is completed by it at the same time. He proposes the idea of intersubjectivity between *self* and *other*, as well as between the author of the text and the hero in the text. This contributes to the relativity argument of the notion of marginal, because Bakhtin rejects the absolute distinction between the categories of self and other.

Another important decentering strategy is Bakhtin's concept of carnival, which concerns not just the subversion of the author, but of all authority. An entire gallery of marginal heroes has been created in the folk tradition of carnival: дурак [fool], плут [rogue], шут [clown]. In *Проблемы поэтики Достоевского* [Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, 1929] and *Рабле и его мир* [Rabelais and His World, 1965] Bakhtin describes the historical role of these characters in opposing officialdom by means of misunderstanding (fool), manipulating (rogue) and meticulously distorting (clown) the official monologic truth.[54] Thus, monologic can be equated with central. Laughter is a key notion of Bakhtin's theory; it is a liberating force, a force of destabilization if not of decentralization, of reaching towards otherness. Laughter itself is a marginal phenomenon, which lives on the borderline (between extreme oppositions, between the allowed and the forbidden,

[54] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolskii (Boston: MIT Press, 1968).

between birth and death) and crosses limits. Laughter subverts hierarchies in social, political and ideological spheres, as well as in discourse. It adds layers and pockets of difference, disrupts monologism, eliminates the autocracy of any single language. In Bakhtin's representation laughter pushes all aspects of the serious and the dogmatic at least temporarily to the margins, moving in to occupy a productively destabilized centre and tends to act as a phenomenon of central position and importance.[55]

As demonstrated above, there is a long established tradition of dealing with marginality as a social and literary notion. Marginality is recognized only with respect to a certain tradition, canon or currently prevailing norm. Ostensibly designed to protect the centre, margins work covertly and perversely to ensure the deautomatization of literary norms, traditions and canons. Marginality is a fluid and highly transient phenomenon. From an economy of exclusion it can, if it becomes self-aware, occur as a reaction to an old trend, challenge it and attempt to replace it. When speaking about marginality it is possible to distinguish between *internal* and *external* marginalization. *Internal* marginalization suggests that a writer (or a particular type of writing) sets himself (itself) outside the canon or apart from the contemporary literary environment. In like manner the Oberiu (the acronym refers to the Association for Real Art) group (1928) proclaimed even in their name their independence from the Soviet avant-garde movement, 'left' art and any preceding "-ism" names such as acmeism or futurism.[56] By *external* marginalization I mean the process whereby the existing canon or other outer factors exclude a certain writer, literary work or genre. Similarly, conservative reviewers fought to have Volodin's

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[55] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 166; Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 17-22.
[56] See George Gibian, ed., *Russia's Lost Literature of the Absurd: Selected Works of Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedenskii* (New York: Ithaca, 1971).

plays removed from the stage in Leningrad in the 1960s since their mere existence undermined Socialist Realism.[57]

Each of the two groups – internal and external - may exist at various levels of extraliterary, intraliterary and linguistic analysis. A scheme of the cultural formation of marginality can be created to illustrate different types of marginality in the theoretical context in which they are most often discussed:

**TABLE 1: Principles of Marginalization**

| | **Internal Marginalization** | **External Marginalization** |
|---|---|---|
| **Extraliterary** | As chosen by the writer:<br>Dissidence<br>Alternative life-style | As established by official structures:<br>Territoriality<br>Politics<br>Nationality<br>Religion |
| **Intraliterary** | Subverting the canon:<br>Genre<br>Trend<br>Themes | Confirming the canon:<br>Genre<br>Trend<br>Themes |
| **Linguistic** | Creating alternative styles | Controlling minor languages:<br>Multi-national writing<br>Translated literature<br>Regional writing |

This table displays various configurations of marginality. It is informal and based on contemporary theories of the marginal. The levels of the scheme overlap. They often produce non-traditional, experimental works of art, which redistribute elements of an art system and thus play an innovative role. Marginality is a context-dependent notion. It evolves only against a set background of fixed values, traditions,

[57] See David Lowe, *Russian Writing Since 1953: A Critical Survey* (New York: Ungar, 1987) 183-85.

and certain historical factors. It is a shifting phenomenon - it aims to usurp the central position, and after achieving centrality can easily undergo canonization. Thus, marginality as a feature of the history and politics of a work's reception can shift over time to a central, mainstream position. Similarly, an author's peripheral status within the canon changes depending on the place (for example, if immigrant culture is the norm, writing as a native is the condition that marginalizes and vice versa).[58]

The terms associated with the process of marginality in literature – *'minor,' 'émigré,' 'migrant,' 'non-canonical,' ' nonliterary'* – often sound reductive, in the sense that they suggest some subjugated status. Subjugation does take place, but is usually limited in time. Literary marginality is ambiguous. Excluded from the central mainstream literature, a text does not become a complete outcast. Deprived of authority, it can nonetheless be read as an authentic expression of the marginal experience. Situated on the periphery of the canonical literature, it has access to the standards of centrality, and thus, possesses the potential to challenge them. Marginality is a natural and vital factor belonging to life and literature. It enjoys the privilege and freedom of not belonging, of not conforming, of playing without rules, which is essential for any creative process.

The scheme suggested above can be used to describe the various forms of marginalization both endured and creatively manipulated by Dovlatov and his Leningrad fellow writers:

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[58] See Kronfeld, On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics, 10-17.

**TABLE 2: Dovlatov and The Marginal Position of Young Leningrad Writers.**

| | Internal Marginalization | External Marginalization |
|---|---|---|
| **Extraliterary** | As chosen by the writer:<br>Dissidence<br>Alternative life-style<br>Extreme actions (emigration) | As established by official structures:<br>Territoriality (Leningrad vs. Moscow)<br>Politics (non-involvement) |
| **Intraliterary** | Subverting the canon:<br>Orientation on the American canon<br>Marginal themes and characters | Confirming the canon:<br>Genre (short story)<br>Trend (Leningrad unaffiliated writers) |
| **Linguistic** | Creating an alternative style with orientation on the American canon | Controlling minor languages:<br>Leningrad school of writing |

Sergei Dovlatov, as well as other young writers of Leningrad found themselves relegated to the position of 'odd men out' in the Russian twentieth-century literary tradition. They experienced external marginalization under pressure from the structures of the Soviet literary establishment and rejection by its institutions, and by exclusion from the contemporary literary and linguistic canons.[59] At the same time they seemed to engage in a certain internal, voluntary marginalization by undertaking experiments in their own lives as well as in their art.

The next chapter will concentrate on the internal side of the process.

[59] By linguistic canon I mean the standardization of language. See Deming Brown, "Narrative Devices in the Russian Short Story: Intimacy and Irony," *American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) 59.

Гений враждебен не толпе, а посредственности.

Гений — это бессмертный вариант простого человека.

Сергей Довлатов.[60]

Genius is hostile not towards the crowd, but towards mediocrity.

Genius is the immortal variant of a simple man.

## Chapter 2
## EXPERIENCE ON THE MARGINS: PROTOTYPES AND PROTAGONISTS

Sergei Dovlatov belonged to the young generation of Leningrad writers of the sixties who immersed themselves in internal marginalization in order to establish their artistic independence. Internal marginalization implies factors within the writers' own control and, indeed, undertaken at their own initiative. These factors include alternative lifestyles[61] adopted by the writers themselves (extraliterary), as well as thematic and stylistic features (intraliterary and linguistic) that set their works outside of the current canon. In order to observe this phenomenon it is essential to discuss the Leningrad literary environment of the sixties, since Dovlatov is associated in the public mind with informal Leningrad groups of writers who experienced marginalization at that particular time. Moreover, Dovlatov himself attributes part of his success to Leningrad literary influences and the special atmosphere that prevailed in his formative years as a young writer.[62]

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[60] Dovlatov, "Zapisnye knizhki," *Sobranie prozy v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 3, 296.

[61] The term 'alternative lifestyle' means here different from the traditional model of the " советский образ жизни" [Soviet way of life] , which required a permanent job, membership in the Communist party, stable family environment, participation in Soviet 'collective' actions (demonstrations, parades, communal labour weekends), quiet and serious leisure (chess).

[62] S. Dovlatov, "My nachinali v epokhu zastoia," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Zvezda," 1996) 231-35.

As stated above *marginal* can be defined only against the background of what serves as a mainstream centre or a norm.[63] Therefore the term *marginal* can be applied to Leningrad writers of the sixties such as Andrei Bitov, Gleb Gorbovskii, Rid Grachev, Anatolii Naiman, Vladimir Ufliand, Iosif Brodskii, Igor Efimov, Viktor Goliavkin, Vladimir Maramzin, Vladimir Gubin, Evgenii Rein, Viktor Sosnora, Boris Vakhtin, Sergei Dovlatov, Valerii Popov and many others. However, it can only be applied against the backdrop of the extraliterary requirements and literary norms then prevailing.

In the sixties the extraliterary requirements for a writer mostly referred to geographical factors, political orientation and social image. To ensure his success, a writer needed to be a writer writing in Russian, working in the centralizing centre (Moscow). He needed to be an official writer, thus a member of the Union of Soviet Writers (established in 1932). As well, he needed to publish in the 'central' press, as opposed to provincial journals, and to support the Communist Party ideology.[64] That is, extraliterary factors determined the status of a writer.

At that time (the sixties and later in the seventies) literature was still under the influence of the Socialist Realist norm.[65] This norm required a novel to be the major literary form, literary heroes to be polarized as positive and negative, the plot to be standard in providing a narrative progression for Leninist ideology, Soviet patriotism, success in industrial production and collective farming. The writer's position had to be clearly defined as that of a promoter of Communist aesthetics. The style had to be accessible and edifying. Conditioned by the recent Stalinist reality, the literary works

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[63] See Gunew, 27- 52.

[64] On the question of co-existence of Russian and non-Russian writers, as well as the "ideological preparation" of writers, see Anthony Adamovich, "The Non-Russians," in *Soviet Literature in the Sixties*, eds. Max Hayward and Edward L. Crowley (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964) 100-29.

[65] See N. N. Shneidman, *Soviet Literature in the 1970s: Artistic Diversity and Ideological Conformity* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1979) 3-31.

of that time employed a typically dualistic chronotope:[66] a heroic revolutionary past and the bright communist future depicted in remote places, such as collective farms, construction sites, the front line of military actions, factories. The norm of the time continued to be defined by Socialist Realist classics promoted in the heyday of Stalinism, by Furmanov's *Чапаев* [Chapaev,1923], Serafimovich's *Железный поток* [The Iron Flood, 1924], Gladkov's *Цемент* [Cement, 1925], Fadeev's *Молодая гвардия* [The Young Guard, 1945], Sholokhov's *Тихий Дон* [Quiet Flows the Don, 1928-1940].[67]

In the sixties changes in social and political life influenced changes in literary modes. After the highly politicized and idealized Stalinist myths of Soviet life yielded partially and sporadically to the period of political tolerance now known as the "Thaw" (1953-1963), the new literature of the sixties changed in two major directions. The first, an external reorientation, entailed the rehabilitation of literature of the twenties with publications of authors such as Babel' and Pil'niak. The second saw an internal reorientation of texts that made the plot more challenging and restored depth and humanity in content (Panova, Nekrasov),[68] regenerated the poetics of form and rediscovered the advantages of the shorter form (Trifonov; *Iunost'* writers such as Aksenov, Gladilin and Voinovich).

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[66] The chronotope is a term first used by M. Bakhtin to describe the interrelationship between the sense of time and the sense of space in a literary work. See Mikhail Bakhtin, "Formy vremeni i khronotopa v romane: Ocherki po istoricheskoi poetike," *Voprosy literatury i estetike: Issledovaniia raznykh let* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1975)234-35; Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981) 36-45.

[67] See Edward Brown, *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982) 154-90; and Mark Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature (*New York: Oxford UP, 1964) 171- 277.

[68] Vera Panova's *Времена года* [Span of the Year, 1953] was the first book of the post-Stalin period to focus on personal problems and the individual. Victor Nekrasov's stories "Вася Канаков" [Vasia Konakov, 1961]; "Новичок" [Novichok, 1963], as well as his novella *Кира Георгиевна* [Kira Georgievna, 1961] contradicted the norms of Socialist Realism by showing unheroic individuals peforming heroic deeds in unheroic manner.

The chronotope of literary works underwent changes too. Time and space fell into stark opposition. Moscow presented as versus far-away provinces. An uneventful industrious present opposed by a remote heroic past and bright optimistic future. Nevertheless, literary norms still governed plot and character development, so that the positive and negative was well defined and conclusions were provided. Special themes were mandated, such as conflicts ultimately resolved at work, the moral questioning of Soviet youth, the search for and testing of models of progressive post-Stalinist leadership, and a return to old revolutionary values. Literary works had to comply with the principles of faithfulness to reality and sincerity in the context of renewed socialism.[69] For the literary norm extra-literary concerns, such as the treatment of social, ideological and moral questions, were of outmost importance - so much so that the value of a literary work was often determined by the ideological, social and national inclinations of an author.

Leningrad writers and poets of the sixties (Bitov, Gorbovskii, Grachev, Naiman, Ufliand, Brodskii, Efimov, Goliavkin, Rein, Sosnora, Vakhtin, Dovlatov, Popov and others) did not correspond to the image of the official Soviet writer. Instead, they challenged the image. They all held a heightened consciousness of difference from a 'positive' Soviet personality type in common.[70] They were known for their eccentricity; Brodskii was at the time hailed as an erudite and a school dropout, Ufliand as a Jack-of-all-trades. Naiman was accredited with the most ready tongue and teasing manner in the city of Leningrad; Rein was celebrated as a man of unerring literary intuition, Goliavkin as an artist and a boxer. Dovlatov was recognized for his exotic looks, story telling and theatrics; Vakhtin was respected as a

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[69] See Deming Brown, *Soviet Literature Since Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978); Geoffrey Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980); Max Hayward and Edward L. Crowley, eds. *Soviet Literature in the Sixties* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1964); Boris Grois, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond,* trans. Ch. Rougle (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992).

[70] The relevant attributes include education in science, a stable career, a modest quiet lifestyle, membership in the Communist Party, and, finally, a serious, sober and unremarkable demeanour.

sinologist and translator of Chinese literature.[71] Truly versatile personalities, young Leningrad writers emphasized and even celebrated their otherness. Many of them had three or more different facets to their professional profile. Some of them were students (Naiman and Rein were at the Technological Institute, Maramzin and Popov at the Electrotechnical Institute, Dovlatov in the Philological Department of Leningrad State University, Goliavkin in the Academy of Fine Arts, Efimov in the Politechnical Institute). Some worked at odd jobs (Brodskii participated in geological expeditions, and worked as an assistant at a local boiler-room; Gubin was a clerk at the Leningrad Gas and Oil Company). Others pursued professional careers (Vakhtin was a translator and researcher).

In order to oppose the "советский образ жизни"[72] [Soviet way of life], the young Leningrad writers managed to locate themselves outside established norms by creating their own lifestyles.[73] Many of them adopted a dishevelled appearance and spent a great deal of time in Leningrad bars. Many left regular jobs, neglected careers and deliberately chose life on the fringes – by becoming stokers, night watchmen or elevator operators. According to Dolinin:

> Для занятия свободной творческой деятельностью лучшей работы было не найти. В несвободном обществе наименее несвободен тот, кто стоит на нижних ступенях социальной лестницы [...] В котельных и сторожках рождались сочинения, уходившие в самиздатские журналы. Почти вся петербургская неофициальная литература имеет кочегарские удостоверения.[74]
>
> To immerse oneself in free creative activity one could not find a better job. In an oppressive society the least oppressed person is the one who occupies the lower rungs of the social ladder. [...] Writings which later went to samizdat journals were created in boiler-rooms and watchmen's booths. Almost all

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[71] The information provided is based on memoirs. See Evgenii Rein, *Mne skuchno bez Dovlatova* (St. Petersburg: Limbus Press, 1997) 83-85, 184; Solomon Volkov, *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1995) 479-520, 522, 526.

[72] This is one of the ideological clichés that were excessively used by the Soviet media between the period of the sixties and eighties. See footnote 42.

[73] Vladimir Ufliand, personal interview, St. Petersburg, May 1998.

[74] See Viacheslav Dolinin, "Leningradskii periodicheskii samizdat serediny 1950-80 godov," *Samizdat* (St. Petersburg: Memorial, 1993) 14.

> members of St. Petersburg non-official literature have a stoker's license.

They treated life as a playground for literature. The young writers saw each other as bright and resourceful individuals, people daring to experiment with their own lives.[75] The position they took reflected the erasure of the life/literature dichotomy - literature for them was not only a text, but a lifestyle and an attitude to life. They combined different professional activities and urban adventures with literature, though for most, writing was the prime commitment.

Most of these writers appear in Dovlatov's prose. Dovlatov presents them as marginal personalities, who distinguish themselves as men of action:

> Среди моих знакомых преобладали неординарныеличности. Главным образом, дерзкие начинающие писатели, бунтующие художники и революционные музыканты.[76]
>
> Extraordinary people prevailed among my friends. They were mostly daring young writers, rebellious artists and revolutionary musicians.

In his description of fellow writers Dovlatov chooses a different way of looking at the artist. The traditional Russian and Soviet concept of a writer as a romantic hero (nineteenth century), a tormented hermit (Modernism), an exemplary citizen (Socialist Realism), or a dissident (Solzhenitsyn and others) rarely displayed trivial personal features. By contrast, Dovlatov offers a private image of the artist. In his presentation each of his friends is no longer the model of civic virtue or the ideal writer; rather he is a "guy next door" with a captivating personality. Dovlatov provides details on daily routine; he gossips and jokes about writers. For instance, he

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[75] The information here and below is based on Valerii Popov, personal interview, St. Petersburg, May 1998.

[76] Segrei Dovlatov, "Remeslo," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Limbuss-press, 1995) 22.

characterizes poet Ufliand's galvanizing energy by listing the rumours about his abilities and hobbies:

> Уфлянд (вес 52 кг) избил несколько милиционеров [...] разрушил капитальную стену и вмонтировал туда холодильник. Дрессирует аквариумных рыб. Пошил собственными руками элегантный костюм. Работает в географическом музее ...экспонатом. Выучился играть на клависине. Экспонирует свои рисунки в Эрмитаже. [77]
>
> Ufliand (weight 52 kg) beat up several militiamen [...] destroyed the main wall and installed a fridge there. Trains aquarium fish. With his own hands made an elegant suit. Works in a museum of geography ... as an exhibit. Learnt to play harpsichord. Exhibits his drawings in the Hermitage.

It is significant that the detailed description of the poet's activities reveals, on the one hand, the regular routine of an ordinary man, who has a job in a museum, renovates his apartment, has hobbies such as sewing and looking after his fish. On the other hand, the poet's abilities are quite incredible: he is an artist and a musician, an amazing athlete, an engineer, a designer and even a magician (he trains fish!). His image does not correspond to the image of a romantic poet involved in the divine process of creating. Instead, it is as though he is in perpetual motion. These outstanding features give an eccentric quality to the protagonist, making him appear beyond belief. Representation of this kind also introduces a "kaleidoscopic"[78] image of the character, which in terms of Lipovetskii's chaos theory symbolizes life's disorder.[79] The chaotic list of the poet's activities contributes to the portrait of a dissipated, absurd, and therefore marginal figure.

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[77] Dovlatov, "Ryzhii," in *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 265.
[78] The term is used in Mark Lipovetskii, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999) 146.
[79] See Lipovetskii, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos*, 3-6, 26-38.

Thus, Dovlatov displays his colleagues' personal activities and opinions as holding interest for the reader. He highlights particular features to illustrate their unique qualities:

> Найман — интеллектуальный ковбой. Успевает нажать спусковой крючок раньше любого оппонента. Его трассирующие шутки — ядовиты.[80]
>
> Naiman is an intellectual cowboy who always manages to beat his opponent to the draw. His bullet-like sallies are lethal.[81]

Or he notes about Brodskii:

> Бродский создал неслыханную модель поведения. Он жил не в пролетарском государстве, а в монастыре собственного духа. Он не боролся с режимом. Он его не замечал.[82]
>
> Brodskii created a model of behaviour that was unheard of before. He lived not in a proletarian state, but in the monastery of his own spirit. He did not fight the regime. He simply did not notice it.

These characteristics present Dovlatov's peers as erratic, almost insane individuals. Their peculiarities (lethal sallies, hermitage of the spirit) make them marginal among more compliant people.

Most of Dovlatov's remarks about the writers of his milieu are apt and abrupt. In his interpretation, Gubin was a "выдумщик, плут, сочинитель" [inventive soul, a rogue, a story-teller], Vakhtin "мужественный, энергичный" [courageous, energetic], Efimov "не слишком откровенный" [not very open],[83] Dar "поразительный, невыносимый, странный" [striking, unbearable, strange].[84] By providing some details about the writers' personalities, Dovlatov achieves a certain shift from the

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[80] Dovlatov, "Potomok D'Artangana," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh,* vol. 2, 18.
[81] Dovlatov, *The Invisible Book*, trans. K. O'Connor and D. Burgin (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979) 28.
[82] Ibid, 23.
[83] Ibid, 20-21.
[84] See Dovlatov, "Poslednii chudak," in *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov,* 276.

impersonal to personal. This shift can be viewed from various angles. First, it can be regarded as a way to oppose the way the canonical approach views the author's image. Next, it signifies a move towards something closer to pop culture that feeds information to a curious public. Finally, in terms of the present discussion of marginal personalities, Dovlatov reveals the mechanism of marginalization and self-marginalization by focusing on writers' idiosyncrasies, by isolating them from the usual context of official writers' conferences and meetings of the Soviet Writers' Union, and by placing them instead in such informal settings as bars, cafés and communal apartments.[85] Marginality thus constructs itself from emphasized eccentricity and alternative lifestyles considered deviant by conventional morality.

The young writers knew each other, and participated in a common cultural ambience. Within their private circles, the Leningrad writers established among themselves a friendly rivalry of wit and daring experimentalism. Each sought to prove his own distinctive, superior style. In such a daring and teasing company writers were stimulated to produce unusual and unpredictable texts in a game of literary one-upmanship. Poet Anatolii Naiman comments:

> Как правило [...] по не зависимому от лежащих вне искусства обстоятельств и мотивов [...] выходило, что ты - гений и что ближайшие твои друзья гениальны, потому что вы, ваша компания - это компания гениев. Минутами, правда, налетал ледяной ветерок отчаяния, зарождавшийся от сомнения: а вдруг твой талант не оценен не потому, что публике недоступна гениальность, а потому, что ты - бездарность? Другого выбора не было: гений или бездарность.[86]
>
> As a rule [...] for reasons not connected with art [...] it turned out that you were a genius and your close friends were geniuses, because you, your group was a group of geniuses. Occasionally, though, you would feel the chilling wind of

[85] This argument could be identified with one of the Formalists' methods ('priem'), namely defacilitation ('ostranenie'). See Shklovskii, "Iskusstvo kak priem," *O teorii prozy* (Moscow, 1925).
[86] Anatolii Naiman, "Personazhi v poiskakh avtora," *Petropol'*, 5 (1994): 173.

> despair, born out of doubt: what if your talent was not appreciated not because the public could not apprieciate the true genius, but because you were a hack? There was no other option: genius or a hack.

This remark reveals an obvious antagonism between 'us' and 'them' (corresponding to "гений или бездарность" [genius or a hack]). It could be related to the (Neo-) Romantic tendency of polarization ('poet' vs. 'crowd'): the 'us' component is a 'company of geniuses,' while 'they' are merely 'hacks' in a faceless 'crowd'.[87] At the core of this tendency is the presentation of the artist as an exceptional personality. Dovlatov comments upon another side of this tendency:

> Строжайшая установка на гениальность мешала овладению ремеслом, выбивала из будничной житейской колеи. Можно быть рядовым инженером. Рядовых изгоев не существует. Сама их чужеродность — залог величия.[88]
>
> The rigid insistence on genius interfered with mastering one's craft, upset the everyday routine. It is possible to be a mediocre engineer. Mediocre outcasts do not exist. Their strangeness itself is a guarantee of greatness.

This comment hints at the dissipated lives of the Leningrad bohemians. It also emphasizes the point that the young writers chose to assume marginal identities to make outcasts out of themselves in order to maximize the process of creation.

Thus, inspired by the idea of exceptionality, the young writers ostracized themselves in a way, by drawing a line between themselves and the public and writing mostly for peers in their own self-ordained elites. For that reason, their extraliterary marginal position (extraordinary personalities) resulted in the intraliterary self-marginalization (moving away from the canon).

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[87] See Joan Delaney Grossman, "Genius and Madness: The Return of the Romantic Concept of the Poet in Russia at the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists*, ed. V. Terras (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) 247-60.

[88] S. Dovlatov, "Remeslo," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh,* vol. 2, 38.

In order to set themselves outside the canon they searched for alternatives to the Socialist Realist stylistic and thematic norms. Today the writers in question are considered by critics[89] to be followers of the Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad school.[90] The tradition of this school implies inventiveness and extravagance. The emerging writers of the sixties did not, however, regard themselves as belonging to any school or continuing any tradition. Given the long neglect by state publishing houses (*gosizdat*) of the pre-revolutionary literature of St. Petersburg and given the decades-old domination of Socialist Realism over the literary scene, young writers of the sixties could not really aspire to be followers of any tradition in view of their limited access to the relevant material. As Iosif Brodskii recalls in conversation with John Glad:

> [...] мы в известной степени открывали для себя изящнуюсловесность впервые. Это был процесс чрезвычайнолюбопытный и потрясающе интересный: мы начинали литературу заново. Мы не были отпрысками, или последователями, или элементами какого-то культурного процесса, особенно литературного процесса, — ничегоподобного не было. Мы все пришли в литературу [...] изумственного, интеллектуального, культурного небытия. И ценность нашего поколения заключается в том, что, никак и ничем не подготовленные, мы проложили эти самые, если угодно дороги.[91]
>
> [...] we were discovering poetics for the first time. In a certain sense this was a curious process; that is, not curious, but totally

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[89] See Lev Losev, "Russkii pisatel' Sergei Dovlatov," *Petropol'* 5 (1994): 192-97; Aleksandr Genis, "Brodskii i Dovlatov," *Petropol'* 5 (1994): 233-34; Vladimir Novikov, "Astroumie [sic]," *Sergei Dovlatov: Tvorchestvo, lichnost', sud'ba* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Zvezda,"1999) 203-7.

[90] The tradition is based on uniqueness, non-resemblance to what is accepted as a norm of the time, on a daring spirit of independence and a passion for the surreal. The integral features of this tradition are a theatrical quality and orientation towards the oral tradition. Historically this marginal city did not produce mediocre positive writers, but rather strange and talented, almost morbid writers. These include Gogol', Dostoevskii, Sologub, Merezhkovskii, Belyi, Blok, Gumilev, Akhmatova, Sasha Chernyi, Kharms and the "Oberiuty," Nabokov, Zamiatin, Zoshchenko, Panova and Granin. See Iurii Lotman, "Simvolika Peterburga i problemy semiotiki goroda," *Izbrannye stat'ei v trekh tomakh,* vol.2 (Tallin: Aleksandra, 1992) 15-17; Solomon Volkov, *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1995) 169-73, 178-83, 215, 391, 501.

[91] John Glad, *Besedy v izgnanii* (Moscow: Knizhnaia Palata, 1991) 126.

> fascinating. We were rediscovering poetry. We weren't some offshoot movement or some late development or one element in a cultural process, least of all a literary process. We came to literature [...] from a cultural and intellectual void. And the value of our generation lies in the fact that we carved out that road [...][92]

In their pursuit of independence the young Leningrad writers chose to subvert the writer's position in order to assert artistic independence. The subversion occurred not only in the extraliterary sense (by ignoring the status of an official writer), but as well in the intraliterary and linguistic senses (by sidestepping the position of an omniscient author in a text dealing with traditional topics in conventional discourse). Their certainty of the value of individual artistic vision inspired them to step aside from the traditional canons (didactic and ideological), and to create a literature different from the contemporary norm. They avoided writing on widely accepted topics (the war, the Russian village and industry), using normative discourse (a pompous, unimaginative style) and form (the novel). [93] The new generation's experiment with distinctiveness was carried out in the short forms of the novella and short story. These were to be the arena for exhibiting individual talent. The aim was to write an original piece of narration in a laconic, concise form, demonstrating clarity, precision and uniqueness of style.[94] They chose to achieve freedom through liberating language itself from political commitment, from heaviness of style and an authoritarian role. Such innovations could be best realized in the smaller forms of the novella or short story, and by choosing more personal topics (such as the search for one's true self, the assertion of individuality, the conflict between the 'private' and the 'collective').

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[92] John Glad, *Conversations in Exile* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1993) 106.
[93] See David Lowe, *Russian Writing since 1953: A Critical Survey* (New York: Ungar, 1987) 43-46.
[94] Based on: V. Ufliand, V. Gubin, A. Ariev, V. Popov, personal interviews, St.Petersburg, May 1998.

The preference for shorter forms can be partially explained as a response to rapid political and social changes in the sixties.[95] Earlier, in the 1850s, 1880s, 1900s and 1920s, the short form had prevailed in times of sweeping changes, when writers felt they could not see the world as a whole and thus not produce an epic novel. Instead, they concentrated on novellas and short stories on isolated aspects of human experience, foregoing any attempt to address global problems. In the sixties the predilection for short forms also marked a reaction to the monumental Stalinist prose of the forties and fifties. In this sense the short form itself could be viewed as marginal with respect to the traditional novel then occupying the central position. The marginal short form was regarded as less significant; it was not regarded as serious literature but rather questioned and challenged the virtues of the dominant genre – the Soviet novel.[96]

As mentioned above, writers outside Leningrad opted for the shorter forms as well. Nagibin, Aksenov and Nikitin published stories and novellas in Moscow.[97] Though innovations were evident in the choice of private topics and the aspiration towards individual subjectivity in point of view and expression, the stories were still written in the tradition of Socialist Realism: the confrontation between good and evil played the key role; characters were drawn as exponents of certain ideas rather than as a plausible representation of contemporary reality; private themes reflected social and ideological requirements; the tone of the stories was often moralizing. [98]

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[95] See D. Brown, *Soviet Literature Since Stalin,* 145- 218.
[96] See Clark, *The Soviet Novel,* 234-50.
[97] For example: Nagibin, "Khazarskii ornament" and "Svet v okne" (1956); Aksenov, "Zvezdnyi bilet" (1961), "Na pol-puti k lune" (1962), "Zatovarennaia bochkotara" (1968); Nikitin, *Golubaia planeta: Sbornik rasskazov* (1962).
[98] See Marietta Chudakova and Aleksandr Chudakov, "Iskusstvo tselogo," *Novyi mir* 2 (1963): 239- 54.

Yet the Leningrad writers used the short form in more radical ways. They employed the short story to step aside from Socialist Realism: to move from the heroic to the non-heroic, from the exceptional to the commonplace, from central topics in the social and ideological spheres to minor marginal experiences such as the private concerns of average persons. Moreover, their short stories contradicted the Russian canon of didactic narration.[99] They represent sketches of trivial situations, glimpses of fleeting emotions, light caricatures of people. The titles of stories reveal their orientation towards modest scenes of life: Goliavkin's "В гостях у соседа" [Visiting My Neighbour], "Как я встречал Новый год" [How I Celebrated New Year's], "Прохожий" [A Passerby], "Я налетел на столб" [I Hit the Street Post]; Popov's: "Ювобль" [EVOL], "Пропадать так с музой" [To Hit Rock Bottom With the Muse], "Отпевание" [Burial Service]; Vakhtin's "Ее личное дело" [Her Personal Business], "Портрет незнакомца" [The Portrait of an Unknown Man]. The topics of the stories comprise friendship, love, happiness and funny encounters. In their stories Leningrad writers ignore social conflicts and the routine of everyday life.

Thus, Rid Grachev's story "Молодость'" [Youth] looks at a young couple whose accidental and trivial fight is being discussed at an open meeting by their teachers and class mates. The central theme here is the conflict between the individual and the collective, the right to privacy and the group's presumed obligation to interfere. The main character, a student, is portrayed as marginal with respect to his colleagues who preach strictly "conscious" behaviour and oppose "spontaneity."[100] The social aspect (the meeting, social rules, public opinion) is shown to be insignificant and ridiculous. Rather, the focus is on the young husband's state of loss and confusion, his quest for understanding by more sensitive colleagues, and desire to escape the confrontation. As well, the couple is shown feeling like

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[99] Mark Al'tshuller and Elena Dryzhakova, foreword, *Izbrannye rasskazy shestidesiatykh* (Tenafly: Hermitage, 1984) 5-10.
[100] See Clark, 15-16, 21-22.

complete outsiders at their own trial, preoccupied just with each other and the joy of being young.[101]

Andrei Bitov's stories contain psychological accounts of an urban hero and his place among his peers. The key topic is the social and spiritual isolation of a city-dweller.[102] The story "Инфантьев" [Mr. Infantile] develops around this topic and touches upon the subject of life and death. As the title suggests, the central character lives in his own child–like world and therefore is marginal in terms of his non-involvement with society. The loss of a close person appears to be a very matter-of-fact thing: the protagonist experiences his wife's death not as a tragedy but as the beginning of his own transformation. Having lived on the margins between life and death, never participating actively in life, hardly noticing people around him, this character suddenly pulls himself out of the fringes of non-existence. He turns into a person unmasked and less formal. A dramatic realization of the essence of life, a personal acceptance of isolation and loneliness, as well the discovery of communication with others helps Infant'ev to deal with his marginal status.

Valerii Popov's "Ювобль" [EVOL] features a marginal hero who is in love with a married woman.[103] The theme of love outside marriage can be viewed as marginal with respect to the model of a good Soviet family (as exemplified in Kochetov's *Журбины* [The Zhurbins, 1952] ). It is a lyrical story about sincerity, uncontrolled emotions and the search for a sense of self. The form of a casual confession lends a conversational and intimate tone to the narration: the hero reflects on his personal understanding of love, rather than the story of the relationship itself,

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[101] Common in pre- and post-Stalinist Soviet Russia public comrades' courts (local Party and Komsomol meetings) could interfere in private matters, family conflicts and discuss the behaviour of a member of the group in order to inculcate Socialist morals.

[102] See Lev Anninskii, "Tochka opory: Eticheskie problemy sovremennoi prozy," *Don* 6 (1968): 168-81; Andrei Nemzer, "Bitov ishchet Bitova," *Literaturnoe segodnia: O russkoi proze. 90-e* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998) 55-59.

[103] See Nemzer 323-32.

on his self-observation and analysis.[104] As a result, the feeling created in the story plays a much more significant role than the plot of the story.

On the whole, Leningrad stories of the sixties, as represented in the examples above, depict many isolated episodes of marginal experiences with an accent on emotion and mood. This enhances the number and variety of sources about human existence, undermining the significance of a single authority, be it a particular norm of behaviour or canon of narration.

The processes of adapting the form of a short story or novella and focussing on everyday private lives emerged simultaneously. Perhaps they reflected a reluctance on the part of writers who occupied peripheral positions to take a global, dogmatic view of the world, or to provide guidance. At the same time, the writers approach the theme of a marginal person. There seems to be a link between these three categories – form (short story), content (private experiences) and major character type (marginal person). In order to avoid a large universal picture and any didactic function, a writer expresses his outlook in a short story about private matters and chooses a marginal person as a literary type.

The definition of this marginal type in the sixties differs from its analogues in previous periods. Thus, nineteenth-century Russian literature was interested in characters who could be described as above average (Pushkin's Onegin and Lermontov's Pechorin), and below average (Gogol's Akakii Akkievich). At the turn of the twentieth century Chekhov, and later Zoshchenko turned their attention to the average person, who quickly became an abstract type of character and transformed

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[104] For references on "confessional prose," see Deming Brown, "Narrative Devices in the Russian Short Story: Intimacy and Irony," in *American Contribution to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists*, 53-75; Deming Brown, *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 44-48.

into the positive proletarian hero of Socialist Realism.[105] The positive hero was supposed to be average but was utterly elevated by his "consciousness" or sense of revolutionary commitment.[106] Thus, the theme of the average person became marginal in the context of Socialist Realist literature with its accent on the heroic and corresponding neglect of the person as a worthwhile literary subject.

This character type was still overlooked in the sixties, in the early years of the decade even rejected by official critics and labelled as *melkotem'e* [shallow topics]. Nevertheless, the Leningrad writers pursue the theme and create a gallery of contemporary average people: Vakhtin's pilot Tiutchev ("Летчик Тютчев, испытатель" [Tiutchev, the Testpilot]), Van'ka Kain ("Ванька Каин") and Abakasov ("Абакасов — удивленные глаза" [Abakasov of the Surprised Eyes]), Bitov's Monakhov ("Улетающий Монахов" [Monakhov in Flight]), Gubin's Illarion and Karlik ("Илларион и Карлик"[Illarion and Little Carl]), Goliavkin's child-like adults ("Парфентьев" [Parfent'ev], "Визит" [A Visit], "Интеллект" [Intellect], "Обаяние" [Charm], "Путешественник" [The Traveller]). The names of their character sometimes allude to famous literary people (Tiutchev, Illarion) and semi-mythological figures (Kain), or sound unusual (Abakasov). By giving these types of name to their charcters the writer achieve the effect of image lowering, of mockery on authorities.

Vakhtin's characters seem to come from borderline territories ("Тютчевский двор" [Tiutchev's Yard] and "Каинский переулок" [Kain's Alley], a community of neighbours and friends), where they create their own marginal worlds, where all the inhabitants are rather eccentric people. The mysterious Van'ka Kain ("Van'ka Kain")

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[105] See Marietta Chudakova, "Skvoz' zvezdy k terniiam," *Novyi mir* 4 (1990): 242-63.
[106] See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 15-20.

is a dark, marginal personality. Nothing is definite about him; his birthplace, his parents, his profession, his relationships. The author presents him indirectly:

> Зовут нас Иванами, но ах какими разными. Иванами, родства не помнящими; Иванами грозными, четвертыми; Иванами — царевичами; Иванами — дурачками; и венчает их человек, для России невозможный незамеченный, однако он есть, как вы, как я, —Иван неслыханный, Ванька Каин.[107]
>
> We are called Ivans, but various Ivans, indeed. Ivans without kin; Ivans the Terrible, the fourth; Ivans – the princes; And they are crowned by the person who is impossible for Russia, unnoticed, however, he is, like you and me, Ivan the unprecedented, Van'ka Kain.

This passage contains several layers of irony, which allude to folk tales ("Иваны — царевичи; Иваны — дурачки") and mock the opposition of central and marginal figures ("Иваны грозные, четвертые" – "Иваны, родства не помнящие") by using in plural form of concrete historical names together with common idioms. Van'ka Kain is presented here ambiguously: as an outstanding charater ("для России невозможный"), and at the same time average ("однако он есть, как вы, как я, — Иван неслыханный"). His marginality is ensured by an allusion to a fabled brigand of the eighteenth century. In the frame of the story Kain's marginality reveals itself in his total lack of commitment to anything or anyone, the fragmentary nature of his interactions with people and reality, his mismatch with the world outside the building where he lives. At the same time he is an original individual, important to his neighbours; they know of his talent, his unique ability to attract people and to be loved:

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[107] Boris Vakhtin, "Van'ka Kain," *Tak slozhilas' zhizn' moia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel, 1990) 49-50.

> [В]ызывает он к себе смертную любовь и в Марии, и в Стелле, и в других, случайных. Это фрукт особый, и раскусить его не нам....[108]
>
> [He] stirs up fatal love in Maria, and in Stella, and in random others. He is a tough nut, not for us to crack...

By contrast Vakhtin's Abakasov from "Abakasov of the Surprised Eyes," though gentle and intelligent, is neither attractive nor worthy of public acclaim. He was marginalized as a child for his challenging behaviour. The fact that he is often called "little Abakasov" points to the tradition of 'little' people.[109] Abakasov feels the unbridgeable gap between himself and others. He perceives people around him as "огромные коллеги, от которых разит мужеством и правдой жизни"[110] [huge colleagues who reek of courage and the truth of life]. Abakasov's marginal position is linked to the size disparity. It alludes to Gogol's "Шинель" [The Overcoat] where Akakii Akakievich is described as "низенького роста" [short] and a Person of Consequence displays a "богатырскую наружность" [heroic appearance]. Such a patterned contrast (big vs. little, important vs. insignificant) plays a key role in constructing the opposition centre/margins. That is the centre, as the embodiment of importance, is granted visual physical superiority over minor subjects.

Convinced of his own insignificance, Abakasov retreats from the typical course of life: deprived of a normal childhood, he does not start a family of his own but frees himself of any material or emotional attachments:

> Выключенность, хотя и не по собственной вине, обесцвечивает, лишает смысла и вкуса судьбу Абакасова.[111]

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[108] Vakhtin 39.

[109] The tradition of 'little' people (petty clerks) goes back to nineteenth-century Russian literature and is most charcteristic of Gogol's, Dostoevskii's and later Chekhov's characters.

[110] Vakhtin, "Abakasov – udivlennye glaza," 62.

[111] Maiia Borisova, afterword, *Tak slozhilas' zhizn' moia,* by Boris Vakhtin (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990) 348.

> Exclusion, though through no fault of his own, makes Abakasov's life colourless, deprived of meaning and taste.

Abakasov's sense of self is derived from the perception of others; he himself never attempts to take control over his life. He is, indeed, a marginalized person and thus powerless.

Bitov's Aleksei Monakhov from "Monakhov in Flight" (his surname derives from *monakh* [monk] and connotes chosen isolation from the world) conditions his marginalization himself. He remains aware of his alienation from others and feels "безумное одиночество, обманутость, единственность в мире"[112] [insane loneliness, deception and singularity in the world]. Though afflicted with pain, he derives pleasure from it. This protagonist is intelligent enough to realize his peripheral position. He acquires this state due to his self-centered nature and inability to love. Monakhov not only accepts his marginal position, but as well willingly takes refuge there. In his relationships with people he exhibits false emotions, reveals a capacity for hypocrisy, and escapes commitments by retreating to his closed inner world.[113]

Goliavkin's characters, young or old, find themselves on the borderline between conventionality and eccentricity. They neglect standard rules readily in order to experience the unknown. In so doing, they go beyond the limits of the norm; they discover new potential within themselves as individuals. The typical Goliavkin hero, initially an average person, often suffers the consequences of transgression; as a result he is rejected as abnormal, but nevertheless achieves personal happiness. Such is the singing plumber from the story "С утра до вечера" [From Morning till Night],

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[112] Andrei Bitov, "Uletaiushchii Monakhov," *Zhizn' v vetrennyiu pogodu* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991) 242.

[113] On Bitov's writing see Ellen Chances, *Andrei Bitov: Ecology and Inspiration* (Cambridge, Eng. and New York: Cambridge UP, 1993).

who, haunted by the dream of becoming a professional singer one day, sings from dawn till dusk, neglecting his duties. The main character of the story "Krasnye kacheli" [Red Carousel] is Kanitel' Sidorovich. His unusual name Kanitel' stands for 'long-drawn-out proceedings.' He leads a colourless life: a sales assistant, he has the reputation of a slow, apathetic, unattractive person; to save money he eats only mushrooms. One day, for no obvious reason he does an extraordinary deed: he builds and paints a carousel in the courtyard of his housing complex. This spontaneous gesture suggests the great potential of a person who is bold enough to break the image of stability at the risk of being labelled eccentric or insane. Marginal position here entails a certain inner evolution, a statement of independent thinking and a step towards freeing oneself from the norm.[114]

In the Leningrad stories of the sixties there are many other examples of characters who appear marginal in the perception of others: Maramzin's engineer from "Я с пощечиной в руке" [Me With a Slap in My Hand]; the writer "Maramzin" from the same author's "Тянитолкай" [Push me-Pull you] captured by KGB officials; the angry retired woman Varvara Stepanovna in Efimov's "Теливизор задаром" [Free Television Set]; the hero of Grachev's "Некоторое время" [Some Time] detained by the police; Popov's unlucky "self" in "To Hit Rock Bottom with the Muse" who tries to break into mainstream literature. These and many other similar characters represent average people in 'real' life, with their "unexceptional lives in unexceptional places."[115] They are "unexceptional" in terms of their position in society, their abilities and aspirations. Nevertheless, they

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[114] On V. Goliavkin and his writing see Gleb Goryshin, *Zhrebii: Rasskazy o pisateliakh* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1987) 245-60; Gleb Gorbovskii, *Ostyvshie sledy* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1981) 258-300.

[115] The expression is used by Clark in her discussion of Soviet fiction since Khrushchev. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel,* 238.

eventually discover their true identities on the fringes of society. Their marginal status is caused by their refusal to submit to collective pressure.

There is an obvious pattern in these characters' behaviour. Initially, they are far from being dedicated to the interests of the collective (angry Varvara does not hesitate to disturb her neighbours), they do not observe discipline (Maramzin's engineer decides to smoke where it is not permitted), do not easily comply with orders (the writer Maramzin does not follow KGB commands). Instead they try to use their own independence and manoeuvre on the borders of the permissible. Although they are presented as defenseless in the face of social injustice, or interference in their personal matters, they manage to maintain their identity, dignity and personal integrity.

As literary heroes, these characters are marginal with respect to breaking the literary tradition of the Soviet Positive hero. To subvert the tradition they act as antiheroes. It is possible to correlate the role of these characters with Bakhtin's concept of rogue, fool and clown.[116] The position of these personalities is not confrontational, but rather performative in the tradition of folk carnival. The characters are shown to choose an alternative way of life, wearing the masks of manipulating rogue (Vakhtin's Kain, Bitov's Monakhov), unaware fool (Vakhtin's Abakasov, Bitov's Infant'ev, Goliavkin's Kanitel'), or manipulating clown (Efimov's Varvara Stepanovna, Popov's Lekha). They try to recreate for themselves the universal license of carnival, to make it permanent and this may be the cause of their failure, or marginalization.

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[116] See M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988); M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

In order to set themselves apart from the Soviet literary environment and to replace the canon, the young Leningrad writers turned to the literature of the West, primarily American literature. American writers such as Longfellow, James Fenimor Cooper, Mark Twain, Jack London, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Bret Harte and Upton Sinclair, had been well known in pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Russia. Within the next two to three decades the Russian public familiarized itself with John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, Robert Frost, William Saroyan, Erskine Caldwell and John Steinbeck.[117] In 1934 an anthology, *Американская новелла XX века* [American Short Stories of the Twentieth Century], was published in Moscow containing stories by Stephen Crane, Henry James, Ambrose Bierce, O. Henry, Ring Lardner, Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway, rendered by such well-known translators as Gavrilova, Kashkin, Eishiskina and Elistratova. Over the next two decades translations of American stories constantly appeared in Soviet journals such as *Литературный современник* [The Literary Contemporary, from 1935], *За рубежом* [Abroad, from 1936], *Иностранная литература* [Foreign Literature, from 1955], *Огонек* [A Small Flame, from 1959].[118] In the late fifties and early sixties, works of American writers such as Anderson, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner, Salinger, Tennessee Williams and Kerouac became available in translations by Rait-Kovaleva, Kashkin, Khinkis, Volzhina, Kalashnikova, Golyshev, Paperno and others. Russian publishers, as well as editorial boards, favoured American literature over

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[117] See Deming Brown, *Soviet Attitudes Toward American Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1962) 109-220; Glenora Brown and Deming Brown, *A Guide to Soviet Russian Translations of American Literature* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1954); Vladimir Libman, *Amerikanskaia literatura v russkikh perevodakh i kritike: Bibliografiia 1776 – 1975* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975).

[118] Sergei Chakovsky, "William Faulkner's Short Stories in the USSR: An Introduction," *Faulkner and the Short Story,* ed. E. Harrington and A. Abadie (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1992) 263-68.

those of other nations,[119] and at this time the choice of translated works expanded considerably. Young Russian writers of the sixties grew up reading American authors, admired them and tried to learn from them.[120] This fascination with American literature started for the Leningrad writers very early. As Dovlatov recalled:

> Для меня, 20-летнего, было несомненно, что на первом месте стоит американская проза, а за ней русская ...[121]
>
> For me, a twenty-year-old, it was obvious that American prose stood in first place, and then came Russian prose ...

Rein in his article about Dovlatov remarked:

> Как он знал и ценил новую американскую прозу! Любовно читал Хемингуэя, Дос-Пассоса, Фолкнера, Чивера, Апдайка, Вулфа. Мы ведь и все в 50—60-е годы были увлечены ими.[122]
>
> How he knew and appreciated new American prose! He read Hemingway, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Chiver, Updike and Wolf with affection. All of us in the fifties and sixties were infatuated with them.

The Leningrad writers of the sixties were mainly interested in American literature of the first half of the twentieth century. It is probably not by accident that the Russian writers were drawn primarily to American predecessors. Certain similarities may be observed between the circumstances surrounding the literary situation of the young Leningraders and the American writers of the twenties. Both groups practised their craft in times of transition (the sixties and twenties respectively) - the young generation of Russian writers tried to depart from Socialist Realism, while the American Modernist writers (Pound, Stein) and their followers

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[119] See D. Brown, *Soviet Attitudes Toward American Writing,* 13-15.
[120] Based on personal interviews with A. Ariev, V. Popov and V. Gubin conducted in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1998.
[121] Glad, 86.
[122] Evgenii Rein, "Neskol'ko slov vdogonku," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov,* 400.

(Anderson, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald, Hemingway) contended with the legacy of Puritanism, short fiction gained popularity in both countries and both groups adopted particular marginal positions relating their lifestyle to an art-style.

The twenties in the United States began as a period of recovery from World War I, followed by rapid economic growth and technological progress.[123] The economic boom gave rise to new social and moral values. Mass entertainment – movies, jazz, sports – was proving its availability and popularity. Moreover, there was a new awareness of the growing influence of American modernization on European society, which served as a stimulating factor for experimentation in the arts.

At the beginning of the twentieth century American writers rebelled against the outmoded diction of their own earlier literature (for example, the nineteenth-century novel of plot and character by Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman; on the thematic level, the old principles of honour and patriotism, romanticism and sentimentalism). They also targetted European Modernism. The poet W. C. Williams was a dedicated promoter of what he saw to be a distinctively American Modernism: in poetry he called for the rejection of formal poetic structures because they belonged to the British tradition, preferring instead the variable foot; he proclaimed an anti-intellectual tone for poetry, concentrating on objects instead of ideas, everyday experiences in simple form; he emphasized the distinction of American English as a separate language.[124] Another American poet, R. Jeffers,

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[123] On factors affecting literary developments in the USA, see Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern American Novel* (New York: Viking, 1993) 25-100; Marc Dolan, *Modern Lives* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1996) 87-155; Julian Symons, *Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939* (London, Eng.: Andre Deutsch,1987) 26-72; A. M. Zverev, *Modernizm v literature SSHA* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979).

[124] See J. Symons, *Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939*, 15-71, 121 –95.

insisted that an American had to write in the "language modified by our environment, the American environment."[125]

These tendencies toward nationalism and anti-intellectualism in poetry also influenced the character of prose. Modernism in American prose focussed on the factual recording of ordinary American life by way of new principles of composition and literary form. It was concerned with the accessibility of literature in terms of form, style and content. With regard to subject-matter, writers turned to the 'ordinary man' and the 'common herd.' They tried to speak about the ordinary in a conversational style, in the simple, child-like manner of Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, or the condensed, laconic way of Ernest Hemingway.[126] This development in prose was considered to be revolutionary and distinctively American. Contemporary criticism hailed the formation of a new school of writing based on "naiveté of language ... which serves actually to convey profound emotions and complex states of mind."[127]

Historically, from the early nineteenth century, short fiction had flourished in the United States and earned recognition as a respectable literary genre.[128] The short story established itself as a rival to imported British novels, and an appropriate form for the treatment of the American scene. Through the works of Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, O. Henry and Ring Lardner, the American short story had acquired certain distinctive characteristics (among them, unity of tone and theme, associations with the tradition of the vernacular anecdote, orientation towards everyday realism, the development of symbolic techniques of

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[125] Quoted in Symons, 173.

[126] For points of view on different aspects of this issue, see M. J. Hoffman and P. D. Murphy, eds., *Critical Essays on American Modernism* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992).

[127] From Edmund Wilson's review of Hemingway's stories in *Dial*. See Wilson, *The Shores of Light* (London 1952) quoted in Symons, 151.

[128] For an overall perspective on the development of the American short story, see Marcus Cunliffe, *The Literature of the United States* (London, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1968); Susanna Pavloska, *Modern Primitives: Race and Language in Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Garland, 2000).

narration, the exploration of colloquial speech patterns, a humorous approach to the subject at hand, principles of clarity and compression). It was well placed to become an appropriate genre for the Modernist age, ideally suited to experimentation and discussion on a wide range of contemporary topics. In the twenties, Anderson, Porter and Hemingway reshaped the American short story: their works tended to suppress plot, favoured elusive themes, focussed on isolated characters and developed an unconventional, informal style.[129]

Recognizing the need for more specific, first-hand experiences in literature expressed in a new style and form, the new generation of American writers carried out experiments not only in their art, but also in their lifestyles. Some came to art by way of revolt. For instance, Sherwood Anderson left his family and his business to become a writer. According to Malcolm Bradbury:

> [A]rt was now protest, and protest became, indeed, the essential theme in and motive of his fiction, which was to be everywhere imbued with his desire to find and release psychic energies that might discover new forms of art and new attitudes towards experience. His work [...] was to be an expression of a fundamental and creative force, a painful personal motion towards the discovery of the spirit through art. This was to be a persisting theme of the Twenties, as, revolting against what seemed to be limited and traditional conventions of American life, it turned to art as a way of rediscovery.[130]

Anderson described the limitations of American small-town life and values (*Winesburg, Ohio* [1919]). The key themes are the exploration of creativity and the hidden desire for individualism. In these stories Anderson employs a new method, a modern technique of writing involving grotesque means of depiction and a symbolic form of narration, as well as augmenting the role of the subtext. Anderson's initiative to revolt against Puritanism through artistic challenges was followed by an entirely

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[129] See D. Galloway and J. Whitley, eds., *Ten Modern American Short Stories* (Toronto: Methuen Educational, 1968) 5-16; W. Weathers, *The Broken Word: The Communication Pathos in Modern Literature* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1981) 43-71.

[130] Bradbury, 59.

new generation of American writers. Moreover, many writers asserted themselves as distinctive figures with the experience of the war or preparation for the war (Dos Passos, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner) and the experience of living in Europe (Stein, Hemingway, Fitzgerald). In Symons's view:

> They went to escape from Puritanism and philistinism of a country run by what Mencken called the booboisie, from prohibition and President Harding. They went looking for freedom, sexual, alcoholic and literary, and for many of them these freedoms were complementary.[131]

These writers introduced new kind of characters. Their protagonists do not follow the rules of traditional morality; they are independent in their ways, daring and dignified. Such is the main character of Stephen Crane's *The Blue Hotel* (1898), Swede, about whom the author noted "a splendor of isolation in his situation."[132]

Sherwood Anderson's characters are humble people, workers, artisans and rebellious women, who realize their common places in life, but nevertheless feel comfortable and proud; they do not aspire to more remarkable positions. One of them declares:

> What is called a great man may just be an illusion in people's minds. Who wants to be an illusion?[133]

William Faulkner's characters are social outcasts, gangsters and murderers (*The Sound and the Fury* [1929], *Light in August* [1932], *The Village* [1940], *The Mansion* [1959]), who threaten community values through non-traditional thinking and behaviour. Many of them live in open violation of conventional norms (*Sanctuary* [1931], *Pylon* [1935]) to demonstrate their challenging independence or

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[131]Symons, 129.
[132]Stephen Crane, "The Blue Hotel," *Complete Short Stories and Sketches of Stephen Crane* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963) 499.
[133] Sherwood Anderson, "Another Wife," *The Best Short Stories of 1927 and the Year Book of the American Short Story*, ed. Edward J. O'Brien (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1927) 50.

loneliness.[134] According to A. Kazin, Faulkner produced a literary phenomenon - "the most solitary character in American fiction, the most extreme phase conceivable of American loneliness."[135]

The same critic considers solitude the most typical state of the American character:

> [W]e Americans are in fact just the opposite of the homogeneous mass we are always trying to be, and what distinguishes American writing is exactly the fact that we are strangers to each other and that each writer describes his own world of strangers living in the same land with him.[136]

Ernest Hemingway created lonely, very independent characters (*The Sun Also Rises* [1926], *A Farewell to Arms* [1929], *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* [1938], *For Whom the Bell Tolls* [1940]) who experience estrangement from other people as well as from the hostile world around them.[137] Characters like Nick Adams (*The Nick Adams Stories*), Jake Barnes (*The Sun Also Rises*), Lieutenant Henry (*A Farewell to Arms*) and Robert Jordan (*For Whom the Bell Tolls)* oppose to the world's chaos their special code of behaviour. Courage, stoicism, honour and dignity characterize this code. It allows a character to feel moral victory in situations of defeat. Thus, the code is adopted by various characters such as Jesus in "Today is Friday," the bullfighter in "The Undefeated," the old fisherman in *The Old Man and the Sea*, the protagonist in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." In *Death*

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[134] For a discussion of Faulkner's characters, see John Duvall, *Faulkner's Marginal Couple* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990); Doreen Fowler, *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1997).

[135] The quote refers to Joe Christmas from *Light in August* by Faulkner. See Alfred Kazin, "The Stillness of *Light in August*," *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed. J. Hoffman and O. Vickery (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963) 253.

[136] Kazin, 250.

[137] For points of view on different aspects of Hemigway's writing see Joseph M. Flora, *Ernest Hemingway: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989); Debra A. Moddelmog, *Reading Desire: In Pursuit of Ernest Hemingway* (Itchica: Cornell UP, 1999); Gerry Brenner, *Concealments in Hemingway's Works* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1983); Stephen Cooper, *The Politics of Ernest Hemingway* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987); John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him:*

*in the Afternoon* (1932) Hemingway defines the notion of honour by explaining the Spanish word for it:

> Called *pundonor*, it means honour, probity, courage, self-respect and pride in one word.[138]

The depiction of human honour and dignity seems to be one of Hemingway's major themes. He attempts to endow all his characters with these qualities, be they fellow members of the middle class, or exotic primitives. Honour emerges as an inner ability which a human being discovers in moments of destruction or despair. Hemingway highlights this dignity in the solitary American hero.

This idea of human dignity and freedom, including artistic independence, was what the young Leningrad writers sought when turning to American music, movies and literature. Brodskii characterizes the young Russian writers of the sixties as the generation

> которое восприняло идею индивидуализма и принцип автономности человеческого существования более всерьёз, чем это было сделано кем-либо и где-либо. Я говорю об этом со знанием дела, ибо имею честь - великую и грустную честь - к этому поколению принадлежать. Нигде идея эта не была выражена более полно и внятно, чем в литературе американской, начиная с Мелвилла и Уитмена и кончая Фолкнером и Фростом.[139]

> which took the idea of individualism and the principle of the autonomy of human existence more seriously than had been done anywhere else or by anyone else. I know what I am talking about, for I have the honour – the great and sad honour to belong to this generation. Nowhere was this idea expressed more fully and clearly than in American literature, beginning with Melville and Whitman, and ending with Faulkner and Frost.

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*Hemingway as Public Writer* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984); Carl P. Eby, *Hemingway's Fetishism: Psychoanalysis and the Mirror of Manhood* (Albany: State U of NY P, 1999).

[138] Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932) 91.

[139] Iosif Brodskii, "O Serezhe Dovlatove," *Petropl'* 5 (1994): 170.

The new literary types created by Leningrad writers of the sixties personify this "idea of individualism and the principle of the autonomy of human existence." They reject the position of the positive hero of the Soviet novel. Generally speaking, in the fifties and early sixties the urban literary hero of official Soviet literature evolved into a contemporary person whose life was often linked with science and technology.[140] Such types are often encountered in Granin's novels *Искатели* [Those Who Seek, 1954] and *Иду на грозу* [Into the Storm, 1962]; in *Открытая книга* [The Open Book, 1956] by Kaverin; in Dudintsev's *Не хлебом единым* [Not by Bread Alone, 1956]. These characters represent a departure from the traditional positive hero; they are typically lonely, individual inventors or researchers who have withdrawn from politics and find themselves in conflict with the bureaucracy. According to Gibian:

> Not necessarily in order to find safety in a neutral position, in "internal emigration," but more out of a waning of hope in political action, out of disillusionment with Party work, the nonpolitical contemporary Soviet man is taking refuge in intensive work in science.[141]

These characters, though, still bore canonical features: they were serious, dedicated, and infused with a strong collective mentality. The literary types drawn by the young Leningrad writers are diametrically opposed to such positive images. Their protagonists either do nothing significant or do not work at all; they refer to themselves as "*посторонние* " [outsiders], "*бездельники*" [idlers] and "*неудачники*" [losers]; their behaviour often deviates from the norm represented in this aspect by serious, hard-working citizens driven by concerns for their community. As mentioned above, they are very much individualized, even self-conscious

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[140] See George Gibian, *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature During the Thaw, 1954-1957* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1960) 29- 73.
[141] Gibian, 70.

personalities, who must take some kind of position vis-à-vis collective pressure (Monakhov from Bitov's "Monakhov in Flight," Kain from Vakhtin's "Van'ka Kain," Abakasov from Vakhtin's "Abakasov of the Surprised Eyes," Infant'ev from Bitov's "Mr. Infantile," Kanitel' from Goliavkin's "Red Carousel," Varvara Stepanovna from Efimov's "Free Television Set," Liokha from Popov's "Hit Rock Bottom with the Muse").

What makes these characters different from previous types of marginal heroes – the nineteenth-century characters, categorized as superfluous people and 'little' people – is their refusal to be seen as victims. They are average people and as such, according to the convention of the time, marginal literary heroes, but nonetheless do not give the impression of suffering personalities. Their marginal status is their way of adapting: most live and act the way they do by their own choice, taking control over their lives and the position they occupy, leading alternative ways of life. They are all questioning heroes who reveal their eccentricity as a matter of personal distinction, as an assertion of their individuality. These characters situate themselves outside the established norms of behaviour where, however displaced, they find themselves occupying zones of freedom - freedom of individuality, diversity and choice. They reject, or rather redefine, their marginal status by taking central roles in their freedom zones. As Bitov's character declares: "То-то и оно. Все люди — центры. Два с половиной миллиарда центров"[142] [That's just it. Everyone is a centre. Two and a half billion centres]. Dovlatov observes the centre-periphery shift: "Сегодня ты начальник, завтра я"[143] [Today you're the boss, tomorrow it's me].

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[142] Andrei Bitov, "Avtobus," *Zhizn' v vetrennuiu pogodu* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991) 6.
[143] Dovlatov, "Zona," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, 91.

Some of them stress their independence by adopting Western fashions. The young Leningrad writers tried to distinguish themselves visually by following American clothing styles. In his interview about fashion in the fifties and sixties the Leningrad poet Rein confessed:

> Да, я просто изучал моду по кинофильмам. Будучи в душе "штатником,[144] пытался подражать Хэмфри Богарту, Кери Гранту. Завязывал галстук, как Джеймс Стюарт. Фильмы *Касабланка* и *Мальтийский сокол* я смотрел по нескольку раз, обращая внимание на детали и аксессуары.[145]
>
> Yes, I simply studied fashion in American movies. Being a "*shtatnik*" deep inside, I tried to copy Humphry Bogart, Cary Grant. I tied my tie like James Stewart. I watched the films *Casablanca* and *Maltese Falcon* several times, paying attention to details and accessories.

Characters in Leningrad fiction of the sixties appear to be fashion conscious as well. Thus, Dovlatov in "Чья-то смерть и другие заботы" [Somebody's Death and Other Troubles] remarks:

> Сам я был в галстуке. Мне его уступил год назад фарцовщик Акула. Он же и завязал его каким-то необыкновенным способом. А ля Френк Синатра.[146]
>
> As for me, I had a tie on. I got it a year ago from a blackmarketeer called Shark. He himself tied it in some kind of unusual way. A la Frank Sinatra.

Efimov in "Free Television Set" describes city people as "*v londonkakh*" [ type of cap with a short round peak],[147] "*stiliagi i shliapnitsy*" [young people who

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[144] The word 'shtatniki' was used in late 1950s and early 60s to refer to a group of young Soviet people who admired American culture and jazz in particular. See I. Corten, *Vocabulary of Soviet Society and Culture: A Selected Guide to Russian Words, Idioms and Expressions of the Post-Stalin Era, 1953-1991* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1992).

[145] Rein, *Mne skuchno bez Dovlatova*, 276.

[146] Sergei Dovlatov, "Ch'ia-to smert' i drugie zaboty," *Izbrannye rasskazy shestidesiatykh* (Tenafly: Hermitage, 1984) 166.

[147] The meaning of the slang words is confirmed by the dictionary D. S. Baldaev, *Slovar' blatnogo vorovskogo zhargona* (Moscow: Kampana, 1997).

wear very narrow trousers and long hair, and girls in hats].[148] Popov in "Liubov' tigra" [Tiger's Love] recalls the American influence:

> [M]ы все вместе играли джаз, и называли друг друга сокращенно на заграничный манер: Ник, Фред, Боб.[149]
>
> [W]e all played jazz together, and called each other by short forms of foreign names: Nick, Fred, Bob.

When in 1959 the two-volume collection of Hemingway's works was published in Russian, true Hemingwaymania started.[150] Russian intellectuals changed their images; they now favoured beards, big sweaters and pipes. Hemingway had an unprecedented influence on the entire generation of Russians in the sixties, and not just in terms of fashion.[151] Fashion initiated the shift towards the material world. Given the long predominance of ideology, of utopian and other forms of abstract ideation, Russians found themselves fascinated by the sheer material weight of Hemingway's prose. Hemingway's characters were convincingly concrete: they enjoyed eating, drinking, bullfighting, driving, fishing and hunting.[152]

The new style of Russian stories of the sixties appeared to be non-philosophical and reflected the new attitude towards the material world. This tendency is revealed in the titles of stories: Maramzin's "Пиджак" [Suit Jacket], "В штанах и без штанов" [With Pants and Without], "Очки" [Glasses], "Человек в мятой шляпе" [A Person in a Wrinkled Hat]; Vakhtin's "Дублёнка" [Sheepskin Coat] and "Ножницы в море" [Scissors in the Sea]. Dovlatov wrote more stories on this theme than others and collected them under a clothing -"receptacle" title

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[148] Igor' Efimov, "Televizor zadarom," *Izbrannye rasskazy shestidesiatykh*, 176, 180.
[149] Valerii Popov, "Liubov' tigra," *Liubov' tigra* (St. Petersburg: Sovetskii pisatel', 1993) 160.
[150] See Ernest Hemingway, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh* , trans. and ed. Ivan Kashkin (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959).
[151] See Peter Vail' and Alexandr Genis, *60-e: Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturenoe obozrenie, 1996) 64-74; D. Brown, *Soviet Attitudes Toward American Writing*, 297 –328.
[152] Vail' and Genis, 66.

"Чемодан" [Suitcase]. It contains "Финские креповые носки" [Crepe Socks from Finland], "Номенклатурные полуботинки" [Boss's Shoes], "Приличный двубортный костюм" [Decent Double-Breasted Suit], "Поплиновая рубашка" [Poplin Shirt], "Офицерский ремень'" [An Officer's Belt], "Зимняя шапка" [Winter Hat] and other stories. Also, he handled the topic in a more ironic, self-parodic light. Material objects abound in the stories and seem to be stripped of symbolic weight. They are a necessity, an assemblage of props to support a theatrical reality. They frame the world in which the characters are exposed to the funny and absurd sides of life. The material world prevails over the spiritual world. Promoting materialism in literature brings back the existing world of reality. The style of the stories does not imply any deep intellectual discussion. The concrete material world is made to 'speak' in the text through a deliberate simplification of language and lack of sentiment.

The idea of material dominance was linked to another tendency borrowed by Russian readers and writers from Hemingway – deliberate anti-intellectualism. Erudition, which had always been a cherished feature of the intelligentsia, gave way to the cultivation of a kind of romantic ignorance. The modern Russian person, as he saw himself reflected in literary characters, considered it fashionable not to know, or not to share one's knowledge, to pretend to be unaware.[153] This tendency of deliberate ignorance may be viewed as a form of passive resistance, as well as a protest against the promoted notion of 'сознательность' [consciousness], meaning loyalty to the Soviet way of life and Socialist morality. For example, Goliavkin's character in "Любовь моя" [My Love] justifies his ignorance:

[153] See Vail' and Genis, 67-68.

> [M]не просто приходится ограничивать себя в культуре. Чтобы всех вокруг не обескураживать.[154]
>
> [I] simply have to limit myself in culture. In order not to shock everyone.

Grachev's protagonist in "Научный случай" [Scientific Case] declares "Культурным себя не считаю, но развиваюсь"[155] [I do not consider myself cultured, but I am developing myself]. New Russian literary heroes affect the attitude of connoisseurs of life without any advertising, outward manifestation or need to prove themselves. They avoid discussions, barely touch upon subjects: "что-то говорил о том, что это прекрасный образец чего-то, не помню чего"[156] [Something was said about something being an excellent example of something, I don't remember what].

Like the Hemingway hero, the new Soviet non-conformist is an anti-intellectual. He values the friendship of those who belong to the Hemingway brotherhood – people with a negative approach to collective norms, stoic bravado and hidden sensitivity. These characters share a special social etiquette affecting a careless attitude towards materialistic and spiritual values. This etiquette fostered a unique closeness and spirit of comradeship between those who followed it. Friendship acquired a particularly exaggerated importance: it was a happy unifying emotion. As one of Vakhtin's characters in "Tiutchev, the Testpilot" puts it:

> Все мы одна семья. Мы ходим хороводом вокруг перспектив, мы любим женщин друг у друга, и даже много более того.[157]
>
> We all are one family. We sing and dance around prospects, we love each other's women and even much more than that.

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[154] Viktor Goliavkin, "Liubov' moia," *Bol'shie skorosti* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988) 341.
[155] Grachev, 147.
[156] Goliavkin, "Khudozhnik," *Bol'shie skorosti*, 271.
[157] Vakhtin, 32.

Of prime importance in these exclusive brotherhoods was humour. Laughter and good cheer replaced the seriousness that had dominated didactic, Socialist Realist prose. The new individualized Russians tested and recognized each other by an ironic approach to everyday situations. A character in "Scientific Case" by Grachev faces a problematic situation; by deliberate recourse to humour he wins the support of a stranger.

> И тут я решаю перейти на шутливый тон. Шутка, она, знаете, в трудных случаях хорошо помогает.[158]
>
> And here I decide to switch to a joking tone. A joke, you know, really helps in tough cases.

Alcohol played a vital role in this etiquette of camaraderie. The new literary Russians drank a lot, openly and happily; they often proved their exceptional abilities by drinking. Popov characterizes the time and his protagonist:

> [В]ино всюду лилось рекой, тогда пили, казалось, всюду и все —и в цеху, и в научной лаборатории, и в поездах — вся страна говорила заплетающимся языком. Естественно, что Боб с товарищами не отставал от прочих, а шел впереди.[159]
>
> [W]ine flowed everywhere, it seemed, and people drank everywhere then – in the workshop, the lab, in trains – the whole country slurred its every word. Naturally, Bob and his friends did not lag behind, but led the pack.

Thus, the literary type created by young Leningrad writers in order to depart from the Soviet positive hero, as well as from the Russian didactic tradition bears the features of this time – heightened attention towards the individual, the welcoming of Western culture, a common ironic mood and a more relaxed attitude towards leisure. Yet this remains a marginal literary type, in that it stands out by voicing the feelings

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[158] Grachev, 144.
[159] Popov, 130.

of a person who takes an autonomous position vis-à-vis the collective mentality and lifestyle.

When turning to American literature the Leningrad writers were concerned not only with thematic questions, but also matters of style. To oppose the canonical writing of Socialist Realism they looked for new stylistic directions. Fascination with American prose influenced their artistic experiment; in it they found an opportune substitute, as they viewed it, for contemporary discourse. Sergei Dovlatov explained this preference for the American style in his interview with John Glad:

> Меня привлекал лаконизм американской литературы, её принципиальная краткость, так несвойственная моей родной литературе. Американская литература на фоне тогдашней советской литературы казалась необычно раскованной, она свободно заговаривала о вещах запретных в русской литературе, например о человеческих отношениях.[160]
>
> I was attracted to the laconicism of American literature, its fundamental brevity, which is not typical of my native literature. American literature in contrast with the Soviet literature of that time seemed exceptionally uninhibited, it freely discussed things forbidden to Russian literature, for example human relationships.

Thus, Dovlatov and his peers found their model in Hemingway's compressed style and tight-lipped heroes. For them it might have been an alternative to the meaningless verbosity of Soviet ideology and the supremely self-confident positive hero. It is interesting to note that Russian critics, long before the sixties, associated the development of the American precise style with the assertion of individualism. As far back as 1935, Ivan Kashkin, for example, had commented upon Hemingway's technique:

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[160] Glad, 85.

> Not to save the world, but to see it and to remake at least a tiny part of it, that's what Hemingway wants and calls upon others to do.[161]

This tendency struck a chord with young Leningrad writers. They were anxious to depart from the prevailing pompous style of the Soviet novel. The style they practised was offhand and humorous. One of the first to adopt this style was Viktor Goliavkin.[162] He favoured a deliberately simple, almost primitive vocabulary and syntax. Goliavkin became known in Leningrad and in Russia primarily as a children's writer. His talent as an intelligent, humorous storyteller and adult writer was not really appreciated at the time, though his manner was later compared to that of Zoshchenko and Olesha.[163] His intentionally facilitated texts reveal a humane approach to people and light wit. Thus, in the story "Уверенность" [Confidence] he touches upon the various temperaments of people and questions of compatibility. Goliavkin draws the portrait of a friend whose constant self-assurance almost leads to a conflict with the narrator. Nevertheless, the story ends on an optimistic, if not somewhat flippant note:

> — Я уверен в том, что не уверен! — сказал он потрясающе уверенно и улыбнулся.[164]
>
> "I'm sure that I'm not sure," said he with amazing assurance and smiled.

Goliavkin declared that he was writing a new "Human Comedy"[165] of the twentieth century. His style is crisp - he uses a limited vocabulary, in some stories

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[161] Ivan Kashkin, "Ernest Hemingway: A Tragedy of Craftsmanship," *International Literature* 5 (1935) 78, qtd. in Brown, 301. See I. Kashkin, *Dlia chitatelia sovremennika: Stat'i i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1977) 44.

[162] See Gleb Goryshin, "Viktor Goliavkin pishet rasskaz," *Zhrebii: Rasskazy o pisateliakh* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1987) 245-61.

[163] Gleb Gorbovskii, *Ostyvshie list'ia* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1981) 258- 300.

[164] Viktor Goliavkin, "I tak khorosho, i tak khorosho," *Bol'shie skorosti* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel, 1988) 292.

[165] Goliavkin might have been inspired both by the Dante's *Divina Commedia* and *The Human Comedy* by W. Saroyan.

restricted to ten - twelve words. Thus, in the example below the author employs only eleven words (this does not include personal pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions), most of them nouns, and repeats the key words (солнце, дождь, туман) at least twice. He avoids all adjectives, as if attempting to overcome the exuberance of the current formal style:

> Когда я в жаре под солнцем, я хочу на дождь и туман. Вот дождь барабанит мне по макушке. туман окутывает меня. В тумане мои мечты о солнце. На солнце мне жарко. Пусть лучше дождь барабанит мне по макушке.[166]
>
> When I am out in the heat, in the sun, I want to be in fog and rain. Now the rain is drumming on my head, the fog is enfolding me. In the fog I dream about the sun. In the sun I feel hot. I'd rather the rain drum on my head.

The use and the repetition of minimal vocabulary implies a conversational style. The oral illusion is reinforced by the rhythmic formation of this passage, based on an effective use of thematic stress,[167] which falls on thematically significant words in a regular pattern of distribution. In the passage under discussion, the first five syntagmas (separated by double slashes) contain three stresses each, while the last three syntagmas hold two meaningful stresses each.

> Когда я в жаре под солнцем, // я хочу на дождь и туман. // Вот дождь барабанит мне по макушке, // туман окутывает меня. // В тумане мои мечты о солнце. // На солнце мне жарко. // Пусть лучше дождь. // барабанит мне по макушке. //

Such texts produce the impression, for modern readers at least, of simple, child-like improvisation with a comic effect. Goliavkin achieves this effect by recourse to worn out banal expressions in new unusual combinations and turns of

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[166] Goliavkin, 422.

[167] On the question of the old Russian tradition of using thematic stress instead of grammatical stress, see R. Picchio, "The Isocolic Principle in Old Russian Prose," in *Slavic Poetics: Essays in Honour of Kiril Taranovskii*, eds. R. Jakobson, Ch. Van Schooneveld and D. S. Worth (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) 299-331.

phrase, as well as the use of tautology and contradiction: "был не крайний случай..." [the worst did not come to the worst], "среди потока самотёка" [in the stream of the haphazard], "любой человек в любом деле устанет" [anyone gets tired of anything], "смотрю на симпатичную внешность шофера, внешне непривлекательную" [I am looking at the nice, outwardly unattractive appearance of the driver], "он стоит сейчас в раздумье у решительного порога" [he is standing in hesitation on the critical threshold].[168] In these phrases the writer uses contemporary cliches (крайний случай, самотёк, решительный порог, внешне непривлекательный) with incompatible words (**не** крайний случай [not the worst case], **поток** самотёка [flow of the self-flow], **раздумье** у решительного порога. The word play here is based on the juxtapositions of opposites and the misapplication of the epithets (решительный means 'critical' and the same time 'swift', 'unhesitating'; the joke is based on mutually exclusive words – 'hesitation at an unhesitating point', симпатичная внешность —внешне непривлекательная 'nice appearance – outwardly unattractive'); or tautology (любой в любом 'anyone in anything', внешность внешне 'outwardly' and 'appearance'). Such syntagmas break the unity of the expressions and garble the meaning. Because these are primarily ideological cliches, this method ensures a humorous effect, a light mockery of the Soviet high style which continued, in official discourse, to take itself seriously. It creates a subtext, which hints at the absurdities of the official language and challenges it in subtle ways.

Very often Goliavkin's stories consist of dialogues. Goliavkin's dialogues are utterly unlike conversations rendered in a neutral realistic style. They also avoid dialect words or professional jargon. In these stories dialogue is a game, based on half-tones and half-sayings: the message is delivered not in a direct way, but through associations built in the course of the exchange. Thus, in "Большие скорости" [High Speeds] two travelling companions are trying to bridge a communication gap by testing each other with questions, when they achieve a sudden breakthrough:

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[168]Goliavkin 380, 326, 409, 484, 491, 492.

— А вы художественную литературу читаете?—спросил я.
— Хэмингуэй,— сказал он с улыбкой. — Бёлль, Фолкнер, Апдайк.
— Сэлинджер, — сказал я, и мы вместе улыбнулись.
— "Особняк," — сказал он с улыбкой.
— "Деревушка,"— сказал я с улыбкой.
— "Глазами клоуна,"— сказал он с улыбкой.
— "Праздник, который всегда с тобой," — сказал я с улыбкой.
— "Кентавр,"— сказал он с улыбкой.
— "Люди не ангелы,"— сказал я с улыбкой.
— "Люди на перепутье,"— сказал он с улыбкой. Мы вовсю улыбались.[169]

Do you read fiction? – I asked. Hemingway, - he said with a smile. – Böll, Faulkner, Updike. Salinger, - I said, and we both smiled. "The Mansion," - he said with a smile. "The Hamlet," - I said with a smile. "In Clown's Eyes," - he said with a smile. "A Moveable Feast," – I said with a smile. "The Centaur," - he said with a smile. "People are not Angels," – I said with a smile. "People at the Cross-Roads," – he said with a smile. We were beaming with smiles. [170]

The ten lines above, though reminiscent of a game of literary trivial pursuit, yield a great deal of information: the dialogue characterizes the time, reflected in the speakers' literary tastes, in the availability or popularity of foreign writers, in the author's mockery of his characters' ignorance. The dialogue contains clipped verbless sentences which help to achieve spontaneity of narration.

[169]Goliavkin, 274.
[170] The original works mentioned here are Faulkner, *The Mansion* (1959) and *The Hamlet* (1940); Böll, *Ansichten Eines Clowns* (1963); Updike, *Centaur* (1963); Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (1964). The works which the characters call "People are not Angels" and "People at the Cross-Roads" do not exist. Goliavkin, probably, mocks the knowledge of his heroes or the contemporary ideologically dictated choices of American books for translations. It is possible that the characters confuse these putative works with books and stories by American writers translated into Russian with similar titles: Cheever's *The Angel on the Bridge* (1965); Wolf's *Look Homeward Angel* (1969); Anderson's *Horses and Men* (1926); Dreiser's *People in the Dark* (1927), *People on Snow* (1927); Crane's *The Men in the Storm* (1962), Kerouac's *The Subterraneans* (1959) and *On the Road* (1960); Hemingway's *Men at War* (1965). The dates provided here indicate the year of publication in Russian.

The group *Горожане* [the Urbanites] (Gubin, Efimov, Maramzin, Vakhtin and Dovlatov) exercised this new conversational style.[171] What brought these young writers together was a demanding approach to the quality of language. They treated language as the defining factor in human life. According to the Urbanites, the language of a literary work has to be creative, precise, humorous and at the same time uncomplicated. It must encourage an enjoyable exercise of the mind, but appear natural. In their manifesto ("Горожане о себе" [The Urbanites About Themselves], 1965) they defined the language they sought:

> Чтобы пробиться к заросшему сердцу современника, нужна тысяча всяких вещей и ещё свежесть слова. Мы хотим действительности нашего слова, хотим слова живого, творящего мир заново после бога. Может быть самое сильное, что нас связывает — ненависть к пресному языку.[172]
>
> In order to get through to the clogged hearts of people today, you need thousands of all sorts of things and on top of that, you need fresh words. We want our words to be real, to be alive, to create the world anew after God. Perhaps our strongest link is our hatred for insipid language.

Their own experiment started in the area of linguistics. Vakhtin used to say:

> Не пиши ты эпохами и катаклизмами! Не пиши ты страстями и локомотивами! А пиши ты ..... буквами — А, Б, В. [173]
>
> Do not write in terms of epochs and cataclysms! Do not write with passions and locomotives! Write with letters – A,B,C.

They were among the first Russian writers of this generation to address the reader in a renewed language: accessible, laconic, exact and diverting. The 'new' style aimed for clarity; in a sense, it was stylized to look somewhat simple. Stories by the Urbanites (for example Vakhtin's "Scissors in the Sea" and "У пивного ларька"

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[171] *The Urbanites* was an unofficial group of writers led by Vakhtin. The group was formed in 1964 and planned to start a periodical *Gorozhane*. Only one issue came out in 1964. See Lowe, 115-18.
[172] "Gorozhane: Fragments of Publications and Interviews," *Sumerki*, 11 (1991): 89.
[173] *Sumerki*, 91.

[By the Beer Kiosk], Efimov's "Скрытый смысл" [Hidden Meaning], "Переписка" [Correspondence], Gubin's "У нас в механическом цехе" [In our Machining Workshop], "Женька с другой планеты" [Zhen'ka from Another Planet], Maramzin's "Перемены" [Changes] and "Jacket") are written in a simple language which can appeal to readers from various levels of society. The style favours a basic vocabulary and colloquialisms. For example, in Efimov's "Correspondence" the deliberately simplified speech of two young people writing to each other is filled with common colloquial phrases: "извиняюсь перед вами" [I beg your pardon]; "из сердца не вырвешь" [you can't stop loving]; "внезапно, как обухом по голове" [suddenly, as if thunderstruck]; "как курица лапой" (about writing) - [scratching like a hen]; "допекла ... одна общественница" [one social worker hounded me to death].[174] Vakhtin in "Sheepskin Coat" makes use of contemporary newspaper phraseology: "братская страна" [fraternal country], meaning country in the socialist block; "непосредственное начальство" [immediate supervisors]; "бытовые потребности" [everyday necessities]; "инвалиды Великой Отечественной" [disabled veterans of the Great Patriotic War]. Vakhtin also relies on set expressions and slang: "тьфу, раз плюнуть" [bah, it's a cinch]; "клевало начальство" [the bosses were nodding off]; "брякнул" [he blurted out].[175] Maramzin employs everyday speech clichés: "девичья гордость" [maidenly pride]; "мужское достоинство" [male dignity]; "большой дом" [big house] - for the KGB headquarters in Leningrad; "вороватые люди" [light-fingered people]; "ни одного приличного человека" [not a single decent person]; "для знания жизни" [for life experience]; "по доброй воле" [by free will].[176] The use of everyday vocabulary and set expressions lends to a text an oral, conversational flavour.

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[174] Igor' Efimov, "Perepiska," *Molodoi Leningrad* 1 (1965): 163, 167, 174, 175.
[175] Vakhtin, "Dublenka," *Tak slozhilas' zhizn' moia*, 156, 157, 160, 163.
[176] Vladimir Maramzin, "Tianitolkai," *Tianitolkai* (Michigan: Ardis, 1981) 16-29.

In this new prosaic style first-person narration predominates. In contrast to the sober, rational narrator of the Soviet novel, the Leningrad writers introduce an unusual narrator.[177] The voice is sometimes sympathetic, intriguing or confused. He also differs significantly from the narrator of the *skaz* of the twenties, where an unbridgeable gap existed between the narrator and the author. The writers of the sixties created a narrative persona who is very close to the author himself, with tendencies toward self-reflection and self-irony, suggestions of intimacy, individuality and fallibility.[178] According to Deming Brown:

> The device most extensively used to create an atmosphere of intimacy in first-person narration was interior monologue.[179]

This type of discourse is framed by first-person narration. For example, Vakhtin's narrator remarks:

> Их разговор я услышал и записал, как и прочее все, потому что *это уже мое личное дело - писать или не писать.*[180]
>
> I overheard and wrote down their conversation, as well as the rest, because, after all, it is my personal business – to write or not to write.

Maramzin's protagonist admits:

> Да, я тоже — и я это чувствовал. *Со мной так бывает.*[181]
>
> Yes, me too – I felt this as well. That sort of thing happens to me.

Bitov's narrator almost ridicules himself as an author:

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[177] George Gibian, "Soviet Literature During the Thaw," *Literature and Revolution in Soviet Russia, 1917-62* , ed. M. Hayward and L. Labedz (London: Oxford UP, 1963) 125-50.
[178] Studies on Youth Prose of the sixties include D. Lowe, *Russian Writing since 1953: A Critical Survey*; G. Gibian, *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature During the Thaw, 1954-1957*; Marietta Chudakova and Aleksander Chudakov, "Iskusstvo tselogo," 168-81.
[179] Deming Brown, "Narrative Devices in the Contemporary Soviet Russian Story: Intimacy and Irony," *American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists* (The Hague:Mouton, 1973) 55.
[180] Boris Vakhtin, "Ee lichnoe delo," *Molodoi Leningrad* 1 (1965): 189.
[181] Vladimir Maramzin, "Ia s poshchechinoi v ruke," *Molodoi Leningrad* 1 (1965): 207.

> Так вот, я приступаю к началу рассказа, *и если мне до того уже не стыдно, то меня охватывает дрожь,* потому что я приступаю.[182]
>
> So, here I am getting down to the story, and if I'm not already ashamed of myself, then I get the shakes, because I am about to start.

In the examples above, first-person narration contributes to the overall impression of informal oral speech. The statements contain colloquial words and clauses: "мое личное дело" [my personal business]; "со мной так бывает" [that sort of thing happens to me]; "если мне до того уже не стыдно" [if I'm not already ashamed of myself]. It adds to the casualness of the style, creates a confidential and spontaneous tone of narration. The narrator plays a key role in most of the stories. He is an equal participant in dialogues with the characters, as well as with the author.

First-person narration is another means of retreating to a marginal territory, where the author's ideas are revealed indirectly, in a non-authoritarian way. Moreover, the narrator often mocks his own authorial competence, revealing his insecurities and drawbacks, and presenting himself in a humorous light. Thus, we find in one of Maramzin's stories:

> Я не выдержал и решил появиться в моем личном творчестве. Никто не может мне этого запретить, да, не может. С полным весельем я заявляю...[183]
>
> I could not bear it any more and decided to appear in my own writing. Nobody can forbid me, no, nobody can. I declare this in full cheer.

Gubin's narrator seems to mock himself:

> Кто вам настукал, что автор серьезный? Это во-первых. Насчет похвалы, во-вторых уже это, автор согласен с вами. Он и сам по натуре дотошный читатель книжек и

[182] Andrei Bitov, "Penelopa," *Izbrannye rasskazy shestidesiatykh* (New Jersey: Ermitazh, 1984) 100.
[183] V. Maramzin, "Poiavlenie avtora v pis'mennom vide". *Tianitolkai* (Ann Arbor:Ardis, 1981) 76, 78.

> тоже не всякую весточку хвалит, но мнение вашего автора вряд ли должно приниматься другими как основание, как основное препятствие к выходу в свет их печальной печатной продукции.[184]
>
> Who snitched that the author is serious? That's in the first place. As for praise, it comes second, the author agrees with you. He himself by nature is a meticulous reader of small books and does not praise just any little word, but your author's opinion should hardly be considered by others as a basis, as the basic obstacle to releasing their miserable printed product.

In the examples above, narrators ridicule themselves as authors by such means of self-irony as the use of slang - "настукал" [snitched]; of officialese – "это во-первых" [that's in the first place], "во-вторых уже это" [it comes second]; of diminutives – "книжки" [small books]; "весточка" [little word]; of bureaucratese – "выход в свет ... печатной продукции" [putting out...the printed product]. At the same time applying these stylistic combinations to narrator's speech appears to mock the intelligentsia and the Russian cult of verbal art. It presents narrators as marginal personages vis-à-vis serious representatives of power, and brings them nearer to the self-denying folk figures of *iurodivye* [holy fools]. According to Russian cultural historians Likhachev and Panchenko, it was only by ridiculing themselves as authors that the holy fools could reveal the absurdity of the society where they lived.[185]

As we have seen, the Leningrad writers of the sixties were influenced by the American writers of the first half of the twentieth century in their thematic choices (reflecting contemporary life, private matters), in their focus on a new hero (an average person, but a marginal character), by employing new stylistic methods (colloquial and humorous discourse, first-person narration, clipped dialogue, the inventive and ironic use of contemporary language).

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[184] Vladimir Gubin, *Illarion i Karlik* (St. Petersburg: Kamera khranenia, 1997) 7.
[185] See D. S. Likhachev and A. M. Panchenko, *Smekhovoi mir drevnei Rusi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1976).

By turning to American texts, the Leningrad writers of the sixties displayed originality and boldness in opposing the Soviet canon and courage in pursuing their own means of expression. Through the style and humour they acquired, their literature offered a new position for a writer, as well as for any citizen – non-collaborating and non-confrontational, but rejecting the entire notion of a powerful centre and voiceless margins.

Thus, the Leningrad writers of the sixties made a conscious choice to appear marginal: eccentric artists opposing the image of the official writer of the previous period; trying to supplant the existing canon by discussing new themes and topics, depicting marginal characters, and turning to the West to create a different type of style.

За что же моя рядовая, честная,
единственная склонность подавляется
бесчисленными органами, лицами, институтами
великого государства?!

Сергей Довлатов.[186]

Why is it, then, that my ordinary, honest, and sole motivation in life is thwarted by all the people, organs, and institutions of the greatest government in the world?[187]

## Chapter 3
## GROUNDS AND STRATEGIES OF MARGINALIZATION

External marginalization implies the process of exclusion of a writer or his work from the existing literary process, when the factors of rejection are beyond a writer's control. In the case of the Leningrad writers of the sixties the external marginalization was to a large extent a reaction to their independent lifestyles and art; marginalization had a severe impact and appeared as one of the characteristic features of life in Leningrad at that time. This situation was a central topic for Sergei Dovlatov's writings, one of the conditions which in some sense predetermined Dovlatov's destiny as a writer, as well as the source of his humour both in his life and his art. That is why this chapter will explore the circumstances of the external marginalization of the emerging writers of the Leningrad circle in the sixties.

Most of the Leningrad writers of the sixties shared the experience of external marginalization, for as Leningraders they found themselves on the periphery of Soviet literature. In Moscow, as the centre of the official arts, there were more possibilities for publication (more numerous and more liberal publishing houses, as well as

[186] Dovlatov, "Nevidimaia kniga," *Sobranie prozy v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2, 8.
[187] Dovlatov, *The Invisible book*, trans. Katherine O'Connor and Diana L. Burgin (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979) 13.

journals), easier access to Party patrons, more relaxed attitudes towards ideological requirements.[188] In Leningrad their rejection of ideology closed all entry into the literary establishment, delaying the publication of their works by decades and restricting their readership. The assumption of a non-conformist lifestyle raised suspicion and subjected them to discrimination. Thus, external marginalization was based on several factors:

> **Extraliterary**: Place: Petersburg - Petrograd – Leningrad by contrast with Moscow as a centre of state-sponsored literary activity.
> Time: the sixties versus the Stalinist period.
> Personality: a writer with a consciousness of difference by contrast with a loyal Soviet writer.
>
> **Intraliterary**: Rejecting the canon centered on the Soviet novel.
> Preference for short narrative forms.
> Turning to private topics from social and political themes.
> Creating new marginal heroes to oppose the Soviet positive hero;
>
> **Linguistic**: Combatting the hegemony of the major language

As mentioned in previous chapters, the condition of marginalization is often linked to the correlation between geography and axiology: the powerful centre of a particular geographical area confers central status on some works and peripheral status on other writings. The fact that the marginalized writers under study resided in Leningrad contributed to their marginal status. The origin of this marginality can be traced back to the Petersburg legend, the *Piterskii* [from Petersburg] difference, the eccentricity of St. Petersburg.[189] The myth has been maintained from the time when the city was founded (1703) and began with both geography and history. Distance from traditional Russian centres such as Moscow and Kiev; location on the border, on

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[188] See Rein, 83-86, 157, 226-234.
[189] See Leonid Dolgopolov, *Na rubezhe vekov* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985) 7-18.

a swampy coastland;[190] the challenge posed by Western architecture to traditional Russian styles – all these factors created a myth about an artificial city that had been built against the laws of nature by the autocratic Tsar Peter I. It was long debated whether St. Petersburg was a city of divine origin and God's gift to Russia, or a threat to Russian national authenticity. In the folk oral tradition Peter the Great's creation was portrayed as an *enfant terrible* – the most non-Russian city, a notorious alien, a city doomed to death. St. Petersburg as a capital (1703-1918) was considered more secular and cosmopolitan than Moscow; it served as a new symbol of national identity, as an emblem of Russian culture, though the origin and legitimacy of the new capital was questioned.[191] In yet another facet of the myth, compared to Moscow, St. Petersburg was viewed as a city inheriting Novgorod's traditions, of political rivalry with Moscow, a challenge to Orthodox beliefs, and an aspiration towards cultural superiority.[192] In the nineteenth century St. Petersburg appeared as a city of contrasts between splendid architecture and extreme poverty, high culture and rigid bureaucracy. Literary works continued the reflection of the disparity, as well as the expression of a polarized attitude towards the city. Pushkin, Gogol', Dostoevskii, Belyi, Merezhkovskii and Blok created an image of a mystical, fatal city, a surreal ghost, a domineering bureaucratic giant, a city on the hinterland between west and east or high and low; a cold noble capital, an artificial and artistic city. [193] These characteristics influenced the features of the St. Petersburg - Petrograd – Leningrad

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[190] Location on the sea shore instead of a mountain or hill implies in Russian tradition an eccentric position – "on the edge of cultural space."See Iu. Lotman, "Simvolika Peterburga i problemy semiotiki goroda," *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, vol.2 (Tallinn: Aleksandra, 1992) 9-21.

[191] See Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995).

[192] See Iurii Lotman and Boris Uspenskii, "Otzvuki kontseptsii 'Moskva-tretii Rim' v ideologii Petra Pervogo," *Khudozhestvennyi iazyk srednevekov'ia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1982) 210-45.

[193] For example many variations of the St. Petersburg myth may be found in Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman" (1833); Gogol's "The Overcoat" (1842), "Nevskii Prospect" (1835) and "Nose" (1836);

literary tradition.[194] The latter were held to be primarily stylistic: precision, elegance and originality captured in words.

The myth underwent further development at the time of the Revolution of 1917. Clark writes: "The October Revolution translated the potential of the myth into the sphere of politics, promising to reverse the ratio of high and low, of center and periphery."[195] The imperial (previously 'central') image of the city was challenged by the proletarian (once marginal) culture which took over the city. The loss of capital status (1918), industrialization in the post-revolutionary era, as well as two changes of name (1914, 1924) represented further aspects of the city's demotion from a central to a peripheral position. As St. Petersburg gradually declined in cultural, political and symbolic import, Moscow rose. Moscow attracted established scientists and writers, and asserted itself as a normative, canonical centre. Leningrad, on the contrary, opened itself to non-canonical, avant-garde culture. In Stalin's time Leningrad suffered the hostility of the Moscow central government and underwent

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Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Belyi's *Petersburg* (1916); Merezhkovskii's "Peter and Alexei" (1905), Blok's "Retribution" (1910-21).

[194] The St. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad literary tradition is closely linked to the phenomenon of the "Петербургский текст" [Petersburg Text] which dates back to the 1820-30s. The best examples of that time comprise Pushkin's "Уединненый домик на Васильевском " [The Lonely House on Vasil'evskii Island, 1829], "Пиковая дама " [The Queen of Spades, 1833], "Медный всадник " [The Bronze Horseman, 1833], Gogol's Petersburg novellas (1835-42). In the 1840-50s the texts include Dostoevskii's early novels. The 1860-80s are marked by the Petersburg writings not only of Dostoevskii, but as well of Grigorovich, Polonskii, Pisemskii, Turgenev, Leskov, Sluchevskii and other writers. At the beginning of the twentieth century there emerged the most significant figures of the Petersburg Text – Blok and Belyi, as well as Annenskii, Remizov, Merezhkovskii, Sologub, Gippius, V. Ivanov, Kuzmin, Gumilev, Lozinskii, and from the 1910s, Akhmatova and Mandel'shtam. In the 1920-30s it was represented in poetry and prose by Vaginov, Zamiatin and Semenov. The "Petersburg Text" was created not only by St. Petersburg's native writers and poets, but also by Moscow writers who under St. Petersburg's influence produced texts in its tradition. Thus the Petersburg Text is characterized by semantic coherence (motifs such as salvation and spiritual revival, nature/culture, death/life and various psychological states) and stylistic integrity (local Petersburg vocabulary, the northern narratorial rythm and melodics, the use of allusions, parody and quotations, and exaggerated attention to lexical innovention). See V. N. Toporov, "Peterburg i Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury," *Mif. Ritual. Simvol. Obraz: Issledovaniia v oblasti mifoepicheskogo* (Moscow: Izdatel'skaia gruppa "Progress," 1995) 259-319.

[195] Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution,* 10-11.

mass repressions often specifically targetted against its residents.[196] Both during and after the Thaw, Leningrad, according to Volkov, "became even more a second-rate city" with a "reactionary local climate" and rigid bureaucratic structures.[197] The combination of the two factors – alternative culture and reactionary governing structures – contributed to the marginalization of non-conformist artists.

Within the external forms of marginalization both intraliterary and linguistic aspects were inseparable from extraliterary factors. The Petrograd – Leningrad school of writing had occupied a peripheral position by contrast with the official Moscow style since the beginning of Stalinism.[198] It was marginalized mostly for political reasons in the context of the general intolerance for, and suspicion of, Leningrad's intellectual and cultural life, as well as its oppositional spirit. Orchestrated by the Soviet authorities, campaigns of severe criticism and outright rejection were launched by the Moscow and Leningrad literary establishment against Leningrad writers on the basis of their choice of literary theme, genre and style. That is, in terms of intraliterary and linguistic marginalization, canonical literature fought against the local writing. That is why underground culture tended to concentrate in Leningrad at that time. According to Lev Loseff:

> Это петроградская литературная школа писательства, требующая постоянного поиска единственных слов для выражения единственного видения и при этом внешней простоты, такой отделанности, чтобы казалось, что не сделано вовсе - само получилось; это проза акмеистической поэзии; это проза Житкова, Шварца, Добычина, Василия Андреева, в другом жанре -

[196] The years of 1936-38, known in Russia as the "Great Terror," have been said to have had a more serious impact in Leningrad. In 1934 Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad Communist Party leader, was murdered and the Terror started: the Leningrad elite was deported in periodic sweeps; artists, writers and musicians were imprisoned, tortured and executed. Another wave of repression came in 1946: the Leningrad Affair, comprising a witch-hunt compaign against Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, as well as arrests among the intelligentsia.
See Solomon Volkov, *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1995) 333-400.
[197] Volkov, 445-550.
[198] See Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution,* 183-184, 264-65.

> Тыняновa; это - самая затоптанная хамской советчиной литературная школа.[199]
>
> It was the Petrograd literary school which demanded of its adherents a never-ending quest for the sole words to express a unique vision and at the same time to maintain the appearance of simplicity and such perfection that it would seem nothing had been done at all, but just happened by itself. Such is the prose of the Acmeists, Zhitkov, Shvarts, Dobychin, Vasilii Andreev, and in another genre, of Tynianov; this was the literary school that had been most humiliated by the Soviet boors.

The Leningrad school of writers has a long history of marginalization and persecution. These are just a few examples: the arrest, confinement and expulsion from the country in 1931 of the "grand master of literature"[200] Evgenii Zamiatin; pressure exerted on Kornei Chukovskii and Samuil Marshak in the thirties to create propagandistic children's literature, as well as multiple arrests of children's writers and illustrators. The respected Leningrad writer Leonid Dobychin was subjected to vicious criticism for "formalism;" his works were labeled as "man-in-the-street gossip, foul anecdotes, and operetta episodes".[201] He is believed to have committed suicide. Evgenii Shvarts was a talented children's writer and a playwright (*Голый Король* [The Emperor's New Clothes, 1934], *Тень* [The Shadow, 1940]; the play *Дракон* [The Dragon, 1943], banned in 1944). The Oberiu group was exterminated. They included the leading Leningrad dadaist poet Nikolai Oleinikov, arrested in 1938 and persecuted; Aleksandr Vvedenskii, who disappeared; Daniil Kharms, who was arrested and incarcerated in a prison psychiatric hospital where he died in 1941. The poet Nikolai Zabolotskii was arrested in 1938, experienced prison, the camps and life in exile. Osip Mandel'shtam died in a Stalinist camp in 1938. Hostile campaigns

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[199] Lev Losev, "Russkii pisatel' Sergei Dovlatov," *Petropol'* 5 (1994): 195.
Boris Zhitkov, Evgenii Shvarts, Leonid Dobychin, Vasilii Andreev, Iurii Tynianov were prominent Leningrad writers of the 1940s and 1950s. See the Appendix.

[200] The information here is based on the memoirs of contemporaries. See V. Kaverin, *Epilog: Memuary* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989); L. Chukovskaia, *Protsess iskliucheniia: Ocherk literaturnykh nravov* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1979); Ia. Gordin, ed. *Pisatel' Leonid Dobychin: Vospominaniia, stat'i, pis'ma* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Zvezda," 1996); Volkov, 375.

[201] Kaverin, 501.

against Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko were started in the thirties and in the forties; they were proclaimed decadent and corrupt, and in 1946 a Party decree was adopted against them. Boris Eikhenbaum was fired from a dean's post at Leningrad University in 1948. The following years, from the end of the forties to the mid-fifties, were characterized by Lidiia Chukovskaia as total terror.[202] Only the sixties brought a temporary change for the better.

To understand better the environment in which the young writers of the sixties matured it is necessary to consider the peculiarities not of place only, but of time as well. The mid-fifties and early sixties brought a flare of freedom and hope to the whole country. Soviet Russia began to acquaint itself with current developments in the West, particularly in the United States. 1955 saw the launch of the glossy magazine *Amerika*. In 1957 Moscow hosted the World Film Festival and opened its doors to many foreign cultural delegations and guests; in 1957-1958 president Nixon and the leader of the Soviet Communist Party Khrushchev exchanged visits.[203]

Leningrad, which had acquired a conservative spirit before and after World War II, found itself divided by the conflict between the overbearing authorities and free-spirited intellectuals. Leningrad's decline over the half-century of Soviet rule had stripped the city of international prestige. The desire and the potential for regaining the status of a cosmopolitan, culturally vibrant city was ever present. Yet with state policy determined to prevent any possible opposition from a revitalized Leningrad, the fifties and sixties saw the city burdened with an oppressive bureaucracy to an even greater extent than Moscow.[204] Both these factors – the aspiration to regain prestige and oppression by Moscow - facilitated an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, with the generally liberal atmosphere of the sixties the social and artistic life of

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[202] See Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Protsess iskliucheniia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1979) 12-15.
[203] Peter Vail' and Alexander Genis, 64-65.
[204] Volkov, 478-520.

the city flourished. On the other hand, it was impossible for young writers to win official recognition and wide access to the public. Leningrad transformed into an exciting centre for the alternative arts in a very short time. New non-official forms of cultural life spread widely. Apart from literary evenings in the Palace of Writers, House of Journalists and Palace of Cinematography, informal public readings emerged, as did discussion clubs, private literary salons, apartment vernissages and seminars on literature, philosophy and religion, to say nothing of the circulation of *samizdat* and *tamizdat* publications.[205] In this atmosphere of new cultural awareness, a considerable number of new independent literary and historical periodicals were launched: the almanacs *Призма* [Prism,1961-1962], *Fioretti* (1961), *Стезя* [Path, 1965]; the student journals *Голубой бутон* [Blue Bud, 1955] of Leningrad University, *Электрон* [Electron, 1956] in the Electrotechnical Institute, *Ересь* [Heresy, 1956] in the Library Institute, *Студенческие новости* [Students' News, 1956] in the Pedagogical Institute, *Культура* [Culture, 1956] and Колокол [Bell, 1962] in the Technological Institute, *Оптима* [Optimum, 1960-1962] in the Continuing Education Department of Leningrad University, *Луч* [Ray, 1960-61] at the Faculty of Law of Leningrad University.[206] Student journals carried original fiction, criticism, translation, political and cultural information, as well as material for discussion. The Leningrad writer Vladimir Gubin recalls:

> In the sixties the city presented one strange, amazing scene. Everyone turned out to be a creative person – a writer, an artist or an actor. It was not just a game, it was a true reality.[207]

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[205] *Samizdat* means the production and circulation of typed or hand-written manuscripts. *Tamizdat* stands for works published in abroad. Examples of the flourishing cultural life in Leningrad in the sixties are available in memoirs on the period. See Rein, *Mne skuchno bez Dovlatova*, 83-87.

[206] See Dolinin, 3-21.

[207] Vladimir Gubin, personal interview, St. Petersburg, May 1998.

Leningrad of the sixties became one vast literary club, with many of its citizens reading, writing and discussing. The young writers lived very intense literary lives. They all tried to publish their works in official journals, newspapers and almanacs. They participated in numerous literary soirees, public readings, and radio programs. Most of them found themselves on the fringes of the literary establishment. According to Sukhikh, by the early sixties the literary scene had taken the form in which it would continue to exist for the next two decades.[208] He suggests the following structure:

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Official Literature:*** | *Ofitsioz* |
| | *Official Opposition* |
| ***Nonofficial Literature:*** | *Samizdat* |
| | *Tamizdat* |

There were shifts between the sectors of the structure as writers transferred from one to another. Daniil Granin, for example, started with honest and challenging prose in the *official opposition* only to turn into a conservative representative of *offitsioz*. Vera Panova, on the other hand, moved from a secure official position to a more daring oppositional side, writing experimental novellas.[209] At that time the greatest polarization occurred between literature officially published and nonofficial "dissident" literature published in the West (*tamizdat*) or circulated in typed copies in Soviet Union (*samizdat*).

The young Leningrad writers belonged to neither the official nor the dissident camp. Their position in the sixties was in between, on the margins of both camps.

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[208] Igor' Sukhikh is a professor of Russian Literature at St. Petersburg State University. His major publications are *Problemy poetiki Chekhova* (1987), *Sergei Dovlatov: Vremia, mesto, sud'ba* (1996).

[209] See Daniil Granin, *Искатели* [Those Who Seek, 1955], *После свадьбы* [After the Wedding, 1958], *Иду на грозу* [I Challenge the Storm, 1962]; Vera Panova, *Спутники* [The Fellow Travellers, 1945], *Рабочий поселок* [The Factory, 1948], *Ясный берег* [The Bright Shore, 1949], "Сережа" [Serezha, 1950], *Лики на заре* [Faces at Dawn, 1969].

While trying to publish their works officially, they did not write as the official literature required, nor could they accept the official literature, which was, in their opinion, boring conventions. They did not join the dissidents for they were not interested in politics, but having no access to official publications they began to circulate their works in *samizdat.*[210] Their marginal position was truly ambiguous – spiritual freedom on the border between official literature and non-official literature, and at the same time seclusion in their own elitist world where literature substituted for life. On the one hand, the city constituted a place with a rich cultural life. On the other, in the late fifties and early sixties the bureaucratic structures of official literature were much more rigid than those in Moscow, and to publish anything but social realistic works was hardly possible.[211]

Already in 1957 the Party reinforced ideological controls over the arts.[212] As a result, in Leningrad repressions against artists, writers and independent publications began forthwith and continued throughout the sixties. The KGB arrested young independent publishers and editors of new literary journals: in 1957, the editor of *The Student's News*, V. Trofimov; in 1963, the editor of *Ray*, G. Krivonosov; in 1965, nine members of the journal *Bell* (among them editors Ronkin and Khakhaev).[213] The characteristic feature of the Leningrad situation was the more oppressive and complicated nature of the local literary and ideological structures.

The repressions affected some of the young writers directly. In 1964 a twenty-three-year-old Brodskii was arrested, incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital,

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[210] See Rein, 182-187; Dovlatov "My nachinali v epokhu zastoia", *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 231.
[211] Andrei Ar'ev, personal interview, St.Petersburg, May 1998.
[212] See Peter Benno, "The Political Aspect," *Soviet Literature in the Sixties*, 190-98.
[213] Information here is based on the facts provided by Dolinin, 9-11.

charged with "malicious parasitism" and exiled to the Arkhangel'sk region.[214] Later in 1972 he was expelled to the West. Brodskii's persecution was due to the fact that his independent behaviour challenged the authorities. The *Gorozhane* writers did not escape marginalization either. According to friends, members of the group had been kept under KGB surveillance since 1968.[215] Maramzin, actively involved in the distribution of samizdat literature and attempts to publish Brodskii's works, was arrested in 1974 and forced to emigrate.[216] Vakhtin was involved in Maramzin's case as a witness. He refused to testify, and this ruined his scientific career and made the publication of his literary works impossible.[217]

Another young Leningrad writer who was marginalized by the establishment was Rid Grachev (Vite). A journalist by profession, he was one of the most talented writers in Leningrad at that time. Many of his contemporaries remember him as a man of rare sensitivity and artistic subtlety, as can be seen in Brodskii's friendly tribute:

> Охранная грамота
>
> Риду Иосифовичу Вите (Грачеву) для ограждения его от дурного глаза, людского пустословия, редакторской бесчестности и беспринципности, [...] полицейского произвола и всего прочего, чем богат существующий миропорядок; а паче всего — от всеобщего наглого невежества.[218]
>
> Charter of Immunity
>
> Given to Rid Iosifovich Vite (Grachev) for protection from the evil eye, idle talk, the dishonesty and lack of principles of editors [...] police tyranny and all other stuff that abounds in

[214] Brodskii reflects upon this period of his life in his poem "Gorbunov i Gorchakov" (1965-68). See I. Brodskii, "Gorbunov i Gorchakov," in *Sochineniia Iosifa Brodskogo*, ed. Ia. Gordin. Vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: MCMXCVII, 1997) 4 vols. 252-88; Volkov, 476-78.
[215] Based on interviews with A. Kovrizhnykh and A. Antonov. See *Sumerki*, 92-3.
[216] Volkov, 517.
[217] Iakov Vin'kovetskii, "Byt' zhivym," *Sumerki*, 91.
[218] Iosif Brodskii, "Okhrannaia gramota," afterword, *Nichei brat*, by Rid Grachev (Moscow: Slovo, 1994) 380.

> the universe; and more than anything from total insolent ignorance.

This document seems to deserve special attention. The title itself encodes a sense of fencing oneself off from the "centre." It may be said to allude not only to the historical document, but to Pasternak's *Охранная грамота* [Safe Conduct, 1931]. In his work Pasternak presents not only a record of individuals (Scriabin, Rilke and Maiakovskii), but also his perception of creativity as a form of "energy," a kind of "embattlement." Pasternak in Brodskii's text provides an interesting point of contrast. While for the Modernists an aggressive-defensive posture against a mercantile world was characteristic, by Brodskii's time the artist's position had changed. It became more of an "outsider's" observing role; Brodskii's humour changes in tone from bitter and obstreperous to mild mockery.

Rid Grachev wrote short stories: "Молодость" [Youth, 1961], "Диспут о счастье" [Debate on Happiness, 1961], "Несчастный случай" [An Accident, early sixties], "Помидоры" [Tomatoes, 1964], "Кошка и мы" [The Cat and Ourselves, 1967]. His essays include "Настоящий современный писатель" [A Real Modern Writer, the sixties], "Почему искусство не спасает мир" [Why Art Does Not Save the World, the sixties], "Интеллигенции больше нет" [There Is No More Intelligensia, the sixties].[219] As his friends and colleagues recall, he tried to publish a book of stories in the sixties ("Где твой дом?" [Where Is Your Home?]), which was reduced to a small insignificant brochure.[220] Aware of his gift as writer, having gained popularity and respect within the underground literary circles of Leningrad, he was rejected by editors and contemporary critics. He fully experienced marginalization by the official literary establishment, and it was believed that it drove

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[219] See Rid Grachev, *Nichei brat* (Moscow: Slovo, 1994).
[220] On Grachev see Gordin, "Dolgoe otsutstvie," afterword, *Nichei brat*, 380-82; Volkov, 521.

him to insanity and attempted suicide. His first and only book of stories and essays, *Nichei brat* [Nobody's Brother, 1994], was published recently. In his writings he mostly deals with the dilemma of an intelligent creative person in Russian society. His stories are simple, but multilayered (in terms of various levels of meaning, experimentation with multiple points of view); they summarize his life experience in a light humorous way and concise form. His essays explore the same philosophical issues seen in his prose, such questions as social injustice, low standards in contemporary literature and lack of freedom of expression for the intelligentsia.

The external marginalization of Leningrad writers continued in the seventies. Many were forced to leave Russia (poets Lev Loseff, Dmitrii Bobyshev, Konstantin Kuzminskii, writers Efimov, Maramzin, Dovlatov; feminist writers Tat'iana Giricheva, Natal'ia Malakhovskaia, Iuliia Voznesenskaia).

As shown above, the Leningrad writers of the sixties were not recognized in their time. Almost none of them were published in their youth. According to Rein, at the age of forty-seven he was a poet who had never published a line of his poetry.[221] The establishment imposed artificial limits on ways of reaching out to the public. External factors played the key role in rejection. Rein recalls that the most frequent question that followed the refusal of his works concerned his nationality.[222] Dovlatov points to another reason for exclusion – ideological position. The first question the newpaper editor asks when Dovlatov, the character, comes for a job interview is "Вы, конечно, беспартийный? " [You, of course, do not belong to the Party?].[223]

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[221] Rein, 85.
[222] Rein, 19, 87.
[223] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol.1, 175.

In "The Trade" Dovlatov makes use of the official document issued by the Department of Literature of the Leningrad literary club "Russia" which reflects some of the causes of marginalization. Works by Maramzin, Dovlatov, Gorodnitskii, Popov were characterized as " Заурядные в художественном отношении, оскорбительные для русского народа и враждебные советскому государству в идейном отношении стихотворные и прозаические произведения"[224] [artistically undistinguished prose and poetry [...] utterly insulting to the Russian people and ideologically hostile to the Soviet government.[225] Further in the same text the writers were accused of Zionist collaboration.

As a spokesperson for the Leningrad community of writers he not only discloses the mechanisms of marginalization, but also depicts the representatives of the ruling centre - KGB, editors, clerks at the publishing houses - who marginalize the writers. For example, his protagonist Alikhanov meets with a KGB official.[226] The officer Beliaev is a person with "долгим, грустным, трагическим взглядом"[227] [a long, sad and tragic look] and a smile that "выражала несовершенство мира и тяжелое бремя ответственности"[228] [expressed the world's imperfection and the heavy burden of responsibility]. He tries to establish contact with the "disbehaving" writer Alikhanov, drinks "Vodka" with him, gives him moral instructions and appears to be "не Дзержинский, а Макаренко"[229] [not Dzerzhinskii, but Makarenko]. Furthermore, the officer sounds almost like a dissident himself predicting the collapse to the Soviet regime and expressing the desire to flee the country. What seems to take place here is a curious reversal of roles: the representative of the "central power"

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[224] Dovlatov, 35.
[225] Dovlatov, trans. O'Connor and Burgin, 55.
[226] Dovlatov, "Zapovednik," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol.1, 407-10.
[227] Ibid, 407.
[228] Ibid, 407.
[229] Ibid, 407.

is not an authoritatian figure; he would rather be on the margins himself. A reader may even feel sorry for him: he has tears in his eyes, confessing that there is no escape for him personally. Dovlatov fills this episode with sad irony and light mockery.

In "Записные книжки" [The Notebooks, 1990] the quality of his laughter changes. In ridiculing the official structures Dovlatov uses a technique of word-punning, based on quotations from Soviet ideological material. He fires a direct shot at the Soviet press, which was known for misrepresentation and severe criticism of free-thinking writers: "В Советских газетах только опечатки правдивы. [...] «Большевистская каторга» (вместо «когорта»). «Коммунисты осуждают решения партии» (вместо «обсуждают»)"[230] [Only misprints are true in the Soviet newspapers. "Bolshevik penal servitude (instead of "multitude"). "Communists abate the Party decisions (instead of "debate")." These puns, based on political clichés, exhibit the Soviet press in a non-complimentary light, as stupid and unreliable. In this presentation the official press loses its authoritarian nature; by such misprints the press disarms itself and, therefore, destroys its central status. In the same manner Dovlatov proposes "Гимн и позывные КГБ: «Родина слышит, Родина знает .."[231] [The KGB's anthemn and call-sign "The Motherland hears and the Motherland knows"]. This quotation comes from a Soviet song («Песня Земли" [Earth Song, 1953], lyrics by E. Dolmatovskii, music by D. Shostakovich); the two quoted lines being well-known to everyone who lived in the Soviet Union in the sixties and seventies. Association of the worn-out word "Motherland" with the KGB indicates the primary importance of the latter, its central position and role in the lives of

[230] Dovlatov, "Zapisnye knizhki," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol.3, 241.
[231] Ibid, 240.

Dovlatov's generation. On the other hand, the image of a singing KGB annuls its centrality and reduces its importance, at least in fiction, to that of some children's radio programs such as the daily morning show "Пионерская зорька" [Pioneers' dawn]. Dovlatov's humour in these extracts is bold and assertive.

In the best traditions of the non-official culture Dovlatov implements political jokes in his narration. One of the anecdotes portrays Beriia as a seducer of minor girls, a vile and vicious tyrant. When the girl, who managed to escape, got flowers from the guard by mistake and thanked Beriia for the bouquet, he replied: "Это не букет. Это — венок " [It's not a bouquet. It's a wreath]. Thus for the top marginalizing power Dovlatov employs black humour.

The impact of marginalization by the Soviet literary officials and by the current canon is described by Dovlatov in "The Trade." He talks about his friends with sorrow and compassion:

> Это были самолюбивые, измученные люди. Официальный неуспех компенсировался болезненным тщеславием. Годы жалкого существования отражались на психике. Высокий процент душевных заболеваний свидетельствует об этом. Да и не желали в мире призраков соответствовать норме.[232]
>
> They were proud, tormented people. Morbid vanity compensated for their official failure. The years of pitiful existence took a toll on their psyche. The high rate of neurotic afflictions found among them bears witness to this. Nor did they have any desire to conform to the norm in a world of phantoms.[233]

Life on the fringes of official literature, without publications or audience, turns Alikhanov of "The Reserve" into a person on the edge of a nervous breakdown: "Ты завидуешь любому, кто называет себя писателем. Кто может, вытащив

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[232] Dovlatov, "Nevidimaia kniga," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol.2, 37.
[233] Dovlatov, *Invisible Book*, trans. O'Connor and Burgin, 61.

удостоверение, документально это засвидетельствовать"[234] [You envy everyone, who calls himself a writer. Who can pull out his writer's membership card and prove his identity]. The tone of narration here is self-demeaning and melodramatic. The protagonist feels that exclusion from literature destroys him as an individual, as well as affects the lives of his family members. He lives with the feeling of impending "catastrophe," of a "dead-end." His perception of the self-created centre (idependent writer with no affiliation to official structures) changes as well. It is no longer a safe retreat, as described in "The Zone," but the "centre" of a "mine field."[235]

Dovlatov directly accuses the establishment of ruining his friends' careers and lives. Turning his friends into protagonists, he writes about Gubin:

> Он начинал легко и удачливо. Но его довольно быстро раскусили. Последовал длительный тяжелый неуспех. Судьба Губина — еще одно преступление наших литературных вохровцев.[236]
>
> His early career was effortless and successful. But people quickly saw through him. He soon suffered many painful setbacks. [...] Gubin's fate is yet another example of the crimes perpetrated by our literary watchdogs.[237]

What are the options for the marginalized writer? Gubin, the writer, reacted to official denunciation by apparent withdrawal from literature. He distanced himself from literary groups and did not attempt to submit manuscripts for official publication. Dovlatov's character Gubin confesses:

> — Да, я не появляюсь в издательствах. Это бесполезно. Но я пишу. Пишу ночами. И достигаю таких вершин, о которых не мечтал ![238]

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[234] Dovlatov, "The Reserve," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, 336.
[235] Ibid, 335.
[236] Dovlatov, "Nevidimaia kniga," 21.
[237] Dovlatov, *Invisible Book*, trans. O'Connor and Burgin, 33.
[238] Dovlatov, "Nevidimaia kniga," 21.

> Yes, it's true, I don't spend much time at publishing houses. But I do write. I write at night. And I am achieving heights that I never before dreamed of ![239]

Gubin's first book *Илларион и Карлик* [*Illarion i Karlik*] was published only in 1997.

The other option for an excluded writer was part-time collaboration with the press, a hack job. In "The Compromise" Dovlatov's protagonist worked as a journalist and after losing this job "Редактировал какие-то генеральские мемуары. Халтурил на радио. Написал брошюру «Коммунисты покорили тундру»[240] [He edited some general's memoirs. Worked part-time at a radio station. Wrote a pamphlet "Communists Conquered the Tundra"]. The reader may feel the narrator's bitter irony towards his position and wonder whether he will eventually manage to overcome his marginality.

Thus, external marginalization receives its due attention in Dovlatov's art.

It was, indeed, a fact of life for the young Leningrad writers. Extraliterary causes such as their peripheral position in rebellious and oppressed Leningrad, within the alternative Leningrad school of writing, and personal non-conformity prevailed over the intraliterary and linguistic factors. The literary and linguistic qualities of their works did not seem to be taken into account at all, they were just rejected automatically as non-professional local writers, unworthy of attention. In a situation like this the young writers suffered rejection, but continued writing anyway and felt that they were in a zone of freedom among themselves, within their creative process. As Dovlatov's character Maramzin proclaims:"Я свободы не прошу. Зачем мне свобода? Более того, у меня она, кажется есть."[241] [I don't ask for freedom, I don't need it. It seems, moreover, that I have it].[242]

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[239] Dovlatov, *Invisible Book*, trans. O'Connor and Burgin, 33
[240] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh*, vol.1, 269.
[241] Dovlatov, "Nevidimaia kniga," 21
[242] Dovlatov, *Invisible Book*, trans. O'Connor and Burgin, 34.

Я был одновременно непризнанным гением и страшным халтурщиком.

Сергей Довлатов[243]

I was an unrecognized genius and an awful hack-writer at the same time.

# Chapter 4
# SERGEI DOVLATOV: A CROSS BETWEEN MARGINAL WRITER AND MARGINAL CHARACTER

In the earlier chapters I looked at the formation and reception of Leningrad prose in the sixties, examining some representative works by individual Leningrad writers to exemplify marginalization as it was imposed by the Soviet literary establishment and by the non-conformity adopted by the excluded writers. This chapter will focus on Dovlatov's experiences of marginalization in his native country.

Of all the Leningrad writers of his generation, Sergei Dovlatov took marginalization, in both his life and his fiction, to the utmost extreme. Marginal experiences form the central topic of his art. Most are ostensibly based on the writer's own life, and most works are cast in first-person narration by a character sharing his author's name and *curriculum vitae*. Marginality announces itself in the titles and informs the themes of his works: *Соло на ундервуде* [Solo on an Underwood, 1980] – a compilation of jokes (*анекдоты*) about eccentric friends and colleagues; *Компромисс* [The Compromise, 1981] – about work on the periphery of literature (as a journalist) and of Russia (for the Russian media in Tallinn); *Марш Одиноких* [March of the Lonely, 1983] – about publishing a Russian newspaper in the USA; *Наши* [Ours, 1983] – about his unusual family; *Иностранка* [The Foreign Woman, 1986] – about Russian émigrés in the USA; *Зона* [The Zone, 1982] – about

[243] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," 376.

work as a prison-camp guard on the imaginative border between the two worlds of free people and convicts; *Заповедник* [The Reserve,1983] – about work as a tour guide on Pushkin's estate-museum in Mikhailovskoe, straddling the borders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of urban and rural life, as well as of the semi-dissident and semi-official canon of village prose.

Sergei Dovlatov's life appears to be a collection of marginal experiences. He was born on 3 September 1941 in Ufa (the capital of Bashkiriia), that is, in geographical isolation from the cultural centres of Moscow and Leningrad. His parents belonged to the so-called creative intelligentsia (his father was a theatre director and mother an actress), always an object of suspicion to the Soviet establishment, and particularly so in the aftermath of the Thaw. After the war (1941-1945) his family returned to Leningrad, where Dovlatov spent his childhood and studied philology at Leningrad State University. It is significant that between the two career paths open to the intelligentsia – the science worshipped in Stalin's times and later in the sixties[244] and the dubious arts – he chose the subject that was out of favour with the regime. From 1962 to 1964 he spent the obligatory term of military service in the labour camps of the Soviet Army as a prison-guard. The experience introduced an additional marginalization factor into his life-story by placing the future non-conformist in a position bound to isolate him from the dissident camp. Upon completing his military service, he worked for two years as a literary secretary for the well-respected Leningrad writer Vera Panova (1905-73), an officially approved writer, but nevertheless one whose writing did not comply with the norms

[244] In the sixties, with the general distrust for words and verbal arts, the young dedicated scientitst became a new exemplary figure, as well as a positive fictional character. This image represented personal qualities such as honesty, sincerity and reliability. See Vail' and Genis, *60-e: Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* 100-22.

of Socialist Realism.[245] Later, Dovlatov found himself marginalized from 'high' literature, when he worked as a journalist for daily newspapers (*Вечерний Ленинград* [Evening Leningrad], *За кадры верфям* [For Skilled Ship-Yard Workers]) and literary journals in Leningrad (*Аврора* [Aurora], Звезда [Star], *Нева* [Neva]) and Tallin (1973-76): *Советская Эстония* [Soviet Estonia], *Вечерний Таллин* [Evening Tallinn]). Finally, the experiment with marginalization reached its most extreme expression when Dovlatov chose emigration as an alternative to external marginalization (rejection by publishing houses and editorial boards, job losses, police surveillance) and internal marginalization (writing for his group of friends, or for the limited audience of *samizdat*). He turned emigration to his advantage, becoming a published writer in the West. Dovlatov emigrated to the United States in 1978 and lived in New York until his premature death in 1990.[246]

Sergei Dovlatov began writing in the sixties ("Эмигранты" [The Émigrés], "Блюз для Натэллы" [Blues for Natella], "Солдаты на Невском" [Soldiers on Nevskii Prospect], "Роль " [The Role], "Дорога в новую квартиру" [Road to the New Apartment], "После дождя" [After the Rain], "Пустая комната" [Empty Room], "Победители" [The Winners], "Люди и автомобили" [People and Cars] and many other stories)[247]. His friends recall that after his military service he

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[245] Panova's *Vremena Goda,* translated in 1957 as [Span of the Year, 1953] (literally [Seasons of the Year]) focussed on private individuals and their personal problems, exposed corruption among Party bureaucrats, and accordingly was severely criticized by the Soviet media.

[246] The biographical information here is based on interviews with Dovlatov.
See Glad, 84-96; "Pisatel' v emigratsii," *Slovo – Word* 9 (1991), 6-12; "Dar organicheskogo bezzlobiia," *Ogonek*, 24 (1990)11-14; as well as A. Ariev, "Nasha malen'kaia zhizn'," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, 5-24.

[247] Some of these stories were published in the nineties ("Эмигранты" [The Emigrants], "Блюз для Натэллы" [Blues for Natella], "Победители" [The Winners], "Солдаты на Невском" [Soldiers on Nevskii Prospect], "Роль" [The Role], "Дорога в новую квартиру" [Road to the New Apartment]) in *Literaturnaia gazeta* 35 (1992), in *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*; in

returned to Leningrad with a collection of stories; his novella *Зона: Записки надзирателя* [Zone: Notes of a Guard] was written in 1966 (published in emigration only in 1982).[248] Though many of Dovlatov's works were written in the Soviet Union, none were ever published there, except for two conventional stories about the working class which stand out among his other works for more 'Soviet' content ("По собственному желанию" [By Personal Choice, *Neva* 5 (1973): 8-18] and "Интервью" [The Interview, *Iunost'* 6 (1974): 41-51].

In New York he became co-founder and editor-in-chief of the Russian weekly journal *Новый американец* [The New American, 1980-82], worked for Radio *Liberty*. In emigration Dovlatov managed to establish himself as a prose writer, in spite of the difficult access for émigré writers to the émigré press unless they had previously published in the USSR (as had Voinovich, Aksenov, Solzhenitsyn and others). In the West Dovlatov published twelve books in Russian, as well as ten stories in the *New Yorker*.

Sergei Dovlatov was an object of exclusionary practices throughout his life in the Soviet Union: expulsion from the university, from military service as a camp guard "по эту, по ненашу сторону колючей проволоки"[249] [on this, not our side of the barbed wire],[250] rejection of his stories by official editorial houses, dismissal from his job in Tallinn, the banning of his first book (*The Zone*) and the impossibility of further publications and intimidation by the KGB. There is more than enough evidence of these facts in his friends' writings:

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*Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*. Others are part of Dovlatov's archives kept by the St Petersburg literary journal *Zvezda* .

[248] Based on information from personal interviews with A. Ar'ev and V. Popov conducted in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1998.

[249] Krivulin, "Poeziia i anekdot," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 383.

[250] This means fence around a prison's or camp's territory.

> Изгнание из университета, служба в охране лагерей для уголовников могли бы сломать любого. У него же это обернулось прекрасной прозой. Но ощущение выброшенности из жизни, своего «отставания», «аутсайдерства» было, насколько я знаю, в те времена ему присуще.[251]
>
> Expulsion from the University, guard duty in camps for criminals could have broken any one. With him it turned into beautiful prose. But the sense of having been thrown out of life, of "lagging behind," "outsideness" was, as far as I know, at that time typical of him.
>
> В конце шестидесятых из-за выступления на литературном вечере один доносчик написал бумагу в обком, где обвинил, в частности, Довлатова в том, что он (Довлатов) сионист и враг.[252]
>
> At the end of sixties because he had taken part in a public reading, an informer wrote a letter to the local Party committee in which he accused Dovlatov of being a Zionist and an enemy.
>
> Не печатали его с фанатическим упорством. Никакого рационального объяснения этому нет. Действовал глубокий охранительный инстинкт.[253]
>
> They kept him from publishing with a fanatical persistence. There is no rational explanation for this. A deep protective instinct was at work.

Dovlatov himself turned these experiences into literature. In *The Trade* he cites official responses to his stories from such well-known literary journals as *Новый Мир* [New World], *Юность* [Youth], *Star* and *Neva*, all praising his style, but nevertheless refusing publication "for reasons other than literary."[254]

> В Ленинграде практически не было возможностей публиковаться. ... Таллинское "благополучие" не получилось. Сергей успел прочесть гранки своей книги, но, как теперь говорят, по не зависящим от автора

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[251] Boris Rokhlin, "Skazhi im tam vsem ...," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 414.
[252] Mark Zaichik, "Ne doletet' do serediny Dnepra," *Petropol'*, 210.
[253] Gordin, "On byl iavleniem prirody," *Smena* 26 Aug. 1990: 3.
[254] For references see S. Dovlatov, "Nevidimaia kniga," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2, 26-29.

> обстоятельствам она так и не вышла в свет. Из газеты пришлось уйти. Началась травля.[255]
>
> It was practically impossible to get published in Leningrad. The good times in Tallinn could not be recreated. Sergei managed to see his book in proof, but, as they say now, due to circumstances beyond the author's control, it was never released. He had to quit the newspaper. The persecution had begun.

Even though Dovlatov's work as a journalist and his early stories were well-liked in Leningrad informal circles, the general intolerance of alterity cast him into the marginal position of an unpublishable author. Dovlatov himself explains:

> Я не был антисоветским писателем, и все же меня не публиковали. Я все думал — почему? И наконец понял. Того, о чем я пишу, не существует. То есть в жизни оно, конечно, имеется. А в литературе не существует. Власти притворяются, что этой жизни нет.[256]
>
> I was not an anti-Soviet writer, and still I was not published. I kept thinking – why? And finally, I understood. What I write about does not exist. That is, it certainly exists in reality. But it does not exist in literature. The officials pretend that such life does not exist.

Sergei Dovlatov's reputation as a marginal person and a writer who addressed marginality is based on two legends, one created by his contemporaries and contributing to the external factors of marginalization, and the other, the internal factor, put into play by Dovlatov himself.[257] His life and career, as they appear in others' memoirs, illustrate that one can be perceived as central in certain areas of one's existence, such as recognition among friends, and as marginal in others, such as exclusion from official literature. In Dovlatov's legend his contemporaries pay

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[255] Elena Skul'skaia, "Slovo proshchaniia," *Sovetskaia Estoniia* 28 Aug. 1990: 4.
[256] Dovlatov, "Kak izdavat'sia na Zapade?" in Sukhikh, *Sergei Dovlatov: Vremia, mesto, sud'ba*, 358-359.
[257] The legend is reflected in many memoir-type articles, as well as in semi-fictional books about Dovlatov written by people who knew him. See notes by friends in Dovlatov, *Sobranie prozy v trekh tomakh; Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*; *Petropol'* 5 (1994); *Sergei Dovlatov: Tvorchestvo, lichnost', sud'ba*; as well as Rein, *Mne skuchno bez Dovlatova*; Alexander Genis, *Dovlatov i okrestnosti*

attention primarily to the external sides of the writer's personality, which are then linked to his artisitic abilities, thus conflating life and art. Certain features of his personality, his appearance and storyteller's talent, made him stand out in society and were incorporated into his literary legend. His exceptional looks tended to place him in the centre of any group:

> Он был невероятно хорош собой. Брюнет с очень короткой стрижкой, крупными, правильными чертами лица и трагическими восточными глазами.[258]
>
> [H]e was incredibly good looking. A dark-haired man with a very short haircut, broad, regular facial features and tragic oriental eyes.

Some compare his image to Hemingway, object of a cult-following among Russian readers of the time :

> Он и внешне напоминал этого знаменитого американца: почти двухметровый, тяжеловатый, короткостриженый и, пожалуй самый обаятельный из окружавшей меня литературной компании.[259]
>
> In appearance he reminded you of that famous American: almost two metres high, on the heavy side, short-haired, and, apparently, the most charming man in the literary circle around me.

Dovlatov was also compared to Maiakovskii:

> Этот человек казался поразительно похожим на самодвижущийся памятник молодому Маяковскому...[260]
>
> This person looked strikingly like a self-propelled monument to the young Maiakovskii...

At the same time, according to his contemporaries, Dovlatov's looks place him outside the norm as an exotic stranger:

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(Moscow:Vagrius, 1999); Asia Pekurovskaia, *Kogda sluchilos' pet' S.D. i mne* (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 2001).

[258] Ludmila Shtern, "Eta neapolitanskaia naruzhnost'," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov,* 387.

[259] Rein, "Chto otdal – tvoe," *Vechernii Leningrad* 26 Aug. 1990: 4.

[260] Viktor Krivulin, "Poeziia i pravda Sergeia Dovlatova," *Petropol'* 5 (1994): 164.

> Сергей Довлатов был огромного роста смуглым человеком. Выглядел как неаполитанский певец. В Ленинграде тогда, людей такой масти было немного.[261]
>
> Sergei Dovlatov was a dark-complexioned man of huge height. He looked like a Neapolitan singer. In Leningrad in those days there were not many people with such looks.

This percieved exoticism is significant: in his own country Dovlatov was seen as a foreigner. Friends and colleagues commented upon his 'oriental' features – his complexion and eyes. They stood in contrast with what was considered dull reality, as if challenging the boredom of what would come to be called the 'era of stagnation' of the Brezhnev years (from the mid-sixties throughout the seventies).

Many emphasize Dovlatov's height and by this separate him from the norm:

> Мне всегда казалось, что при гигантском его росте отношения с нашей приземистой белобрысой реальностью должны были складываться у него довольно своеобразным образом. [...] его манерам и речи была свойственна некая ироническая предупредительность, как бы оправдывающая и извинявшая его физическую избыточность.[262]
>
> With his gigantic height, he always seemed to me to get into quite unique relationships with our stubby colourless reality. [...] his manners and speech were tinged by some ironic courtesy, as if justifying and excusing his physical excess.

This exuberance of size could not only raise Dovlatov above the norm, but also grant him central importance. Thus, in the folkloric tradition, Russian warriors ('богатыри') were characterized by extraordinary height. According to Bakhtin, the emphasis on size is a distinctive feature of the folkloric chronotope and a key component in constructing a mythological biography:

> Человек становился богатырем по сравнению с современными людьми («богатыри — не вы»), наделялся невиданной физичесой силой, трудоспособностью,

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[261] Zaichik, "Ne doletet' do serediny Dnepra," *Petropol'* 5 (1994): 205.
[262] Brodskii, "O Serezhe Dovlatove," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 3, 156-57.

> героизовалась его борьба с природой, героизовался его трезвый, реальный ум, героизовались даже его здоровый аппетит и его жажда.[263]
>
> A person became a Hercules in comparison with modern people ("it's not you who are the warriors"), was granted extraordinary physical strength and capacity for work; his struggle with nature, his real wit and even his healthy appetite and thirst received heroic features.

Bigger meant better, or rather, having a bigger impact. As Bakhtin explains, "идеальная величина и сила и идеальное значение человека никогда не отрывались"[264] [ideal size and strength, as well as the ideal significance of a person were never separated]. There are traces of this equation in images of such important historical figures as Peter the Great and the poet Maiakovskii, with whom Dovlatov was compared as well. [265]

A later development in the Dovlatov myth identifies his external features not with external impact but with internal characteristics – his artistic vision and literary expression. In this conflation of life and creative work, physical features predetermine spiritual traits; the size factor is highlighted and transferred to art, marking Dovlatov's abilities as uniquely artistic and theatrical:

> Сережа был явлением природы, все в нем было гипертрофировано, утрировано, укрупнено. Превосходный рассказчик-импровизатор, он, один из немногих, сумел превратить свою фантасмагорическую устную речь в литературу, закрепив на бумаге интонацию, мимику, жест.[266]
>
> Serezha was a phenomenon of Nature; everything about him was hypertrophied, exaggerated, enlarged. An excellent storyteller and improviser, he, like few others, could turn his phantasmagoric speech into literature, having fixed intonation, facial expression and gesture on paper.

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[263] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Formy vremeni i khronotopa v romane," *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1975) 299.
[264] Bakhtin, 299.
[265] See Brodskii, "O Serezhe Dovlatove," *Panorama* 13 Sept. 1991: 17.
[266] Gordin, "On byl iavleniem prirody," *Smena,* 26 Aug. 1990: 4.

> [Ч]еловек-театр, универсал, безгранично щедрый — в том числе, и в прямом смысле — в раздаривании своих способностей.[267]
>
> [A] walking performance, a universal man, infinitely generous – in the literal sense of the word as well – in making a gift of his abilities.

Crucial to the Dovlatov image was his legendary talent as conversationalist, a storyteller and a humourist:

> А рассказчиком он был поразительным. К тому же у него при блестящей памяти был неиссякаемый запас полуфантастических и в то же время вроде бы совершенно правдивых историй о Пушкине и Хэмингуэе, Куприне и Вульфе...[268]
>
> And as a storyteller he was amazing. Possessed of an excellent memory, he also had a never-ending stock of semi-fantastic, and at the same time utterly true stories about Pushkin and Hemingway, Kuprin and Wolf.

The writers listed here. Alexander Pushkin, Ernest Hemingway, Alexander Kuprin and Thomas Wolf,[269] enjoyed canonical status at the time. As a marginal writer who tells stories about established literary authorities, Dovlatov seems to have removed the boundaries between the canonical and non-canonical, recognized and rejected. His "never-ending stock of utterly true stories" implies he has privileged access to the giants of high literature, or even belongs with them. On the other hand, "semi-fantastic" stories with their ironic and intimate approach may lower the unreachable images of authorities, bringing the subjects of high literature into the sphere of folk, oral art, in effect decentering the central and mixing it with the marginal.

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[267] Vail' and Genis, "Na smert' Sergeia Dovlatova," *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* 26 Aug. 1990: 3.
[268] Galina Kambolina, "Do vstrechi," *Vechernii Peterburg* 3 Sept. 1991: 4.
[269] Thomas Wolf is mentioned by Dovlatov among the writers he preferred in the seventies. See his correspondence with Skul'skaia, in "Chto budet posle smerti," *Moskovskii komsomolets* 9 July 1992: 5.

At the same time, according to his friends, Dovlatov was capable of lifting the low to the rank of high:

> Его разговоры для всех, кто с ним общался, неожиданно становились событиями высокой литературы, даже когда предметом обсуждения были казусы или разного рода несообразности. [270]
>
> For everyone who was in contact with him his conversations unexpectedly became events of high literature, even when the discussion concerned extraordinary occurrences or some kind of absurdity.

That is, the legend about Dovlatov stresses his ability to close the traditional gap between high and low literature,[271] or in terms of the present argument, between centre and margins:

> Довлатов был универсально талантлив, то есть не экономил себя на литературу, а вкладывал божий дар в любые мелочи, будь то журналистика, разговоры, кулинарные приготовления, рисунки, либо ювелирная бижютерия...[272]
>
> Dovlatov was universally talented, that is he did not spare himself for literature, but invested his divine gift in all sorts of trifles, be it journalism, conversation, cooking, drawing, or jewelry-making.

What stands out in this remark is Dovlatov's reluctance to recognize the tension between 'high' literature and extra-literary genres – oral improvization, journalism, illustrations or non-fiction. From a broader perspective, this may be regarded as an attempt to popularize any unrecognized stratum of literature, to give quality and respect to pop-literature, or as it is more commonly known and widely underrated in Russian parlance, mass-literature. The tendency to promote pop-art can be viewed as a logical development for a marginal writer working in the city known

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[270] Krivulin, "Poeziia i anekdot," 383.
[271] On the subject of high and low genres in Russian literature, see Iu. Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, 38-45.
[272] Vladimir Solov'ev, "Solo na avtootvetchike," *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* 8 Sept. 1995: 5.

for its propensity for the alternative arts. Equally important is the influence of American culture, long considered synonymous with pop-culture, and of great impact among the young writers of Leningrad.

Thus, the Dovlatov myth as created by the writer's contemporaries, rewrites an exotic personality into a legendary figure, reveals the poles of privilege in the opposition of margin and centre, in effect, moves its protoganist from the fringes to award him with the acclaim of a redefined centrality.

Dovlatov's rise from marginal to central is not only the product of the legends woven by others, it is aiso a work of his own making. In fact, the writer Dovlatov is the major character of his writings; his prose is autobiographical.

As mentioned above, in describing his fellow writers Dovlatov approached the concept of a writer from a unique vantage point – not just as a public figure, but as a private person as well. In constructing his own legend (*Ours*, *The Zone*, *The Reserve*, *The Suitcase*, *The Trade*), having experienced marginalization and struggled for recognition, far from promoting the model public writer, Dovlatov plays with the idea of celebrity. As Daniel Boorstin notes, the celebrity is a twentieth-century phenomenon.[273] When making a celebrity the mass media does not so much accent the person's accomplishments, as reveals and advertizes his or her private life to the public. There is a direct link here to pop-culture or pop-literature which favours exposure. Writers tend to cooperate in creating their images as celebrities for two reasons. First, contemporary readers no longer accept the ideal, requiring intellectual and emotional challenge instead, particularly of the sort faced by writers in the public eye and reported by them in autobiographical fiction. Second, celebrity literature

[273] See David Boorstin, *The Image* (New York: Atheneum, 1962) 118-20.

sells well.[274] Both concerns played significant roles in Hemingway's self-promotion and fame. [275] In creating his own legend Dovlatov uses a similar strategy and allows his private life to become a commodity for a mass audience.[276] Business concerns did not seem to be of any importance at the time when he was writing his texts in Russia, due to the lack of a commercial market in the Soviet Union of the sixties and seventies. However, rewriting and publishing his books in the United States at the end of seventies might have presented Dovlatov with these concerns. As for tailoring his product to readers' tastes, stories of a marginalized writer answered the demands of the public, both Russian (because of the analoguous fates of thousands of Russians) and American (because of the exotic appeal of a Soviet émigré writer).

Dovlatov develops his legend by means of his fictional protagonists. On the one hand, like a celebrity he tells his family story, accords heroism and special importance to his ancestors, gives trivial details of their lives, as if they were all famous figures (*Ours*). On the other hand, he plays with the public: confuses dates and events, distorts facts about his family and exhibits himself in a self-mocking light (*The Reserve*, *The Compromise*). The student Dovlatov involved in the mundane business of selling two hundred pairs of socks (*The Suitcase*); the journalist Dovlatov delivering a eulogy riddled with officialese at a local party boss's funeral (*The Compromise*); the radio correspondent Dalmatov [sic] tormented with love and guilt for all humanity (*Филиал* [The Affiliated Branch]); tourguide Alikhanov fabricating

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[274] See Leo Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1961) 137-40.

[275] See John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him: Hemingway as Public Writer* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 1-12.

[276] This can be explained by the young Dovlatov's fascination with Hemingway's personality, who established himself both as a public writer and as a celebrity. Dovlatov in the position of a marginal writer does not aspire to the public writer's status, but rather experiments with the celebrity's role. This kind of analogy may seem slightly off balance, especially knowing that in fact Hemingway built rather a obscure type of celebrity for himself ("the galvanic man of action," instead of ideas). The analogy is applicable to Dovlatov in the context of the Soviet worship of Hemingway, which might have influenced his writings even later, at the end of seventies.

stories about Pushkin in Mikhailovskoe (*The Reserve*) – these are vivid images of Dovlatov's 'selves' in his fiction. If we assume that the 'real' Dovlatov resembled his fictional counterparts, then the gallery presented across his oeuvre adds up to a rather unflattering self-portrait. *Ours*, *The Suitcase*, *The Zone*, *The Reserve* and several shorter works portray a man who is wordly, hardened and cynical. Each version highlights a distinctive aspect of the author's personality. At least six can be distinguished: (1) the unlucky athlete of *The Suitcase* regrets the failed career of a boxer; (2) the manly man of *The Zone* and *The Reserve* has witnessed violent deaths, enjoys a good fight, drinks to excess and opines on the proper place of women; (3) the non-committed family man of *Ours, The Affiliated Branch* sees his first marriage fall apart and teeters on the brink of a second divorce; (4) the *bon vivant* shown in *The Compromise* and *The Reserve* enjoys leisure, talking, alcohol, cigarettes, and women; (5) the marginal artist in *The Reserve* is unpublished, unknown and out of favour with the authorities; (6) the outsider of *The Compromise*, *The Reserve*, *The Zone* and *The Suitcase* belongs with neither the officially recognized writers nor the dissidents, sides with neither loyal officers nor convicts. The latter version of Dovlatov's alter-ego is of special interest here: the double exclusion takes the concept of marginalization to another level, deconstructs the opposition, in effect, erases the boundary between marginal and central.

Dovlatov designs a type who is stripped of heroism, presenting instead a collection of failures as a drunkard, a morally confused intellectual and slacker. He can even be a marginal celebrity. The latter, for all its apparent contradiction in terms, pursues a peculiar goal. External exposure helps the writer conceal an essential inner self from public view. Moreover, while true celebrities, whose lives seem glamorous and exciting, may lose touch with everyday reality and with 'real'

audiences, Dovlatov's marginal celebrity may still maintain kinship with his readers and gain their support.

The external characteristics of the Dovlatov legend (the gift for storytelling, flamboyant appearance) are linked by his contemporaries with his literary style. Its conversational tone and subtle humour gained him popularity in Leningrad literary circles, as well as among his fellow journalists in Tallinn. Thus, a Tallinn friend wrote:

> Мы помним с каким блеском, с каким щедрым талантом писал он свои газетные материалы, как заставляли они думать об ином уровне профессионализма, как изменили общую атмосферу редакционной жизни искрометный юмор Сергея, поразительный его дар рассказчика.[277]
>
> We remember the brilliance and generous talent he revealed in his newspaper material, how that material made one think about another level of professionalism, how Sergei's sparkling humour and his amazing gift as a storyteller changed the general atmosphere in the editorial office.

The oral tone and humour are characteristic of Dovlatov's prose. They are traits which may be attributed to his fascination with American literature.

In his Leningrad circle Dovlatov was the most devoted promoter of American literature. Friends remember him spending hours telling stories about American writers or retelling plots of American novels.[278] Later in the United States, in his radio discussions he analyzed his attraction to American culture:

> С детства я любил американскую прозу [...] Еще раньше я полюбил американские [...] фильмы [...] За идею превосходящего меньшинства [...] Затем я полюбил джаз шестидесятых годов, сдержанный и надломленный. Полюбил его за непосредственность. [...] За прозорливость к шансам гадкого утенка, за глубокий выстраданный оптимизм...У меня появились знакомые американцы. Я любил независимость их поведения, элегантную

[277] Skul'skaia, "Slovo proshchaniia," 4.
[278] See Shtern, "Eta neapolitanskaia naruzhnost'," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 391-93. Rein, "Neskol'ko slov vdogonku," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 400.

> небрежность манер. Я любил их пренебрежение к условным нормам.[279]
>
> Since childhood I have loved American prose. [...] First I fell in love with American [...] movies. [...] For the idea of the superior minority. [...] Later I fell for the jazz of the sixties, which was restrained and on the breaking point. I came to love it for its immediacy. [...] For the insight into the chances of an ugly duckling, for profound optimism born of suffering. I became friendly with some Americans. I enjoyed the independence of their behaviour, their elegantly casual manners. I loved their disregard for conventional norms.

Note that Dovlatov lays particular emphasis on individuality. The notions of "the superior minority," "the chances of an ugly duckling" and "independence" echo the pursuit of "individuality," of "self-assertion" among the young Leningrad writers. Dovlatov takes it even further. In his exploration of the theme American culture served as a model. In his youth Dovlatov looked upon Hemingway as his "идеал литературный и человеческий" [280] [literary and human ideal].

In Dovlatov's early prose, a passion for Hemingway reveals itself in the titles and thematics of the stories. Stories with titles such as "Хочу быть сильным" [I Want to Be Strong] and "Победители" [The Winners] seem to be reminiscent of Hemingway's "The Undefeated" and "The Battler"; "Когда-то мы жили в горах" [We Used to Live in the Mountains] seems to echo Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" or "An Alpine Idyll." "После дождя" [After the Rain] recalls Hemingway's "After the Storm" or "Cat in the Rain." "Хоть бы снег пошел" [Wish It Would Snow] brings to mind Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "Cross-Country Snow." Finally, "Солдаты на Невском" [Soldiers on Nevskii Prospect] seems to have been inspired by Hemingway's "Soldier's Home."

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[279] Dovlatov, "Kak izdavat'sia na Zapade?" in I. Sukhikh, *Sergei Dovlatov: vremia, mesto, sud'ba*, 362.

[280] Dovlatov, "Nevidimaia kniga," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2, 14.

Dovlatov's thematics seem to look to the same source and include sports, primarily boxing ("I Want to be Strong," "The Winners," "Ниже ринга" [Below the Ring]), soldiers on leave ("Soldiers on Nevskii Prospect"), male friendship ("Чирков и Берендеев" [Chirkov and Berendeev], "Незнакомые друзья" [Unfamiliar Friends]), alienation ("Дорога в новую квартиру" [Road to the New Appartment], "Роль" [The Role], "Люди и автомобили" [People and Cars], "Тетя Даша" [Aunt Dasha]). The theme that informs all his works is individuality and individual independence.

In his article "Папа и блудные дети" [Papa and the Prodigal Sons, 1985] Dovlatov explains the appeal: Hemingway was taken to incarnate the "convinced individualist," the very "model of modern character" and "model of man".[281] Individuality is the key. Dovlatov insists that

> Углубление в мир Хемингуэя становилось для советского человека формой бегства от действительности ... с ее приматом коллектива над личностью.[282]
>
> Plunging into the world of Hemingway became for a Soviet person a type of escape from reality [...] which put the collective above the individual.

Hemingway for Dovlatov is a creative escape route not only away from collective reality of the Soviet model, but towards and into a reality chosen, willed and shaped by the assertive individual. The characters of Dovlatov's early stories reflect this tendency. In them Hemingway stands for the modern lifestyle, the Western system of values and membership in a group of original individuals.

So broadly accepted was the association that Hemingway's name can occur, in passing, among the incidental details, the fashionable accoutrements, of a well-appointed apartment:

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[281] Dovlatov, "Papa i bludnye deti," *Petropl'* 5 (1994): 124.
[282] Dovlatov, "Papa i bludnye deti," 124-25.

> У Вари Кузьменко быстро огляделся. Низкая мебель, книги, портрет Хемингуэя...«Хемингуэя знаю», — с удовлетворением подумал майор.[283]
>
> At Varia Kuz'menko's he looked around quickly. Low furniture, books, a portrait of Hemingway ..."I know Hemingway," the major thought with satisfaction.

Hemingway's portrait serves as a symbol of the time (the sixties' worship of Hemingway), of exclusivity (the characters share an esoteric knowledge of American literature), of belonging (the characters represent the new intelligentsia). Further, in the same story another character refers to Faulkner in order to sound more convincing and modern:

> —Ты Фолкнера читала? Вялый кивок. —Что-то не верится. Ну да ладно. Фолкнер говорил — в любом движении сказывается уникальный опыт человека. [284]
>
> "Have you read Faulkner?"A languid nod. "Hard to believe. Oh well, as Faulkner used to say, in any movement a unique person's experience is expressed."

Occasionally Dovlatov's characters try to insert English expressions into their conversation to make a joke, to sound relaxed:

> — Всё будет о'кей, — заверил Гаенко.[285]
>
> "Everything will be O.K.," Gaenko assured [us].
>
> — Рашен пепси-кола, — сказал майор.[286]
>
> "Russian Pepsi-cola," said the major.

This ability of the characters to use American colloquial phrases adds colour to their personalities, emphasizes their individuality.

Dovlatov's characters stand out as highly individual and therefore marginal personae. They represent average people coming from various walks of life: they are

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[283] Dovlatov, "Doroga v novuiu kvartiru," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 182.
[284] Dovlatov, "Rol'," 185.
[285] Dovlatov, "Soldaty na Nevskom," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 169.
[286] Dovlatov, "Rol'," 181.

soldiers, actresses, convicts, students and playwrights. They are vital, spontaneous people with their peripheral experiences behind them and the quest for centrality costantly in sight. For example, the young corporal Gaenko in "Soldiers on Nevskii Prospect" comes from a provincial region and has a shady criminal past, but enjoys great popularity among his comrades:

> Ефрейтор Гаенко вырос среди пермской шпаны, где и приобрел сомнительный жизненный опыт, истерическую смелость и витиеватый блатной оттенок в разговоре.[287]
>
> Corporal Gaenko had grown up among the delinquents of Perm', where he acquired a questionable life experience, hysterical bravery and a florid thieves' tinge in his speech.

The author stresses the significance of his character's individual qualities:

"Гаенко многое прощалось за ум и так называемую смекалку"[288] [Gaenko got away with a lot, thanks to his intelligence and so-called street smarts].

As the examples above show, Gaenko's popularity is based upon features such as a strong sense of self and ready wit. Moreover, Dovlatov gives his character the qualities he himself was said to possess: a sense of humour and prodigious story-telling talent. Gaenko's jokes and stories are more than entertainment; they constitute a survival tactic which allows him to tell his own truth and to create his own alternative reality. In this way he surmounts his peripheral status as a poorly educated delinquent and builds the reputation of a savvy survivor among his fellow soldiers. In this way he carves out his own alternative centrality.

In the story "The Role" Dovlatov takes note of the tendency to treat intellectualism as a marginal quality. As a high-brow, his fictional alter-ego feels inferior to his girlfriend:

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[287] Dovlatov, "Soldaty na Nevskom," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov*, 158.
[288] Dovlatov, "Soldaty na Nevskom," 158.

> Лиде, как я понимаю, было тоскливо со мной. Достоинства, которыми я обладал, ей не импонировали. Например, я был эрудитом.[289]
>
> As I realize, Lida was bored in my company. The merits I possessed did not appeal to her. For example, I was erudite.

There is another marginal character in this story, the actress Antonina, distinguished by virtue of her looks and eccentric manners: "Крупная, рыжая, в модной блузке с пятном на груди, она чересчур шумела"[290] [Big, red-haired, in a stylish blouse with a spot on the front, she was too loud]. She dances until dawn, rejects a desirable film-script because it lacks *subtext*, rushes from Moscow to Leningrad to challenge movie-bureaucrats, glorifies Solzhenitsyn and is characterized by friends as "abnormal."[291] Life to Antonina is nothing but a direct extension of the stage, even though she plays out the tragedy of under-appreciation and a blocked career. As the plot unfolds, her chief obstacle is petty bureaucracy: minor officials prevent her from realizing her full potential in the theatre. Nevertheless, she tries to play a leading role in life, atrracting the full attention of those who surround her. After all, she is a semi-dissident member of the intelligentsia, who voices her opinions and tries to find her own way to appeal to the official 'centre'.

The heroine of "The Road To a New Apartment," Varia, is caught up in her dreams and exists in two different worlds – the world of mundane reality and the fictional world of her diary. In real life she is a modest make-up artist, while in her fantasies she is a writer speaking out for her generation. These two worlds complement one another: in her fictional world Varia gains what she lacks in reality - the affirmation of centrality through an individualized vision of life, that is, admission to the centre on her own terms, redefining or reconfiguring that centre. This centrality is an illusion, but nevertheless the awareness of it presents Varia not as a

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[289] Dovlatov, "Rol'," *Maloizvestnyi Dovlatov,* 172.
[290] Dovlatov, "Rol',"173.
[291] Ibid.

passive person, or a meek make-up artist, but rather as a woman possessed of an independent mind, an active and searching soul.

In *The Zone* Dovlatov depicts not only a great number of marginal personalities, but also the absurdity of the societal and literary division into central and marginal by suggesting that the notions of centrality and marginality are interchangeable. He recalls the works of camp literature and detective fiction where, in the former, a convict was an admirable heroic figure and a guard – a vicious traitor; and in the latter, on the contrary, a convict was a social outcast, while the detective represented the central concepts of morality and justice. According to Dovlatov:

> Я обнаружил поразительное сходство между лагерем и волей. Между заключенными и надзирателями. Мы были очень похожи и даже взаимозаменяемы. Почти любой заключенный годился на роль охранника. Почти любой надзиратель заслуживал тюрьмы.[292]
>
> I discovered the striking similarity between life in the camp and at liberty. Between the convicts and the guards. We were very similar and even interchangeable. Almost any convict could have played a guard. Almost any guard deserved to be in prison.

*The Zone* contains fourteen stories and approximately twenty characters. All of the characters are marginal in their textual representation (no detailed portraits or life stories are provided; the characters appear as sketches), and in their status (in relation to the rest of the population outside of the camp). They include a rebellious thief, Kuptsov, who sacrifices his hand in order to save his reputation. Similarly, a guard, Pakhapil' speaks Estonian to everyone in what is, after all, a Russian-dominated environment; a former pilot Mishchuk is visited by his pilot-friend in his airplane; Katia, a captain's wife feels anguished and alienated living among soldiers and convicts, while convict-actors play revolutionaries in a theatrical performance.

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[292] Dovlatov, "Zona," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1, 63.

Though marginal, these characters are memorable individuals, each with his or her own story, and a starring role or central position in it.

The most marginal of them is Dovlatov's alter ego, Boris Alikhanov. He is a misfit in the camp zone, a representative of the intelligentsia who serves as a guard. In other words, Alikhanov is outsider in the eyes of guards and convicts alike:

> Он был чужим для всех. Для зэков, солдат, офицеров и вольных лагерных работяг. Даже караульные псы считали его чужим. На лице его постоянно блуждала рассеянная и одновременно тревожная улыбка. Интеллегента можно узнать по ней даже в тайге.[293]
>
> He was an outsider to everyone. To the convicts, soldiers, officers and free camp workers. Even the guard dogs looked on him as a stranger. His face constantly wore a wandering and at the same time alarming smile. An intellectual can be spotted by it even in the taiga.

Alikhanov carries out his duties as a guard, but sympathizes with the convicts. His position in the zone is on the border between two groups – guards and convicts - and he tries to fit in with both. Thus, he brings food to the convicts, drinks with the guards, helps to save the convict who informs on his fellow inmates, and gains popularity among the soldiers by ignoring the officers. Often he finds that in his interaction with others he is inconsistent: he tries to prevent soldiers from going to a prostitute by comparing them to animals, then follows them himself; when it seems that he has achieved understanding with the convicts, they treat him to meat chops made out of his captain's dog. In this cruel and absurd world Alikhanov turns to writing. His first efforts at writing represent his attempt to gain control over the hostile reality he faces, to create an identity for himself. This fact can be related to the theme of conflating life and art, mentioned earlier. Living in the 'zone' nurtures writing, and at the same time writing becomes his 'zone 'of freedom, his other life.

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[293] Dovlatov, "Zona," 44.

Alikhanov's turn to writing marks the final stage of marginalization in him: from an intellectual to a writer. This shift brings release, as well as a new, self-created centrality in an alternative reality. Writing changes his relationship to the world, because "[ж]изнь стала податливой. Ее можно было измерить движением карандаша"[294] [life became pliable. It was possible to measure it with the stroke of a pencil] and "[м]ир стал живым и безопасным, как на холсте" [295] [the world became lively and safe, as on a canvas]. Writing changes him. For the first time he appears with a calm, victorious smile, as if he has found his place between and within the two antagonistic cultures of guards and convicts; as if he has managed to assert a centre of his own in the chaos around him.

In these early works Dovlatov's marginal characters appear to stand out among the literary outsiders who had become common in Soviet literature of the sixties (in writings by Nekrasov, Granin, Solzhenitsyn and Aksenov). Mathewson describes the general situation:

> Idlers, drunks, ex-convicts, alienated artists are not perhaps "typical" in the sense of the quintessential or of the average, but they are of much greater human and literary interest. Their situation on the margins of society gives the writer a vantage point from which to present society's victims or its rebels, or if he must, to point the way back to respectability.[296]

Dovlatov's marginal types are neither heroic rebels, nor pitiful victims. They distance themselves from the status of victim by constructing their own alternative realities and by preserving their personal dignity. For instance, the guard Pakhapil's reality is a walled-off world of his own, where he can proclaim his life motto –

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[294] Dovlatov, "Zona," 54.
[295] Dovlatov, "Zona,"55.
[296] Rufus Mathewson, "The Novel in Russia and the West," *Soviet Literature in the Sixties*, ed. M. Hayward and E.L. Crowley (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964) 1-18.

"Estonians must live in Canada,"[297] speak Estonian to himself, the guard dogs and anyone else, to find a place for drinking alone at the local cemetery. The author adds the final comic touch to this image of independence by granting Pakhapil' official recognition: he is rewarded by his military superiors for taking care of the soldiers' graves. That is to say, the outsider, in this case the ethnic other, is elevated to the honorable centre.

The marginal characters presented by Dovlatov reverse their marginality into centrality of some kind: Varia ("The Road To the New Apartment") reigns in her fantasy world and in reality manages to unite a group of very different, alienated men and help them to experience a feeling of spontaneous comradeship and warmth. Natella ("Blues For Natella") shines as a beauty queen during the short span of her vacation and inspires passion, poems, fights and reconciliations. A young engineer ("I Want to Be Strong") burdened by his modest existence dreams of a beautiful life, turns to boxing, but instead gains appreciation through his wit. Alikhanov (*The Zone*) defuses the threats posed by the cruelties of camp life by treating them as a subject for his writing.

Furthermore, Dovlatov's marginal heroes become almost typical, because he manages to assign eccentric qualities to all his characters: the peripheral convicts with their enormous sense of freedom, actresses and playwrights playing out their lives, Soviet Army soldiers commenting on the system like so many progressive dissidents, rival boxers who despise fighting and are concerned about each other's health, senior officers acting like romantic knights and wise humanitarians. The cumulative impact of all these and the many other eccentrics in Dovlatov's work is to portray the average person as a modern marginal hero, to insist that everyone has some element

[297] Dovlatov, "Zona," 31.

of originality and that a marginal position is arbitrary and reversible. In effect, Dovlatov destroys the whole notion of centre and periphery. He stated this goal in his interview with John Glad: "Я пытаюсь вызвать у читателя ощущение нормы"[298] [I am trying to evoke the sense of a norm in my readers].

It seems that Dovlatov was marginalized as a writer for not writing in the official Soviet manner: emotionally reserved, technically non-challenging and thematically predictable. Moreover, his main topic – eccentric but ultimately ordinary people – does not follow the Russian literary tradition where such characters typically appeared as victims of circumstances. Brodskii defined Dovlatov's characters in the following way:

> Образ человека, возникающий из его рассказов, — образ с русской литературной традицией не совпадающий и, конечно же, весьма автобиографический. Это — человек, не оправдывающий действительность или себя самого; это человек, от нее отмахивающийся.[299]
>
> The personality type that emerges in his stories does not correspond to the Russian literary tradition, and certainly is very autobiographical. This type justifies neither reality nor himself, but instead brushes this reality aside.

Dovlatov exposed marginality in a way that was not welcomed by the official canon. If the marginality of his characters had portrayed others, more than ourselves; if it had criticized instead of tolerated, it would probably have been accepted by editors. If his mavericks and outcasts had been punished and there had been a clear moral to the stories; if all his peripheral types had represented some exotic mythological caricatures rather than average contemporaries, then Dovlatov's stories could have won central acclaim because they would have permitted the reader to maintain a distance from the unruly periphery and to associate more with central

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[298] Glad, 93.
[299] Brodskii, "O Serezhe Dovlatove," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 3, 359.

values. Instead, Dovlatov moves away from depicting other people's drawbacks and misfortunes; he exposes himself together with his fellow citizens, our own merits and faults.

Только пошляки боятся середины. Чаще всего именно на Этой территории происходит самое главное...

Сергей Довлатов[300]

Only vulgar people are afraid of the middle. In most cases it is here that the most important things happen.

## Chapter 5
## CROSSING BORDERS

Perhaps one of the reasons that Sergei Dovlatov holds such fascination for the Russian public today is that he managed to turn the most severe form of marginalization – emigration - to his advantage and to become a professional writer in his adopted country.

This chapter will focus on the experience of emigration, on the dislocation experienced by an artist in search of independence and freedom. Emigration, like any form of marginalization, entails both external and internal factors. External factors include persecution by the authorities or outright expulsion from the country; internal factors govern, as always, matters of individual choice, on the socio-political level – using emigration as a form of protest against governmental control over themes and artistic techniques of creative works.[301] Russian history witnessed the exodus of many writers, artists, philosophers, scholars and critics throughout the post-

[300] Dovlatov, "Remeslo," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 2, 147.
[301] On the subject of literary exile see T. Ferraro, *Ethnic Passages: Literary Immigrants in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); P. Carter, *Living in a New Country* (London: Faber, 1992); S. Gunew, ed. *Displacements: Migrant Storytellers* (Geelong, Vic.: Deakin UP, 1981); D. Minni and A. F. Campolini, eds. *Writers in Transition* (Montreal: Guernica, 1990).

revolutionary period.[302] In the second half of the sixties and early seventies emigration became for writers an alternative to imprisonment or internal exile.[303]

Whether chosen or imposed, emigration for a writer presents the most extreme form of marginalization. Not only does the writer find himself uprooted from his homeland; he is automatically cut off from his native literary milieu, excluded from intellectual exchange with his fellow citizens and isolated from his native language environment. Émigré writers from Russia were liable to suffer the loss of the special status accorded to their profession, be it as prophet, famous bohemian writer, prosperous official writer or respected dissident. They were also evicted from the canon of Russian literature, removed from library shelves, school curricula and serious discussion in the press. Emigration places a writer on the outer edge, if not say almost beyond the Pale of his native culture. Life in another country introduces him to new facets of marginalization in the form of cultural, linguistic, professional and personal alienation. The common paths for émigré writers is writing in Russian for the Russian émigré community with no recognition in Russia (Chinnov, Berberova); changing professions (thus, Maramzin and Efimov became editors); writing in English, seeking a new readership through translation, or, in rare instances writing directly in English (Nabokov, Brodskii).

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[302] The first generation of Russian émigré writers (1917-1924) was represented by figures such as V. Nabokov, M. Aldanov, K. Bal'mont, I. Bunin, A. Kuprin, D. Merezhkovskii, A. Remizov, B. Zaitsev, V. Khodasevich and many others; after the Second World War emigration continued (K. Hoerschelmann, P. Irtel', Iu. Ivask, I. Chinnov, I. Elagin and others). In the sixties and early seventies I. Brodskii, A. Solzhenitsyn, V. Maksimov, A. Galich, V. Nekrasov, Sasha Sokolov, Iu. Mamleev, A. Gladilin and many others emigrated from the Soviet Union. See Ludmila Foster, *Bibliography of Russian Émigré Literature,* 2 vol. (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1970); Simon Karlinskii and Alfred Appel, eds., *The Bitter Air of Exile: Russian Writers in the West, 1922-1972* (Berkeley: U of California, 1977); G. Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii* (New York, 1956).

[303] See O. Matich, "Russian Literature in Emigration: A Historical Perspective on the 1970s," *The Third Wave: Russian Literature in Emigration*, eds. O. Matich and M. Heim (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984) 15-20.

Dovlatov achieved singular success as an émigré writer writing in Russian, gaining recognition in Russia, popularity in the émigré community and the respect of American literary circles.

In his émigré writings Dovlatov continued to pursue the topic of marginality. Moreover in his works about uprooted individuals (*The Compromise*, *The Foreign Woman*, *The Branch Office*, *The Invisible Book*) marginality received a new treatment. Being on the margins of society is shown first as an interim solution, a compromise, and later as a fresh start toward reaching out for success. Marginality no longer presents the binary, linear, and in the final analysis, static opposition of centre and margins. Rather, it gains a multidimensional dynamic by embracing the interstitial zone, a revitalized margin between constantly shifting centres and forever redefined peripheries.

Sergei Dovlatov underwent emigration after having been perceived as exotic in his native country and subjected to the exclusionary practices of the Soviet literary establishment. Despite the obvious drawbacks of cultural and linguistic alienation, outside of his own country the émigré has the opportunity to consider his own position both within and outside his native culture, and to observe those who were seen as strangers in his homeland. That is, the marginal position of an emigrant or expatriate could benefit a writer. According to Edward Brown, an émigré writer develops a particular consciousness in which "mixed images of home and abroad have the effect of defamiliarizing – of making strange in Shklovskii's sense – both the experience of exile life and memories of home."[304] The advantages of such a position include the possibility of developing a sharp, fresh perception of the new reality, a critical perspective on one's previous life experience and cultural

[304] E. Brown, "The Exile Experience," *The Third Wave: Russian Literature in Emigration*, 53.

stereotyping, as well as a taste for exploring diversity and enjoying the freedom of foreigners.[305]

Dovlatov experienced emigration twice: first, upon moving to Tallinn in 1973, when the Baltic republics served Soviet citizens as a substitute for the West. Geographically Tallinn was more remote from the official centre of Moscow; historically the Baltic republics had their own, more western culture. They were also more 'western' in the twentieth-century late-Soviet culture sense, more capitalist because they had been more rcently annexed to the Soviet Union (1940). For Dovlatov this move was a conscious decision in order to obtain a measure of artistic freedom. His wife Elena Dovlatova explained:

> Все виды искусства вместе с работой преподавательской считались «идеологическими» и должны были быть санкционированы соответствующими органами и организациями. Бытовало мнение, что давление этих организаций слабее на территориях двуязычных, где существовали литературы общегосударственная, то есть на русском языке, и национальная. В расчете на то, что в Эстонии все-таки дальше от так называемого центра, от Москвы и Ленинграда, и, соответственно, Эстонская секция Союза писателей там главная, а русская второстепенная, Довлатов поехал в Таллин.[306]
>
> All forms of art, and teaching jobs as well, were regarded as "ideological" and had to be sanctioned by certain organs and organizations. The prevailing view was that the pressure exerted by these organizations was lighter in bilingual territories, where there existed a state literature – in the Russian language – and a national one. Dovlatov went to Tallinn in view of the fact that Estonia is further away from the so-called centre, that is Moscow and Leningrad, and accordingly the Estonian division of the Writers' Union is the chief one there, while the Russian division is the subordinate one.

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[305] S. Castillo makes use of an analogous concept '*Auslanderfreiheit*' [freedom of foreigners] implying tolerance toward foreigners, which allows them to break conventions on the grounds of ignorance or misunderstanding of local mores. See Castillo, 94.

[306] Elena Dovlatova, "Po doroge v N'iu-Iork," *Sergei Dovlatov: tvorchestvo, lichnost', sud'ba,* ed. A. Ar'ev (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Zvezda", 1999) 106.

In other words, in his search for artistic freedom Dovlatov settled upon peripheral experiences. *The Compromise* (1981) is the novella in which Dovlatov describes his life on the periphery of Russian society in Estonia, and his work on the periphery of literature - in journalism. The title itself is symbolic primarily because of reference to the journalistic profession, since journalists were forced to compromise their convictions in order to promote the official doctrine in covering the news, i.e. the late Soviet 'era of stagnation' enforced lipservice to the ideological 'simulacrum.'[307] The title is also emblematic with regard to the lives of many Soviet people, pressed to live in an atmosphere of mental duplicity, compromising personal belief in favour of state policy.

Dovlatov characterizes the atmosphere of the periphery as mild:

> Вообще обстановка была тогда сравнительно либеральной. В Прибалтике — особенно.[308]
>
> Generally speaking, the atmosphere then was comparatively liberal. Particularly in the Baltics.

In *The Compromise* Tallinn society is presented as diverse, but nevertheless the two poles – center and periphery - are easily recognized. There are also marginal characters who occupy the territory on the border between the centre and the periphery.

The official centre is populated by local Communist Party officials and editors-in-chief. A certain Turonok is described as a "елейный, марципановый человек; [т]ип застенчивого негодяя."[309] [An unctuous, marzipan man; a type of

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[307] The term, used by Epstein, defines "a simulated copy of reality that had lost all reference to the original." See Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*, trans. and ed. Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1995) 8, 189-97.

[308] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, 286.

[309] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," 177.

bashful scoundrel]. There too we find official writers, scientists and doctors: "[п]олноценные, хорошо зарабатывающие люди" [well-paid full-fledged people]).

By contrast, Dovlatov places on the periphery such nonconformists as creative artists, who oppose the official culture, devote themselves to artistic interests and earn a hand-to-mouth living by means of odd jobs. When Dovlatov the character and his friend look for a job at the central boiler-house ("Compromise Ten"), they find members of the Tallinn bohemian community there: a Zen-Buddhist, an avant-garde artist and a theorist of new alternative music. As a result, wildly the eccentric character Bush concludes that the place is not a boiler-room, but the University of Sorbonne.[310] This example appears in parallel with the immediately preceding generation's comments in camp literature (Shalamov, Solzhenitsyn, Ginzburg), where prisons and camps were often compared to symposia of the intelligentsia. In the sixties creative non-conformists populated such peripheral hideaways as boiler-rooms and stoke-houses.

The margins between the two poles of official and non-official are haunted by some illusive figures. For example, the text hints at the emergence of a new generation with a different and challenging mind-set. Thus, in conversation with a doctor he has interviewed, Dovlatov the journalist supports neither the powers–that-be, nor the new independence movement:

> Я понизил голос, спросил доверительно и конспиративно:
> — Дело Солдатова?
> — Что?— не понял доктор.
> — Ваш сын — деятель Эстонского возрождения?
> — Мой сын, — отчеканил Тенне,— фарцовщик и пьяница. И я могу быть за него относительно спокоен, лишь когда его держат в тюрьме.[311]

[310] See Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," 285.
[311] Dovlatov, "Kompromis," 200.

> I lowered my voice, and asked in a confidential and secret tone: "The Soldatov affair?" "What?" the doctor did not understand. "Is your son a member of Estonian revival movement?" "My son, "Teppe said crisply, "is a black marketeer and a drunk. And I can only stop worrying about him when he is in prison."

This quote contains the narrator's irony of bohemian lifestyles and position, when vodka, drugs and black market activity were symbols of confrontation with the authorities.

A similar attitude emerges in the introduction of his other friends' rebellious son who lives like an underground revolutionary or illegal immigrant:

> Сын — таинственная личность. Шесть лет уклоняется от воинской повинности. Шесть лет симулирует попеременно — неврозы, язву желудка и хронический артрит. Превзошел легендарного революционера Камо. За эти годы действительно стал нервным, испортил желудок и приобрел хронический артрит. Что касается медицинских знаний, то Игорь давно оставил позади любого участкового врача. Кроме того, разбирается в джазе и свободно говорит по-английски.[312]
>
> The son is a mysterious person. For six years he has dodged military service. For six years he has been alternately faking neurosis, a stomach ulcer and chronic arthritis. He went further than the legendary revolutionary *Kamo*. Over the years he has indeed become nervous, ruined his stomach and acquired arthritis. As for his medical knowledge, Igor' has left your local general practitioner way behind. Besides, he knows jazz and speaks English fluently.

Most of the characters in *The Compromise* can be perceived as marginal: the author's close friends; the drunken photographer Zhbankov; the three journalists who, in opposition to the majority of their colleagues, do not call themselves "Золотое перо республики"[313] [the golden pen of the Republic] – Shablinskii, Klenskii and Dovlatov; the young adventuress Alla Meleshko. The most eccentric of them is Erik

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[312] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," 223.
[313] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," 182.

Bush ("Compromise Ten"). He is characterized as «нечто фантастическое»[314] [something fantastic], «космический пришелец»[315] [visitor from outer space], «двойственная личность»[316] [ambiguous personality], «диссидент и красавец, шизофреник, поэт и герой, возмутитель спокойствия»[317] [dissident and handsome man, schizophrenic and hero, trouble-maker]. Bush's tale was first released as a separate story titled "Lishnii" [A Superfluous Man].[318] According to Sukhikh:

> Заглавие явно намекает на литературную традицию, напоминает о «лишнем человеке» русской классики. Но по дороге из девятнадцатого века в двадцатый, от Тургенева к Довлатову «лишний» — иной породы, чем «лишние люди» Тургенева или Гончарова. Любовная игра тех персонажей (русский человек на rendez-vous) трансформировалась в роковое воздействие на стареющих женщин. Их высокое безделье —в газетную поденщину. Идеологический пафос — в «абсолютную беспринципность», сочетающую отчаянное диссиденство, мятежность натуры с рабской покорностью и игрой по правилам.[319]
>
> The title obviously alludes to literary tradition, recalling the superfluous man of the Russian classics. But along the road from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, from Turgenev to Dovlatov, the "superfluous man" moved away from Turgenev's or Goncharov's "superfluous" people. The love plot embracing this type (a Russian at the rendez-vous) was transformed into the fatal impact he had upon aging women. Their high-minded idleness turned into newspaper hack-work. Ideological pathos became "an absolute lack of principles," which combines desperate non-conformism and a rebellious nature with slavish obedience and playing by the rules.

Like the traditional superfluous hero, Bush is anti-social; he does not do anything productive or creative. He lacks integrity and purpose. Not only does he lack the ability to undertake, much less to initiate concrete action; he does not even

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[314] Ibid, 268.
[315] Ibid, 270.
[316] Ibid, 273.
[317] Ibid, 296.
[318] For the first publication see "Lishnii," *Grani* 135 (1985): 11- 20.
[319] Sukhikh, *Sergei Dovlatov: Vremia, mesto, sud'ba*, 140.

aspire towards professional or personal fulfillment. It seems that the transformation of the superfluous man of nineteenth-century literature into Dovlatov's Soviet marginal person might indicate Hemingway's influence. Bush gives the impression of a foreigner: his name could be American or German, he has American looks ("мужественное лицо американского киногероя»[320] [the masculine face of an American movie-actor]). With telling irony Dovlatov shows how a Russian superman who smokes American cigarettes, walks with a Parker-pen in his jacket pocket, and more than anything praises Western freedom, becomes a toy-boy of sorts, sponging on older women. In a way this transformation parodies Hemingway's characters (Jake Barnes or David Bourne), or rather the euphoria and passion for the West which had outlived itself by the beginning of the seventies. Society had by that point become all too conscious of the constraints imposed by state policy, with which it now collaborated by sheer inertia. That is why a character like Bush may be said to personify the frustrated hope for change once held by the generation of the sixties, and the subsequent degradation of the defeated non-conformists. In his image Soviet anti-intellectualism is transformed into unadorned ignorance. Similarly, inaction as a form of protest develops into an all-encompassing life principle; affected cynicism becomes genuine. Bush takes advantage of women, neglects his obligations at work, readily compromises his convictions in order to win back his full-time job. In this state of amorphous protest he goes so far as to attack his boss's wife at a party. Indeed, his actions follow the motto "Пускай кругом бардак [...] Свобода — мой девиз, мой фетиш, мой кумир!"[321] [ Let there be bedlam everywhere... Freedom is my motto, my fetish, and my idol!]. This marginal character is intelligent enough to realize his powerlessness vis-à-vis the state, but reacts with uneasy and unwilling resignation. That is why Bush dissembles rather than acts constructively to the point

[320] Dovlatov, "Kompromis," 270.
[321] Ibid, 271.

of destroying himself. He is sensitive to others and supports them, but wastes himself on absurd gestures of protest. The narrator seems to be used to the type. He remarks:

> Кроме того, человеческое безумие — это еще не самое ужасное. С годами оно для меня все более приближается к норме. А норма становится чем-то противоестественным.[322]
>
> Besides, human insanity is not the most awful thing. Over the years it has come to my way of thinking closer and closer to the norm. And the norm has become something that is unnatural.

In effect, margins and centre interact and disperse each other: it is no longer obvious what constitutes the centre and represents the norm - spontaneous eccentrics with their irrational sincerity, or self-compromising "normals." The author claims:

> В этой повести нет ангелов и нет злодеев ... Нет грешников и праведников нет. Да и в жизни их тоже не существует.[323]
>
> There are no angels and no villains in this novella. There are no sinners and no righteous men. Nor do they exist in real life.

This remark merges centre and periphery. The key feature which unites these poles in the novella is the ability for endless compromise. The author seems to ridicule this knack and justify it at the same time. In fact, he places himself as a character – the journalist Dovlatov – among central and peripheral figures in order to link all of the characters together and to show the perspective of each of the poles. Dovlatov the character, though residing on marginal grounds (he is an anti-hero: perpetually criticized by his bosses, apparently inclined to drink, confused, absolutely unsettled in personal life) moves easily from margin to centre and back again. Thus, he is treated as part of the Party establishment when he travels as a correspondent for a local paper to one of the collective farms to write a report to Brezhnev ("Compromise Eight"), or when he speaks on behalf of the newspaper at the funeral

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[322] Ibid, 271.
[323] Ibid, 182.

of a city official ("Compromise Eleven"). In the moral compromises he faces, his demeanour is cold, remote and unperturbed. At the same time, he often calls himself a "cynic" who is aware of the compromises he makes and pretends to wear a temporary mask of cynicism. He lives between two worlds (official and dissident or bohemian) without fully belonging to either. On the one hand, he befriends peripheral characters (the alcoholic underground writer Alikhanov, the idealistic journalist Lida, the unfortunate Cambridge graduate Bykover, his "criminal" brother and others) but does not identify with them, because he himself never exerts himself to challenge anything or to contribute to either society or art. On the other hand, although Dovlatov's alter-ego is very close to the literary powers-that-be (he even admits the affinity between his editor-in-chief and himself in a comic episode of mending his boss's trousers),[324] he does not recognize their central values. His position is truly ambiguous – he tries neither to distance himself from the periphery, nor to move closer to the centre. He plays his game on the margins between the two worlds, exercising in each the prerogative of foreigners or outsiders. His role of a newcomer from Leningrad to Tallinn and to the newspaper gives him the freedom to observe an alien environment from a fresh perspective, to see himself in the new setting as if through a stranger's eyes, to maintain a safe distance from unfamiliar structures and to redefine himself as someone with no past or reputation. Taking up this freedom he notes:

> В журналистике каждому разрешается делать что-то одно. В чем-то одном нарушать принципы социалистической морали. То есть одному разрешается пить. Другому — хулиганить. Третьему — рассказывать политические анекдоты. Четвертому — быть евреем. Пятому — беспартийным. Шестому — вести аморальную жизнь. И так далее. Но каждому, повторяю, дозволено что-то одно. Нельзя быть одновременно евреем и пьяницей. Хулиганом и беспартийным...Я же был пагубно универсален. То есть разрешал себе всего понемногу.[325]

[324] See Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," 231-36.
[325] Dovlatov, "Kompromiss," 269.

> In journalism everyone is allowed to do one thing. Just in one aspect to violate the principles of the socialist moral. That is, one is allowed to drink. Another – to behave like a hooligan. A third guy – to tell political jokes. A fourth – to be Jewish. A fifth – not to belong to the party. A sixth to indulge in amoral conduct. And so forth. But each, I repeat, is allowed only one infraction. It is not permitted to be a Jew and a drunk at the same time. A hooligan and not a party member.. I was ruinously universal. That is, I allowed myself a little bit of everything.

Thus, Dovlatov the correspondent aspires to freedom in Tallinn, but finds himself in a setting far from idyllic. What is revealed throughout the novella (for example, the episodes involving the newborn "jubilee" citizen in "Compromise Five," the interview with an Estonian milk-woman in "Compromise Eight," a brief affair with a young Komsomol functionary in "Compromise Eight") is that Dovlatov's protagonist, as many others, adopts the system of compromises. These compromises successfully substitute for an assertion of independence and exposure of individuality. Compromising becomes his marginal territory, his safety zone.

Coming to Tallinn, Dovlatov's protagonist experienced dislocation. He tries to fit in to the new environment, to find his own place, as always balancing between the two goals on the shaky grounds of compromise. His reactions to the surroundings might indicate hypocrisy, though with a feeling of shame. There are many bitter exclamations and rhetorical questions proving the inner discomfort which the hero experiences:

> И вообще, что мы за люди такие?[326]
>
> And generally speaking, what kind of people are we?
>
> И как глупо сложилась жизнь![327]
>
> How stupidly life has turned out.

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[326] Ibid, 191.
[327] Ibid, 202.

> Что я мог ответить? Объяснить, что нет у меня дома, родины, пристанища, жилья? ...[328]
>
> What could I say? Explain that I have no home, no motherland, no refuge, no fixed address?
>
> А я все думал — зачем? Куда и зачем я еду? Что меня ожидает? И до чего же глупо складывается жизнь! ...[329]
>
> But I kept thinking – what for? Where am I going and what for? What awaits me? And what a stupid turn life is taking!

The marginal position of Dovlatov the character in *The Compromise* is noteworthy. In the first place, it offers a vision of two different worlds – the centre and the periphery, both geographical and cultural. Secondly, it illustrates the position of an entire generation on the margins of Soviet society. They look for a niche in life, either on the periphery (bohemia), or between the official centre and its peripheral opposition - that is, in the "compromise" zone. Finally, Dovlatov's presentation of marginality does not claim centrality (validity) for his views or actions (or rather inaction), but attempts to cope with the situation and juggle two different ways of living and looking at the world.

*Иностранка* [The Foreign Woman, 1986] is the work in which Dovlatov deals with his second experience of dislocation, this time emigration to the United States of America. Once again the writer took the opportunity to exercise the freedom of marginality in his own life and in his fiction. The reasons for his emigration are not discussed in the novel, but mentioned indirectly:

> Во-первых это было модно. Почти у каждого мыслящего человека хранился израильский паспорт.[330]
>
> First, it was trendy. Almost every thinking person kept an Israeli passport.

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[328] Ibid, 254.
[329] Ibid, 267.
[330] Ibid, 30.

> В эмиграции было что-то нереальное. Что-то, напоминающее идею загробной жизни. То есть можно было пытаться начать все сначала. Избавиться от бремени прошлого.[331]
>
> There was something unreal in emigration. Something that recalls the idea of the afterlife. That is, it was possible to try to start all over again. To shed the burden of the past.

In describing emigration, Sergei Dovlatov took full advantage of his outsider's perspective. His preference for Western values such as independence and respect for individuality helped him to identify with American culture. His rejection of both positive and negative absolutes can be understood to refer to the relationship between centre and margins. It explains why he does not use his peripheral position of an immigrant to contrast the two countries – America and Russia – along the conventional lines of superior to inferior or civilized to uncivilized. Instead he depicts, with subtlety and humour, the ridiculous and admirable, demeaning and graceful aspects he observes in both cultures. Thus, the image of the Russia he left behind is stripped of high symbolism and serious emotion. Russian emigrants do not display patriotism or nostalgia for their former homeland. On the contrary, their attitude towards Russia is comical, even unceremoniously derisive:

> Не я покидаю Россию! Это Россия покидает меня. Я уношу Россию На подошвах сапог.[332]
>
> It is not me who abandons Russia. It is Russia who abandons me. I am carrying Russia on the soles of my boots.
>
> О, Маша! Ты — как сама Россия! Оскверненная монголами, изнасилованная большевиками, ты чудом сохранила девственность!...[333]
>
> Oh, Masha! You are like Russia herself! Profaned by the Mongols, raped by the Bolsheviks, you preserved your virginity by a miracle.

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[331] Ibid, 30.
[332] Dovlatov, "Inostranka," *Sergei Dovlatov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 3, 12.
[333] Dovlatov, "Inostranka,"46.

Марусь! Ты любишь Русь?![334]

Masha! Do you love Russia?

Life in the United States is also treated with mockery. This attitude appears in the description of the Russian community in New York. Thus, the Russian immigrants living on the periphery of American society establish their own centre, borders and customs:

> Местных жителей у нас считают чем-то вроде иностранцев. Если мы слышим английскую речь, то настораживаемся. В таких случаях мы убедительно просим: —Говорите по-русски! В результате отдельные местные жители заговорили по-нашему.[335]
>
> The local people here are considered something foreign. If we hear English spoken, we prick up our ears. In cases like this, we insist: "Speak Russian!" As a result some local individuals have begun speaking our language.

Dovlatov notes one of the paradoxes of emigration - whereby emigrants are both seen to be and themselves see the 'locals' as peculiar. This perception suggests some of the national prejudices of the periphery (the Russian émigré community), which combine both rejection of and yearning for the centre:

> К американцам мы испытываем сложное чувство. Даже не знаю, чего в нем больше — снисходительности или благоговения. Мы их жалеем, как неразумных беспечных детей. Однако то и дело повторяем: «Мне сказал один американец...»[336]
>
> We have complicated feelings towards Americans. I am not sure what prevails there – condescension or reverence. We pity them, as if they were foolish, carefree children. Still we keep repeating: "An American told me..."

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[334] Ibid, 47.
[335] Ibid, 7.
[336] Ibid, 8.

In his description Dovlatov deals with certain stereotypes, some of which he supports: "Нью-Йорк был для Маруси происшествием, концертом, зрелищем."[337] [New York for Marusia was an event, a concert, and a spectacle].

> Но мы в чужой стране. Языка практически не знаем. В законах ориентируемся слабо. К оружию не привыкли. А тут у каждого второго — пистолет. Если не бомба...[338]
>
> But we are in a foreign country. We practically do not know the language. We don't know our way around the laws. We are not used to weapons. And here every second person has a gun. If not a bomb...

Some other myths he ridicules, contradicting, perhaps, the most common Soviet attacks on racial tensions in the United States:

> Чернокожих в Америке давно уже не линчуют. Теперь здесь все наоборот.[339]
>
> Blacks in the States have not been lynched in a long time. Now the tables are turned.

Dovlatov not only demolishes the prevailing stereotypes, but also blurs the distinction between the existing centre (American) and the periphery (émigré). He mocks what his characters (fellow Russian émigrés) see as a monolithic American group (white, middle-class Anglo-Saxons) by mapping out the ethnic diversity of New York. He shows that nobody is perfect: the representatives of the centre appear far from ideal, while his fellow countrymen, as periphral types, are often made to look ridiculous.

The key theme of this novella is life on the margins of an alien society. That is why the writer emphasizes:

> Я жил не в Америке. Я жил в русской колонии.[340]
>
> I did not live in America. I lived in a Russian colony.

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[337] Ibid, 39.
[338] Ibid, 56.
[339] Ibid, 43.
[340] Ibid, 50.

The population of this colony consists of eccentric characters – a former artist who specialized in portraits of Molotov, an old-time dissident, author of the book *Sex Under Totalitarianism*, the mysterious social activist Lemkus, the apathetic movie director Lerner and many others. Each in his own way challenged the conventions in Russia, prompting emigration to the United States. In America they seem to lead lives full of fantastic adventure and absurdity. Money comes easily to the couch-bound Lerner: an insurance payment for having been bitten by a dentist's dog, his father's old loan with phenomenally accumulated interest, a substantial inheritance from an acquaintance. The dissident Karavaev misses the familiar security of Soviet structures, including their repressive measures. The sex theoretician spends his time teaching everyone and everything – religion, democracy and conspiracy theories. These types oppose the regular mode of living in America as well. They have no regular employment, criticize American practices, keep to themselves and to the Russian community without trying to integrate.

The characters who represent a real challenge to the cultural and social norms of both centre and the periphery are Marusia [Maria] and Rafael' [Raphael]. Marusia's image inverts the well-known stereotype of 'the girl from a good family,' in terms of the present argument, someone established by birth in the centre. Although she was brought up in a comfortable Soviet home and did the 'right' things, such as having studied hard, obtained a University degree in the arts, visited theatres and museums, acquired a proper circle of friends and admirers, and married a suitable young man, she was not consistent in being 'good.' Her love for a Jewish intellectual, challenge to traditional morality by entering into a common-law relationship, objection to the system in reading and distributing forbidden literature, and finally emigration to the United States made Marusia marginal in her homeland.

In the States she does not easily fit in the émigré community either. The author remarks: "Я быстро понял, что она не создана для коллектива"[341] [I quickly realized that she was unfit to be part of a collective].

Thus, she can be insensitive towards her colleagues, avoid participating in émigré activities and, finally, outrage the Russian community by falling in love with a man of Latin-American origin. Although everything that happens to Marusia seems to be a matter of pure chance, she nonetheless appears to retain her emotional autonomy, never admitting to any sense of abnormality. Marusia asserts her own identity by refusing the ready-made patterns of peripheral life, by exercising her freedom. The lover she chooses is almost an ephemeral person:

> Рафаэль материализовался из общего чувства неустойчивости. Из ощущения праздника, беды, успеха, неудачи, катастрофической феерии.[342]
>
> Rafael' materialized from the common feeling of instability. From the sense of celebration, of trouble, success, failure and catastrophic magic.

Rafael' is a local man (who could be regarded as centre-affiliated with respect to the new Russian émigrés' peripheral position); his numerous relatives live and own businesses in New York. Yet, from the point of view of the real 'centre' of American society (white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) Rafael' with his Latin-American origins is marginal. He stands out among his fellow Americans: he is a socialist by conviction, a free-spirited wanderer with no fixed job or occupation and a romantic admirer of Russian women. Rafael' is an attractive character, in spite of his ignorance (he is convinced that the October Revolution was headed by the partisan Tolstoi who later commemorated his impressions in *The Gulag Archipelago*). The narrator reveals an affinity with Rafael' in the balance of lyrical tone and aloof posture.

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[341] Ibid, 51.
[342] Ibid, 53.

*The Foreign Woman* marks a turning point in Dovlatov's presentation of marginality. In this novella the centre (former Soviet respectable citizens or regular 'decent Americans') is barely present; the plot revolves exclusively around the peripheral characters. While some central types are mentioned briefly in passing (for example Marusia's parents back in Russia), they are treated entirely without negative colouring; gone is the marked opposition between central and peripheral characters. Characters in the centre (Marusia's parents, Soviet embassy officials, the 'exemplary' couple of Fima and Lora) are sketched with friendly tolerance, soft humour - that is, in the same manner as the peripheral characters.

Moreover, all the characters in *The Foreign Woman* emerge in short colourful jokes (*anekdoty*). In this technique Dovlatov follows the classic tradition of Russian story-telling.[343] The genre of the short form and the discourse of humorous anecdotes annul the distance between the narrator and the reader. This method not only brings the two realities of life and fiction, truth and fantasy, closer; it also encompasses a new treatment of literary characters. Dovlatov's character sketches blend together real people (Dovlatov himself, his family members, friends, colleagues, opponents) and fictional types. All of the characters are as real as their actual prototypes, all exist in the same dimension. What is more, while it is possible to categorize characters in three groups (central, peripheral and marginal, where marginal is an intermidiate group between centre and periphery), their anecdotal representation serves to eliminate the distinctions between them, in effect to erase the marginal. On the whole, all the characters, while preserving their individuality, reach out for universality. This could be attributed to the anecdotal technique described above,

[343]See Leonid Grossman, *Etudy o Pushkine* (Moscow: L. D. Frenkel', 1923) 39-75;
Sukhikh, *Problemy poetiki Chekhova* (Leningrad: Isdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1987).

where the accent shifts from "factual to psychological truth."[344] What emerges is a psychological equivalence and universality of characters – an erasure of normal / abnormal, local / foreign, central / peripheral.

In sum, Dovlatov's representations of himself, his colleagues and friends, as well as émigré women and men, go far beyond the centralizing stereotypes of his time. He managed to use his inner freedom and marginal perspective to find his own space (through his writing, his diverse characters) in a world of decentered cultural, social and political convictions, to contribute to the erasure of centrality and marginality, to promote the priority of humanity, diversity and tolerance.

[344] Efim Kurganov, "Sergei Dovlatov i liniia anekdota v russkoi proze," in Sergei Dovlatov: *Tvorchestvo, lichnost' sud'ba*, 208-23.

## Conclusion

Marginality, Dovlatov's field of expertise, turns out to be a complex and elusive phenomenon that plays both a positive and negative role in the process of artistic creation. It enjoys little permanence in a writer's life, as well as in the reception of his works. Themes and characters that appear marginal at one time and place may be considered mainstream at another.

The concept of marginality is closely linked with the culture and socio-political context in which the author resides, be it his home-culture or that of his country-of-emigration. For example, look at the lives and works of the young Leningrad writers of the sixties. In the context of St. Petersburg / Leningrad's oppositional role vis-à-vis other Russian cities and official Moscow culture, these writers represent an alternative artistic tradition whose work has been neglected and relegated to the margins of twentieth-century Russian literature. The specific situation that prevailed in Leningrad during the mid-sixties through the seventies was greatly responsible for the alternative stance to the Soviet way of life and writing taken by these artists at that particular time. The assertion of artistic independence by these young writers clashed fiercely with the rigid control that 'official' Leningrad culture exerted over literature. This climate meant their innovations were not accepted, and forced them to seek refuge in small private writers' circles and to express themselves using the intimate mode cultivated in their prose. According to Efimov:

> И от этой ситуации большей безнадежности, большей зажатости цензурой, может быть у них выработался стиль чуть более камерный, чуть более сосредоточенный

> на внутреннем мире человека, более внимательный к мелочам психологического состояния.[345]
>
> And from this situation of greater hopelessness, heavier censorship limitations, they developed a bit more of a chamber style, slightly more focused on the inner world of a person and more sensitive to psychological details.

The alternative stance of Leningrad writers to Soviet official literature was expressed in the apolitical nature of their art, as well as in the quest for new aesthetic principles at a stylistic level (brevity, compression, precision and humorous effects) and a thematic level (private topics, average people as marginal literary characters). The writers recast their own life-roles by envisioning themselves as hermits and outcasts.

In their pursuit of originality and independence, these young Leningrad writers distanced themselves from the general public, preferring to experiment with their work within the confines of elite literary groups. In other words, they exercised self-marginalization by withdrawing from their careers, regular jobs and families, and by writing only for sophisticated readers like themselves. Due to their withdrawal and non-conformity with the rules and standards of the rest of society, they were further marginalized – their work was rejected and they became isolated as individuals.

On the other hand, however, the young Leningrad writers sought recognition nonetheless. In order to be successful they had to become part of the mainstream, that is, to reach a more general audience and to be published by respectable journals. These writers did try to cross over the borders of their marginal milieu in order to secure a foothold within the establishment. When their works were barred from publication by the conservative ideology and taste of state editorial boards, they

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[345] Glad, *Besedy v izgnanii*, 294.

circulated their works both in *samizdat* and *tamizdat,* which were still limited ways of contacting even a marginal audience.

Thus, marginalization involved a complex interplay and interdependence between internal and external factors for the Leningrad writers of the sixties. Herrnstein Smith singles out the decisive role of external marginalization. Here, the status of a literary work does not depend on the aesthetic qualities of the text itself, but rather on its relation to the ideological positions held by an individual writer at a given historical moment.[346] This may be said of the Leningrad writers' hermitic role in Soviet literature of the sixties and seventies. Marginalization condemned them to relative obscurity practices throughout most of their active lives in the Soviet Union, where their works were regarded as irrelevant and unworthy. Nevertheless, their internal marginalization and their devotion to alternative artistic practices ensure their place in history. It is the internal aspect, such as the inventive nature of prose by Goliavkin, Vakhtin, Gubin, Maramzin, Popov and others, that helped subvert the current canon (oriented towards Socialist Realism and centered on Moscow literature). If, as Bloom contends, "[a]ll strong literary originality becomes canonical,"[347] eventually these 'writers-on-the-margins' may acquire the status of known and respected masters of the Leningrad school, which is now becoming known as a major actor in the 'big picture' of late twentieth-century Russian literature.

Are the Leningrad writers of the sixties winning increased acceptance as canonical writers now that the power structures and taste of the central cultural elite have changed? As Bloom suggests, "once we view [the canon] as the relationship of

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[346] Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives of Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988) 20-30.
[347] Bloom, 25.

an individual reader and writer to what has been preserved out of what has been written,"[348] and so full-fledged canonization has yet to come to the Leningrad writers. Since only forty years passed since their most creative period, it is still relatively early for canon formation.

In the meantime, the status of marginal writing has already begun to change. In the West, texts produced by those who were traditionally considered marginal (such as women and ethnic minorities, among others) have increased in number. Russian literature in the post-Soviet period became more open, even to the extent of admitting the writing of former dissidents (Ginzburg, Solzhenitsyn), Russian émigrés (Nabokov, Zaitsev, Berberova, Siniavskii, Voinovich) and post–avant-garde writers (Viktor Erofeev, Kabakov) into its realm. It welcomed new genres such as the detective novels of Marinina or Malysheva, *chernukha*,[349] muck-raking on contemporary, everyday themes (Kaledin and Gabyshev, for example), and sado-erotic literature by Sorokin. The writer who made the most dramatic about-turn from marginal to mainstream is Sergei Dovlatov.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, marginality can be regarded the single most important unifying factor in Dovlatov's career and art. He started out as an atypical writer situated on the margins between official literature and dissident literature, between Russian classics and American moderns. Throughout his career, he mediated between cultures and generations. With Dovlatov, the external aspect of marginality can be clearly construed from his life story, his exclusion from official Soviet literature, his harassment by the KGB, his legend as created by his friends and colleagues, and lastly, his emigration to the United States. Emigration, the last and most debilitating stage in the external development of marginality, became in fact the

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[348] Bloom, 17.

[349] This term means writing based on horrifying descriptions of everyday Soviet life.

first step in his remarkable turnaround, to his most significant contributions to the literature of marginalization. It transported him from one marginalizing reality to another. In that new reality, though, he was able to overcome the rejection caused by external factors. But it was the internal aspect of marginality that helped him to achieve popularity. As soon as Dovlatov let his voice be heard by the public, he found himself listened to and appreciated. Apart from the unique qualities of his prose that are so valued by connoisseurs and literary specialists, his writings carry phenomenal appeal to the broader reading public, both Russian and American. It seems that in Russia, the general atmosphere of mistrust of anything official and local (politicians, writers, traditional characters) draws readers to the 'odd man out', as they can relate very well with these marginal experiences, themes, characters and mode of expression. According to Genis:

> To be able to see everything, to be able to understand everything, to disagree about everything, not to try to change anything – this is a philosophy of life the Russian reader had not encountered before. That is perhaps why readers respond with such warm attachment to Dovlatov – he makes no demands on them. The most enchanting facet of Dovlatov is the unassuming nature of his revelations. The main thing he reveals is the fact that in a world that appears superfluous to itself, there is room only for a superfluous hero.[350]

What is called "superfluous" by Genis is what has been called 'marginal' in this study. In Dovlatov's art everyone is marginal, the world itself is marginal, a place where marginality becomes a normal phase of life. Dovlatov's approach to marginality itself is unusual, in its tolerance, sympathy and humour. It is expressed in an unpretentious, conversational and light style that is appropriate for the end of the twentieth century. Epstein characterizes the atmosphere of the end of the century as

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[350] Alexander Genis, "Paradigms of Contemporary Culture," in Mikhail Epstein, Alexander Genis, Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover, *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999) 415.

filled with "a new kind of seriousness that tests itself on laughter."[351] The nature of this laughter is different; it is gentle and quiet, not explosive. Epstein suggests that " the twenty-first century will acquire a taste for thoughtfulness, quiet meditation and delicate melancholy,"[352] and this in turn will mean greater use of kind humour, of light and happy laughter. Then, we may conclude, the time will come to recognize and appreciate not only Dovlatov, who became a model for the sixties generation and for current immigrant authors, but for his Leningrad fellow writers and poets as well.

The results of this study open up many avenues for future research into Dovlatov's life and work, as well further explorations of the Leningrad school of writing. For example, it would be very interesting to compare Moscow and Leningrad literature of the same period, or make more detailed analogies between particular Leningrad and American writers. The question of the characteristic quality of Dovlatov's humour, as well as his unique treatment of the immigrant experience, both point the way towards more in-depth study of the impact of multicultural experiences on the evolution of a writer's art, since, according to Sollors, "multiculturalism has taken on an undreamed of centrality in literary and cultural studies, and the aesthetic expression of minority groups now has a global circulation."[353] In these terms, Dovlatov's works might represent a voyage through the postmodern landscape of the Post - Cold - War Period; a journey from enforced homogeneity and the corresponding struggle for difference to a context that permits greater heterogeneity and the celebration of the author's identity. Given these possibilities, and looking back over the issues raised by this study, the interplay between the artist's social context and the evolution of his notion of marginality

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[351] Mikhail Epstein, "Charms of Entropy," in Epstein, Genis and Vladiv-Glover, 448.
[352] Ibid.
[353] See Werner Sollors, afterword, *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text*, 151.

throughout his artistic career, suggests that this multi-faceted author will remain of interest to scholars and the general reading public for many years to come.

# Appendix A

## Glossary of names

This glossary includes the names of those authors who belonging to the circles of the young writers and poets of the sixties. Also included are authors are who belonged to the older generation (30s-50s), but who were influential on the literary scene of the 1960s and 70s.

BAKINSKII, VICTOR A well-known prose writer, Bakinskii was the head of a literary studio in Leningrad. He published mainly in Leningrad – *The Day Will Come* (1960), *Signs of the Labyrinth* (1968), *The Story of Four Brothers* (1971).

BERGOL'TS, OLGA 1910-1975 A Leningrad poet influenced by Akhmatova and known for her war poems – *Leningrad Notebook*. Her poems were widely known in *samizdat*. During the years of Great Terror (1936-38) she was arrested together with her husband, poet Boris Kornilov. Kornilov was shot, Bergol'ts, pregnant at the time, was badly beaten and lost her baby. In the sixties she attracted the compassion of the young poets of Leningrad, as drunken madonna of Leningrad.

BITOV, ANDREI b. 1937 A Leningrad prose writer who is associated with the young generation of the sixties. His stories appeared in numerous journals; his books include *The Big Ball* (1963), *Druggists' Island* (1968), *A Way of Life* (1972), *The Pushkin House* (1978).

BOBYSHEV, DMITRII b. 1936 A poet who belonged to a group of young lyric poets (Brodskii, Rein, Neiman) personally encouraged by Akhmatova. He first published his work in the *samizdat* journal *Sintaksis*. His poetry is metaphysical. Among his works *Ziianiia: Sbornik stikhotvorenii i poemy* (Paris, 1979), poems in *Kontinent*, *Vestnik*, *Ekho*, *Vremia i my*.

BRODSKII, IOSSIF 1940-1992 The most significant Russian poet of the end of the twentieth century, winner of the Nobel Prize (1987) and Poet Laureate of the United States (1991). In the sixties he belonged to the circle of poets close to Akhmatova (Bobyshev, Neiman, Rein), called "Akhmatova's orphans." Convicted of "parasitism" in 1965, he was sentenced to exile in the Russian north. He emigrated to the United States in 1972 and was a Poet-in-Residence at the University of Michigan. In Russia his poems began to be published only in 1987. A multi-volume collection of his works was published in St. Petersburg in 1992. Abroad appeared *Part of Speech* (1977) and *End of a Beautiful Age* (1977).

DANINI, MAYA A writer of the new generation, author of the book *Quick Money* (1965).

DAR, DAVID (Rivkin) b.1910 A writer of children's stories and various non-fictional works. Husband of Vera Panova, the step-father of Boris Vakhtin. His prose came out in the Paris-based journal *Ekho*, No 2 (1978).

DOBYCHIN, LEONID 1894-1936,37 A prose writer whose works were greatly esteemed among Leningrad writers. He was known for simple and laconic writing. Dobychin was subjected to a vicious critical campaign for his "formalism" and vanished in 1936-37 (he is believed to have committed the suicide).

DRUSKIN, LEV b.1921 A poet of the older generation, a well-known figure in literary circles of Leningrad, the head of an informal literary 'salon' in the seventies.

EFIMOV, IGOR'. b. 1937 A prose writer, a member of the Urbanites group (1965). One of the few writers whose works were published in Leningrad starting in 1962. He emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1978; he lives in the USA, publishes the journal *Hermitage*.

GOLIAVKIN, VICTOR b.1934 A writer of children's books, absurdist and humorous stories, an artist. His style was called "intellectual primitivism."

GOR, GENNADII 1907-1981. A writer of the thirties, the author of an acclaimed surrealistic novel about a collective farm, entitled *The Cow*.

GORBOVSKII, GLEB b. 1931. One of the most notable Leningrad poets of the sixties. His poems were published in Russian and in English (*The Living Mirror: Five Young Poets from Leningrad*, 1972).

GORICHEVA, TAT'IANA b. 1947 A philosopher, an activist in religious and feminist movements. Together with her former husband Viktor Krivulin and Boris Grois published a *samizdat*

journal *37* (1976-81). She published the journals *Woman in Russia* and *Maria*. Emigrated to the West in 1980, lived in Paris, and returned to St. Petersburg in the 1990s.

GRACHEV, REED b. 1935 A talented writer of short stories who contributed to *Young Leningrad* (1962). His publications consist of the books *Where is Your Home* (1967) and *Nobody's Brother* (1994).

GRANIN, DANIEL b. 1918. Best known Leningrad author of the post-Stalinist times, the chairman of the Leningrad branch of the Union of Writers. He is the author of novels *Those Who Seek* (1954) and *I Challenge the Storm* (1962).

GUBIN, VLADIMIR. b. 1934 A prose writer, a member of the *Urbanites* group. Contributed to *Molodoi Leningrad* in the sixties. After rejection and criticism of his stories removed himself from the literary scene, though continued writing. His book *Illarion and Little Karl* was published in 1997. Lives in St. Petersburg.

KHVOSTENKO, ALEXEI b. 1943 A poet, singer, artist, playwright and actor. Grew up in St. Petersburg, now lives in Paris. Author of absurdist poems, *The Book of Wild Boar* and a play *Fire Exit*.

KUSHNER, ALEXANDR. b. 1936. One of the most respected Leningrad poets of his generation, a leading cultural figure in Leningrad. First published in his early twenties and released many collections of his poems through Soviet publishing houses. The author of *First Impressions* (1962), *Night Watch*

(1966), *Signs* (1969). His poetry has been translated into English.

KRIVULIN, VIKTOR b. 1944 A poet, novelist, essayist. He graduated from Leningrad University in philology, specialized in Italian and Russian literature. Krivulin is a leading representative of the Leningrad artistic underground. Published the *samizdat* journal *37*, as well as *Severnaia pochta*, dedicated to poetic theory. He is one of the founders of Club-81 for the non-conformist Leningrad intelligentsia. His collections include *Rhythm* (Paris, 1981), *Poems* (Paris, 1987/88). He co-authored songs with A. Volokhonskii and B. Grebenshchikov.

MARAMZIN, VLADIMIR. b. 1934 A writer of children's books and short stories and television scripts. He was a prominent *samizdat* writer and was convicted for trying to publish Brodskii's poetry (1975). He emigrated to France in 1975; since 1978 has published together with A. Khvostenko a Paris-based avant-garde journal *Echo*. He is the author of *The Two-Tone Blond, Push-Me-Pull-You.*

METTER, ISRAIL 1909-96. Prose writer of the 'older generation' and author of *People:Tales and Stories* (1968).

NAIMAN, ANATOLII, b. A poet. He was a close associate of Akhmatova and worked with her on translations of *Leopardi*. Together with Bobyshev, Rein and Brodskii formed a literary circle around

Akhmatova; it was referred to as the 'magic choir," and after Akmatova's death – "Akhmatova's orphans."

PANOVA, VERA. 1905-73. A well-liked and respected novelist and playwright whose novel *Travelling Companions* (1946) was one of the most popular works about the Second World War.

POPOV, VALERII. b.1939 A representative of the prose of the sixties, a screen writer. First published in 1969. Author of many grotesque romantic stories. His collections include *Life Has Worked Out* (1981) and *Feast of Drivel* (1991), as well as the surreal novels *Days in the Harem* (1994), *She-Rascal* (1996).

REIN, EVGENII. b.1935 A Leningrad poet, Akhmatova's disciple, close friend of Brodskii. He lives and works in Moscow now. Collections of poetry include *Shore Line* (1989), *Darkness of Mirrors* (1990), *Day Which Could Not Be Changed* (1991).

SHVARTS, EVGENII, 1896-1958. A dramatist and writer of children's literature, had experience as an actor in the Leningrad Children's Theatre.

SOSNORA, VICTOR. b. 1936. A prominent poet and prose writer. His poetry is said to be inspired by the Russian avant-garde (Khlebnikov) and medieval literature: *Horsemen* (1969), *Crystal* (1977).

UFLIAND, VLADIMIR. b.1937. A Leningrad poet, close friend of Brodskii, Dovlatov, Vakhtin. Wrote children's poetry, worked in theatre and cinema. A collection of his poems *Teksty* appeared first in 1978 (Ann Arbor: Ardis). In Russia

published in 1993 and 1995. Member of St. Petersburg Pen-Club and St. Petersburg Union of Writers.

VAKHTIN, BORIS. 1930-1981 A well-respected prose writer of the sixties, he founded the literary group *The Urbanites* (1965). Vakhtin was the son of Vera Panova, a Sinologist, a translator of Chinese poetry and prose. In 1964 he witnessed Brodskii's trial and initiated many petitions in his defense. He took notes at the Siniavskii and Daniel' trial (1965); appeared as a witness at Maramzin's trial (1975). All this ruined his career as a scientist. His literary works were not published in the Soviet Union at that time, but came out in *Echo* (Paris) in 1978-1979 and *Metropole* (1979).

VOL'F, SERGEI. b. 1935. A Leningrad poet, dramatist and story writer, friend of Brodskii. Published a book in 1993: *Little Gods.*

VOLODIN, ALEXANDR (Lifshits) b.1919 One of the most innovative Russian playwrights. His play include *The Factory Kid* (1957), *Five Evenings* (1959), as well as the movie scripts *Never Part from Your Loved Ones* (1969) and *Autumn Marathon* (1980). Has also published prose since 1956.

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Genis, Alexandr. Personal Interview. 23 May 1998. Tape recording. In the editorial office of the literary journal *Zvezda*. St. Petersburg, Russia.

Goliavkin, Viktor. Personal Interview. 26 May 1998. Tape recording. In the writer's home, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Gubin, Vladimir. Personal Interview. 24 May 1998. Tape recording. In the editorial office of the literary journal *Zvezda*. St. Petersburg, Russia.

Mechik-Blank, Ksana. Personal Interview. 26 May 1998. Tape recording. In a private home, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Popov, Valerii. Personal Interview. 28 May 1998. Tape recording. In the writer's home, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Sukhikh, Igor'. Personal Interview. St. Petersburg State University. Russia. Notes. 21 May 1998.

Ufliand, Vladimir. Personal Interview. 22 May 1998. Tape recording. In the writer's home, St. Petersburg, Russia.