Satire, Parody, and Nostalgia on the Threshold: Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* in the Context of its Times

by

Krystyna A. Steiger

Department of Russian and Slavic Studies

McGill Univesity

December 2004

A thesis

submitted to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

© Krystyna A. Steiger 2004

Library and Archives Canada

Published Heritage Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-494-12949-2
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-494-12949-2

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

Satire, Parody, and Nostalgia on the Threshold:
Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* in the Context of its Times

by
Krystyna Steiger

A Thesis Submitted for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

This thesis analyzes Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* (1996) from the perspective of its (extra-)literary context, and status as a threshold text on various levels. It argues that through the expression of satire, parody, and nostalgia, Pelevin's novel exemplifies and transcends the threshold between the Soviet and post-Soviet literary narrative. Against the background of various comparison texts, by such precursors and contemporaries as Kaledin, Makanin, Petrushevskaia, P'ietsukh, Sorokin and Tolstaia, Pelevin's novel is shown both to conform with and diverge from the (post-)glasnost' literary text. Common features on the levels of theme and motif are identified, in order to establish both the notion of literary threshold, and a link to its extra-literary counterpart, in keeping with the crises of national transition from late- to post-Soviet status. Using Bakhtinian theory as a point of departure, the notion of threshold is identified on various levels of Pelevin's text, including theme, motif, and bifurcated structure in the form of dual time frames and plotlines. Through satire, Pelevin is shown to reconcile the notion of threshold as change, with that of frozen transition.

Overtly parodic, *Chapaev i Pustota* manipulates three principal constructs of Socialist Realism: the positive hero, the mentor/disciple relationship, and the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. The thesis traces the role and development of these constructs in the four (un-)official versions of the so-called 'Chapaev myth' before

examining Pelevin's own manipulation of the constructs against three distinct models of parody by Gary Saul Morson, Linda Hutcheon, and the Russian Formalists.

As an aesthetic manifestation of the extra-literary threshold state, the expression of nostalgia is examined in various texts of the (post-)glasnost' period. Pelevin's parody and satire of nostalgic expression attests to the evolution in his novel from Socialist Realism to sots-art, and beyond.

Satire, parodie et nostalgie sur le seuil:
***Chapaev i Pustota* de Viktor Pelevin dans le contexte de son époque**

par
Krystyna Steiger

Thèse soumise en vue de l'obtention
d'un doctorat en philosophie

Résumé

Cette thèse se propose d'analyser le roman de Viktor Pelevin, *Chapaev i Pustota* (1996), du point de vue de ses contextes littéraire et extra-littéraire, et d'établir à plusieurs niveaux sa nature de texte-seuil. Son argument central consiste à poser que par l'expression de la satire, de la parodie et de la nostalgie, le roman de Pelevin représente de manière exemplaire, et transcende, le seuil qui sépare le roman pré-soviétique du roman post-soviétique. À la lumière d'une comparaison avec divers textes de précurseurs et de contemporains, comme Kaledin, Makanin, Petrushevskaia, P'ietsukh, Sorokin et Tolstaia, le roman de Pelevin se révèle comme à la fois conforme et différent du texte littéraire des périodes Glasnost et post-Glasnost. Des thèmes et des motifs communs permettent de définir la notion de seuil littéraire et d'établir un lien avec son équivalent extra-littéraire que sont les crises de transition nationale de la fin de l'ère soviétique vers l'ère post-soviétique. À partir de la théorie bakhtinienne, la notion de seuil est identifiée à plusieurs niveaux du texte de Pelevin, y compris au niveau des thèmes, des motifs, et d'une structure binaire sur le plan de la chronologie et de l'intrigue. À travers la satire, Pelevin concilie la notion de seuil, comprise comme changement, avec celle de transition figée.

Ouvertement parodique, *Chapaev i Pustota* manipule trois construits fondamentaux du réalisme socialiste : le héros positif, la relation de maître à disciple, et

la dialectique entre la spontanéité et la conscience. Cette thèse retrace le rôle et le développement de ces trois construits dans les quatre versions, officielle et non officielles, du soit disant «mythe de Chapaev», avant d'examiner, à partir de trois modèles théoriques de la parodie empruntés à Gary Saul Morson, Linda Hutcheon et aux formalistes russes, la manière dont Pelevin lui-même les manipule.

En tant que manifestation esthétique de l'état de seuil, l'expression de la nostalgie est examinée dans divers textes des périodes Glasnost et post-Glasnost. La parodie de Pelevin et sa satire de l'expression nostalgique attestent d'une évolution, dans son roman, du réalisme socialiste vers le Sots-art, et au-delà.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Thesis Supervisor, Professor Laura Beraha of McGill's Department of Russian and Slavic Studies for her guidance in every stage of this dissertation. Without her erudition, strategic and academic advice, enthusiasm for my topic, common interests in the field of post-Soviet literature, and constant good cheer, writing this thesis would have been a much less exciting, and much more intimidating, task. I give heartfelt thanks to Professor Paul Austin, Chair of Russian and Slavic Studies, for his moral support over the years. I thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for the Doctoral Fellowship which enabled me to pursue my studies. I also thank Ms. Lynda Bastien, our Graduate Administrator, for always being on top of it, with a smile and a kind word. Last, but never least, I thank my husband Nory Marc Steiger – my full-time consultant, pillar, source of inspiration, and all round guiding light.

A Note On Transliteration

This dissertation follows the modified Library of Congress system; it omits the diacritical marks and ligatures required by the strict style. Exceptions are made when quoting directly from an English-language publication, preserving the system followed in the given article or book.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Since its publication in 1996, Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*[1] has received a wealth of positive criticism, and more than its share of negative reviews. Having read a good cross-section of the articles written, one would be hard-pressed not to recognize the distinct dichotomy of opinion between critics – those who thoroughly appreciate the novel, and those who emphatically do not. To be sure, in Pelevin criticism, there is rarely a middle ground. It is all the more fitting, then, that this thesis treats Pelevin's novel as a threshold text – one that both occupies and represents a certain middle ground or bridge, of sorts, between historical periods and literary genres, and across various (extra-)literary modes of discourse.

The concept of threshold is complex. Traditionally, thresholds imply transition, movement, or change. In literary theory the threshold chronotope is inextricably linked with Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of those highly charged moments of emotional crisis and scandal in Dostoevskii novels which generate imminent, frequently irreversible change, for better or worse. Time on the Bakhtinian threshold is experienced "as if it had no duration."[2]

---

[1] Literally, "Chapaev and Emptiness/Voyd," where the pun, opaque to the first-time reader, plays on the central protagonist's 'speaking name.' It has been translated by Andrew Bromfield as both *The Clay Machine Gun* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999) and *Buddha's Little Finger* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000).

[2] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays,* ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 248, as cited in Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990) 375.

By contrast, the threshold informing the transition in Russia from the quagmire of Brezhnev's stagnation, through the reforms of Gorbachev's perestroika to the collapse of the Communist State in 1991 is extended. In 1997, one political scientist observed that "[t]he transition, [...] is more protracted than most had hoped. It has established its own distinctive dynamics, and is worthy of study as a phenomenon in its own right." [3] Addressing the leaders of Montreal's business community at McGill University in December 2003, the Russian Ambassador to Canada affirmed that the transition from Communism to an ideological position as yet largely undefined is a lengthy and complicated process, far from settled. Post-Communism, it seems, comprises a protracted threshold state, or prolonged transition. Though traditionally associated with movement, then, the notion of threshold, if protracted, can also imply stalling, stasis, and even limbo. One need only consider the great expectations for Khrushchev's Thaw following Stalin's death (1953), and those same hopes betrayed in light of the subsequent freeze signaled by the Czech invasion (1968).

Chapter I of this thesis addresses this ostensible contradiction in terms intrinsic to the threshold. The notion of threshold is inscribed into the various narrative levels of *Chapaev i Pustota*, not the least of which includes its bifurcated structure, representing two distinct timelines. In turn, these represent the most important threshold periods in twentieth-century Russian (literary) history – the Civil War (1919) and the demise of the Soviet Union (1990s). The two corresponding plotlines converge in their common

---

[3] Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997) 127-30, as cited in David Lovell, "Introduction: Making Sense of the Transition from Communism," *The Transition: Evaluating the Postcommunist Experience,* ed. David Lovell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 2.

narrator-hero, Petr Pustota (Peter Voyd); they depict his quest for identity in both timeframes.

Not surprisingly, a sense of identity-loss on the transpersonal level is a primary symptom of the state of threshold, or transition in post-Soviet Russia, both within and beyond the parameters of the literary narratives marking the period. The hero's quest is impeded by the memory-loss he suffers, again, in both time-frames. In the 1990s, it is triggered by a rejection of the new, post-Soviet reality, which Pet'ia escapes by regressing in his mind to the reality of the Civil War timeframe. There, as the commissar to the Red detachment led by the legendary Civil War hero Vasilii Ivanovich Chapaev (1887-1919), Pet'ia's amnesia is said to have been caused by a blow to the head in a heroic battle. The motif of the threshold as movement is established by Pet'ia's passage between the two timeframes portrayed as the transition from sleep to waking. It is reinforced by motifs of motion in both times, and the depiction in the novel of various altered states of consciousness. The novel's overarching theme of Buddhism contributes to the notion of threshold in emphasizing the impermanence of all states of being. Ultimately, however, just as Buddhism reconciles impermanent states with an absolute, Pelevin reconciles the opposing notions of threshold as impermanence, and frozen transition. He does so through satire – not simply of contemporary reality, but also of the Silver Age to which he regresses. Through satire, Pelevin's novel reveals itself as a threshold text linking extra-literary reality to its narrative representation. The author reconciles the threshold with frozen transition by exploiting the similarities between the two 'realities,' rather than highlighting their differences.

Frequently associated with genres such as the fantastic and science fiction, Pelevin's oeuvre has been relegated to and celebrated in the ranks of popular fiction.[4] Thus, *Chapaev i Pustota* may also be considered a threshold text linking forms of high and low culture. Cementing this view, Pelevin refers to and includes elements in his novel of the various (un-)official versions of the cultural myth based on the historical Chapaev. Immortalized in Dmitrii Furmanov's Socialist Realist classic novel *Chapaev* (1923), the Vasil'iev brothers' Stalinist film of the same title (1934), various officially sanctioned Soviet folktales, and countless unofficial anecdotes (Chapaev jokes), the civil warrior famous for his outspokenness, near illiteracy, and maverick behavior is reincarnated in Pelevin's novel. The author's combination, on the one hand, and reconfiguration, on the other, in the text of such representatives of high and low culture as are mentioned above no doubt adds to the novel's popular, if not always critical, appeal. One of the most controversial works to have emerged over the past decade, indeed, a work that provokes debate precisely on the divide between high and low as Russian literature struggles through its own protracted transition from post-Soviet to postmodern and beyond, *Chapaev i Pustota* reveals itself as a threshold text of uniquely complex and highly symptomatic dimensions.

In this work Pelevin links novel, anecdote, ideological/metaphysical tract and other genres through parody. Unlike satire, which critiques social, cultural or ideological norms beyond the literary text, parody targets other aesthetic works or their component

---

[4] To many of his detractors (Arkhangel'skii and Nemzer foremost among them), Pelevin remains to this day a writer of pulp fiction; in this capacity and particularly in view of his commercial success, he has been accused of betraying high art. Pelevin's position on the threshold between 'high' and 'low' culture fuels much of the debate around him. Sots-art poet Lev Rubinshtein, for example, takes an unexpectedly negative view of Pelevin's "balancing on the boundary between elite and pop art (*popsa*)" in "Kogda zhe pridet nastoiashchii P?," *Itogi*, 26 April 1999: 14, *Sait tvorchestva Viktora Pelevina*, 12 December 2004 <http://www.pelevin.nov.ru.stati/o-rub/1.html>.

parts, extending its sights, if desired, to include a body of works by a single author, or even entire genres. Parody itself is complex, in that it can connote either a mode of discourse, or a genre; theoretical positions vary on the definition and range of parody. Gérard Genette, for instance, objects to the notion of the parody of a genre as such. Arguing that the consideration of a genre necessitates generalization, Genette prefers to attach to parody a more text-specific function.[5] This thesis borrows Genette's terms to denote the text of parody (hypertext) and its target (hypotext), but does not adhere to his ban on genre parody, for the simple reason that it cannot apply to (post-)Soviet literary models. Contrary to Genette, in the closing decades of the twentieth century, Socialist Realism, or rather, its fading traces function as a genre, more specifically as a generic hypotext, for the generically focused parody of sots-art. There the target is Socialist Realism as an entire body of works, loosely if not sloppily defined, perhaps, but inextricably linked with an ideology and point of view on the world. *Chapaev i Pustota* incorporates the strategies of sots-art; it might even be said to position itself on the threshold between sots-art and the as yet largely indeterminate void, the vacuum of ideology beyond that fast waning trend.

Chapter II of this thesis considers *Chapaev i Pustota* against three paradigms of parody, provided by Linda Hutcheon, Gary Saul Morson, and the Russian Formalists. By aligning the work with the latter, the chapter demonstrates the workings, in Pelevin, of parody as a threshold, between, as indicated above, the genres of Socialist Realism and sots-art. At once the mirror image and the undoing of Socialist Realism and Soviet ideological discourse, given its propensity for literalizing verbal rhetoric through non-

---

[5] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree,* trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997) 84-85.

verbal means,[6] sots-art is in most instances antagonistically counterposed to its target. By the same token, even a hostile anti-genre such as sots-art is not immune to the effects of transition, or the threshold context. Among these, nostalgia is perhaps the most paradoxical, in that it presumes an emotional yearning for the past which, in the former Soviet Union, has various negative connotations. The complexities of (post-)Soviet nostalgia are more pronounced still in view of the many historical truths unearthed in the revelatory spirit of glasnost'. The process of nostalgia involves the idealization of the past as a better time, from the perspective of a less than ideal present. In the late- and early post-Soviet context, the nostalgic subject bears the additional burden of having to weave these newly discovered, and largely unedifying, truths into the fabric of an already tainted past.

From the Western perspective, it is hard to imagine nostalgia for the 'good old days' of Stalinism or even Brezhnev's stagnation, but the phenomenon exists and has arguably risen to occupy a central position in the literary debates of today's Russia. Its aesthetic expression in *Chapaev i Pustota* is examined in Chapter III of this thesis in keeping, however, with the work's parodic status. More specifically, this chapter examines the correlation between parody and nostalgia in the context of (post-)Soviet prose fiction in general, as well as Pelevin's own treatment of the theme. Indeed, Pelevin's manipulation of nostalgia in his novel is pivotal to its consideration in this chapter as a work of (post-)sots-art fiction.

In each of its three chapters, this thesis considers Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* against a background of narrative texts by selected representatives of the (post-)glasnost'

---

[6] More than merely a literary genre, sots-art includes – and indeed began with – the plastic arts, by such artists as Komar and Melamid, and Il'ia Kabakov.

literary scene. These include such precursors and contemporaries as Sergei Kaledin, Liudmila Petrushevskaia, Viacheslav P'ietsukh, Tat'iana Tolstaia, Viktoriia Tokareva, and Vladimir Sorokin. By identifying common themes and motifs, the thesis aligns Pelevin's novel with the literary trends defining the era of the (post-)Soviet threshold.

The thesis also aims, however, to distinguish *Chapaev i Pustota* from the selected comparison texts. By so doing, it attempts to underscore the novel's innovative contributions, through its treatment of parody and nostalgia, to the post-Soviet literary scene in directions, beyond the threshold, yet unknown, but suggested by such critics and scholars as Gerald McCausland, Aleksandr Genis, Mark Lipovetskii, and Natal'ia Ivanova. This thesis does not purport to constitute an exhaustive analysis either of Pelevin's oeuvre, or of satire, parody, or nostalgia as modes, genres, or themes, respectively, in the period of (post-)glasnost.' It aims instead to contribute to the scholarly discussion of *Chapaev i Pustota* in the context of its times, as a meaningful and innovative contribution to the contemporary Russian literary scene.

Chapter I
On the Threshold: (Post-)Perestroika, Pelevin, and Satire

The official collapse in the former Soviet Union of State Communism in December 1991 was seen by many in the West as the definitive end of an era. Yet, the country had been on the threshold of political and cultural change since the introduction of perestroika and glasnost' by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986. It may even be said that a threshold, or transitional, state of affairs continues to govern post-Soviet Russia to this day, some thirteen years after the dissolution of the USSR. Fiction of the (post)-perestroika period reflects the various manifestations of late- and post-Soviet life on the threshold, by thematic, formal and narrative means. This chapter discusses the concept of 'threshold' as it relates to the closing decades of twentieth-century Russia, as represented in its literature, and as perceived as a crisis in literary and national identity. In Russian literary history the prose fiction of threshold periods has tended to favor mimetic and especially satiric modes in response to the upheavals of transitions – witness the emergence of realism and the flourishing of satire in the tumultuous 1920s. Prose works of the late- and post-Soviet years are no exception.

Though in some ways unique as a threshold period (crossing over centuries, millennia, and ideological systems, for instance), the (post-)perestroika period is only one of several crucial threshold periods in Russian literary history. Only those (pre-)Soviet thresholds most relevant to the threshold of (post-)perestroika with regard to the concepts of reality and its representation will be examined here. The goal will be to establish similarities to, and/or divergence from the late- and post-Soviet period, roughly, from

1986-1996. As the focus of this thesis, Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* will be discussed as an exemplar of post-Soviet Russian literature on the threshold.

The polemic over the relationship between literature and life, between a text and its context, has informed the field of literary studies for centuries. The question has been particularly relevant to scholars of Russian literature since the mid-nineteenth century when, with the triumph of the Russian realist tradition in the works of such literary giants as Dostoevskii, Tolstoi and Turgenev, the Russian novel came into its own as a surrogate forum for the discussion of political, social and religious concerns. True to the mimetic characteristics of the realist tradition at large, the nineteenth-century Russian novel was called upon to mirror contemporary 'reality.' Read in large part with an emphasis on message over means, Russian literature in this Golden Age endeavored to represent reality seamlessly. By deflecting attention from the literary devices employed by the author in creating his narrative, the Russian realist novel strove toward transparent verisimilitude.

In the twentieth century, the very notion of 'reality' and the extent of its representation by aesthetic means were challenged by the poetics of Russia's pre-revolutionary (1890-1916) and pre-Stalinist periods (1917-28). Russian Symbolism dominated the first of these periods; its metaphysical branch was characterized by a Neo-Platonic and decidedly spiritual vision of existence, supplanting the positivism of the preceding century with an idealist vision of the world. Inspired by the writings of Dmitrii Merezhkovskii (1865-1941) and the mystical visions of Vladimir Solov'iev (1853-1900) – key figures in Russia's first generation of Symbolists (1892-1900) – such second-generation metaphysical poets as Andrei Belyi (1880-1934) and Aleksandr Blok (1880-

1921) promoted in their works the sense of a pending, ultimate reality, over what they regarded as the mundane reality of the earthly domain. The Symbolists represented this higher reality obscurely, through vague language intended to evoke, rather than simply to describe.[1] Intuitively, the Symbolist poet saw Russia on the threshold of a new era to which he, through his craft, could provide spiritual access.

However, a series of political crises[2] precipitated a crisis in Symbolist circles (1910); in literature, wistful language, vague impressions and the word-as-symbol yielded to ellipsis, fragmentation, and a return to 'the word as such.'[3] Ultimately, as a mode of artistic representation, Symbolism would serve as the threshold, or transition, between the schools of nineteenth-century Realism and the later strain of Modernism, or "historical avant-garde," that characterized the second, pre-Stalinist period of twentieth-century Russian and Soviet literature.

In keeping with the changing face of Russian reality, this period witnessed significant changes in aesthetic representation. In the words of Evgenii Zamiatin:

> The old, slow, soporific descriptions are no more: laconicism—but every word supercharged, high voltage. [...] In the swift movement [of the language] the canonical, the habitual escapes the eye [...]. The image is sharp, synthetic, it contains only one basic feature, the kind you can catch from a moving automobile.[4]

Zamiatin clearly distinguishes between the old poetics of Symbolism on the one hand, and his own, new, modernist techniques, on the other.

---

[1] Milton Ehre, "Zamjatin's Aesthetics," *Slavic and East European Journal* 19 (1975): 288-296.

[2] These include national defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) and a thwarted revolution (1905).

[3] Osip Mandel'shtam makes this distinction in his 'manifestoes' of Acmeism – "Morning of Acmeism" (written 1913, published 1919) and "On the Nature of the Word" (1922). The Futurist antipathy towards the metaphysical and esoteric aspirations of the previous generation was shared, in a sense, by their rivals in Russia's post-Symbolist age, the Acmeists, who insisted on 'beautiful clarity'. Mikhail Kuzmin wrote an article of the same title ("O prekrasnoi iasnosti," [1910]).

[4] Evgenii Zamiatin, "O sintetizme," *Litsa* (New York: Chekhov, 1955) 237-38, as cited in Susan Layton, "Zamjatin and Literary Modernism," *Slavic and East European* Journal 17.3 (1973): 280.

Punctuated by the avant-garde poetics of Vladimir Maiakovskii (1893-1930) and Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922),[5] the Bolshevik revolutions of February and October 1917, the ensuing Civil War (1918-21) and, lastly, by the relative stability established by Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP, 1921-27), Modernism flourished in Russia through to the end of the twenties, producing such distinguished writers as Isaac Babel' (1894-1941), Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), Boris Pil'niak (1894-1937), Andrei Platonov (1899-1951) and Iurii Olesha (1899-1960). Regardless of their varied political and artistic viewpoints, each of these writers contributed greatly to the period of Russian literature in revolution.

Regardless, also, of their particular modes of representation (satire, or abstraction) of a more fragmented, abstract reality, and the unprecedented changes therein, these authors strove in their work to reflect the times – equally unprecedented in Russian (literary) history. Though unique in its formal modes of aesthetic representation, now emphasizing means over message, Modernism was linked to Russian Realism and Symbolism, by a concerted effort to address and interact with contemporary reality.

By contrast, the Stalinist Russian novel, in keeping with the literary method of Socialist Realism, aspired not to reflect or splinter reality, but to *create* it. In his new role as 'engineer of the soul,' the Soviet writer strove to portray reality not as it was, but rather as it 'ought to be' on the road to the radiant future of the Communist utopia.[6] In other

---

[5] Maiakovskii and Khlebnikov are among the poets who signed the Futurist manifesto, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" (1912), which advocated throwing writers such as "Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy overboard from the Ship of Modernity." Khlebnikov is known for his 'trans-sense' (*zaum'*) poetry, including "Incantation by Laughter" ("Zakliatie smekhom"). See Carl R. Proffer, Elleanda Proffer, Ronald Meyer, and Mary Ann Szporluk, eds., *Russian Literature of the Twenties: An Anthology* (Dana Point: Ardis, 1987) 542; 461-462.

[6] Hans Günther distinguishes between 'utopianism' as the active implementation in the 1920s of future-building projects (such as those for resurrecting ancestors, and controlling the climate, by Nikolai Fedorov) as depicted by Andrei Platonov and Zamiatin, on the one hand, and the more static practice of

words, the Stalinist novel portrayed a society on the threshold of a new era. Typically, the threshold portrayed in official Soviet fiction is smooth, controlled, guaranteed by a repetitive and pre-ordained dialectic. Ultimately, the transition from a state of ideological ignorance to that of 'consciousness' on the part of the 'positive hero' of Soviet fiction is plotted as inevitable; enemies encountered and struggles waged on its path are written into the larger plot, the 'grand narrative' and strict linearity of Marxist-Leninist history. Socialist Realism represents, in this sense, the return to a seamless mode of representation. In literature as in life, antagonists are removed to the margins not only of society, but of history itself, so that ultimately the concept of the threshold yields in Soviet literature to the related but less nuanced, and decidedly more static, notion of boundary. In other words, while 'threshold' can imply linkage, 'boundary' clearly connotes separation. Eventually, after a series of 'thaws' and 'freezes' (symbolizing the much anticipated but ultimately failed threshold of the Khrushchev years) the Soviet transition came to a halt; its threshold protracted to the point where Soviet society, in its ostensible 'revolutionary development,' became synonymous with 'stagnation' under Brezhnev.

By definition, however, thresholds presuppose movement as entry to or departure from one time or space, to another; in a word, thresholds are inherently dynamic. The literary theories of Mikhail Bakhtin emphasize the potential of the threshold.[7] In Bakhtin's analysis of the works of Dostoevskii, for instance, the threshold is synonymous

---

'realistic' utopian myth-building under Stalin, and Socialist Realism. See Hans Günther, "Socialist Realism and Utopianism," *Socialist Realism Revisited: Selected Papers from the McMaster Conference*, eds. Nina Kolesnikoff and Walter Smyrniw (Hamilton: McMaster University, 1994) 29-32.

[7] On chronotopes and thresholds, see Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press Slavic Series 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 84-258; *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, Theory and History of Literature 8 (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984) 61-63, 111, 169-170.

with scandal, crisis, and outbursts of emotion acting as catalysts for significant change in the situations of those involved; most scenes of scandal occur, literally, on thresholds between rooms, or in spaces symbolic of a threshold, such as stairwells, hallways, or salons.[8] The threshold is at once a breaking point and a turning point.

Russian literature of the late- and post-Soviet eras both resembles and diverges from the nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetic models outlined above. Frequently graphic in its portrayal of reality and overtly topical, often to the point of undermining its fictional status,[9] for example, much of this prose strongly resembles its realist precursor, firstly, in that it, too, seeks primarily to reflect contemporary reality. Composed and published in an atmosphere of new-found freedom, first, of more lenient, then completely repealed censorship, such works as Sergei Kaledin's "Smirennoe kladbishche" ["The Humble Cemetery" (1987)], and Liudmila Petrushevskaia's "Svoi krug" ["Our Crowd" (1988)] and "Vremia-noch'" [*The Time: Night* (1992)], expose the discrepancies between the Soviet 'real' and the (late/post) Soviet 'ideal' with a frankness barely imaginable by official Soviet prose writers prior to glasnost'. Now commonplace to the reader of contemporary Russian fiction, the once shocking scenes of domestic violence, alcoholism, and body functions depicted in these and other works of so-called 'cruel

---

[8] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 170.

[9] Opposing groups in the glasnost' literary camp included those conservative writers intent on extreme topicality and moral sermonizing (Valentin Rasputin, Vasilii Belov, and Viktor Astaf'ev) bordering on publicistic writing (*publitsistika*), and those opting for so-called alternative prose (Tat'iana Tolstaia, Viktor Erofeev) avoiding ideological perspectives and moral prerogatives. The division is often regarded as one between the conservative (thick) and liberal literary journals. For an overview of the literary scene during perestroika, see Deming Brown, *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature: Prose Fiction 1975-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 1-18. For a different perspective more focused on so-called alternative groups during and after the period, see Robert Porter, *Russia's Alternative Prose* (Oxford: Berg, 1994).

prose' (*zhestokaia proza*) have been discussed at length since their publication.[10] They have been considered by at least one critic as a return, of sorts, to a naturalistic tendency, that outgrowth of Romantic Realism, remarkable for its detailed descriptions of the impoverished strata of Russian society of mid-nineteenth-century Russia.[11] They deserve mention here as points of comparison and contrast to Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota.*

Set in 1978 Moscow, Kaledin's "Smirennoe kladbishche,"[12] portrays the illicit activities of a group of cemetery employees who live and work according to their own perverted code of honor. This includes grave robbing; selling occupied grave-sites to the unsuspecting bereaved; bribery, extortion, and severe beatings administered to co-workers who fail to comply with the rules. The main protagonist, Vorobei, is a gravedigger who, though faithful to his co-workers, is both victim and tyrant in his personal life. Deafened and debilitated by three blows to the head with an axe, delivered by his own brother, Vorobei awaits trial for injuries he inflicted on someone in another brawl. His wound has not been mended with a metal plate; covered only by a flap of skin, it throbs visibly to the beat of his heart. Subject to seizures and fits of anger since the injury, Vorobei expresses his frustrations physically, by beating his wife – an

---

[10] See for example the various articles and books on (post-)glasnost' women's prose by Helena Goscilo, including *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood During and After Glasnost* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); "Body Talk in Current Fiction: Speaking Parts and (W)holes," *Russian Culture in Transition*, ed. Gregory Freidin, Stanford Slavic Series 7 (Oakland: Stanford UP, 1993) 145-177.

[11] Konstantin Kustanovich, "The Naturalistic Tendency in Contemporary Soviet Fiction: Thematics, Poetics, Functions," *New Directions in Soviet Literature: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990,* ed. Sheelagh Duffin Graham (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 76. Despite the obvious descriptive similarities between the so-called nineteenth-century Natural School (*Natural'naia shkola*) and what Kustanovich refers to as (late) Soviet "neo-naturalism," the critic is careful also to distinguish between the two tendencies. He notes, for instance that in opposition to the promotion by their Russian Naturalist precursors of the "plight of the poor," Soviet naturalist prose abstains from any didacticism. Kustanovich maintains that, having "lost the belief in art as an ideological weapon," these Soviet authors "simply want to show life without teaching anybody how to live" (Kustanovich 78).

[12] Sergei Kaledin, "Smirennoe kladbishche," *Novyi mir* 5 (1987): 39-81. Hereafter, Russian citations will refer to this edition.

alcoholic who is guilty, in turn, of neglecting an apparently handicapped child, who sits soiled in his crib. Like the majority of works of 'cruel' glasnost' prose, Kaledin's ending is pessimistic: knowing the potentially fatal effect upon him of even the smallest amount of alcohol, in the novella's closing scene Vorobei, to the horror of wife and friends, sits at the dining table, poised to take a drink.

Like his nation, Vorobei totters on the threshold between life and death. Kaledin's cemetery represents a microcosm of late Soviet society at large: a graveyard serves as the emblem of Russia in the 1970s-80s. The novella is cynical and, for the most part, devoid of humor. Traditionally, explicit humor does not constitute a threshold feature; the crisis generated by the emotionally charged threshold situation is not conducive to overt laughter. Indeed, Kaledin's depiction of a decorated (though thoroughly hung-over) WWII hero crawling out of the freshly dug grave, in which he has spent a drunken night, is more pathetic than humorous.

By contrast, in Petrushevskaia one can only laugh at the image of a woman's eyeball dangling from its socket, having popped out due to stress ("Svoi krug"), or at the catty but half-innocent 'mistaking' by a woman of her friend's inexpensive Czech bracelet for a serviette holder ("Vremia-noch'"). Now violently absurd in the spirit of Kharms, now slapstick, the humor in Petrushevskaia's depiction of domestic strife and the bare-faced absurdities of late-Soviet existence is tempered, however, by the much less amusing and far more sensational images of a mewing six-month fetus surviving an induced miscarriage, and the passing, by a bed-ridden geriatric patient, of her own womb ("Vremia-noch'"). Thus, where (black) humor is concerned, Petrushevskaia's most popular works diverge from Kaledin's.

However, the sense of cocky helplessness and conceited desperation pervading her narratives, and the 'tragic flaws' possessed by the (anti-)heroes they portray serve also to link them to Kaledin. The novellas of both authors depart completely from the optimistic paradigm of Socialist Realist fiction, and its mandate to uplift and inspire the reader. Moreover, in contrast to the utopian aspect of the traditional work of Soviet prose, these novellas are markedly dystopian; that is, they portray the negative effects of an ostensibly utopian society.[13]

The works of Kaledin and Petrushevskaia both conform to and depart from the notion of threshold as transition. On the one hand, the narratives of both authors exude crisis, in the Bakhtinian sense: beatings, seizures, betrayals and neglect (of both children and parents) do indeed leave their mark. On the other hand, the narratives give no impression of any transition or resolution of their crises, however remote. On the contrary, Kaledin portrays the height of Brezhnev's 'stagnation' as a quagmire, a burial ground from which there is little hope of extrication, while Petrushevskaia's conflicts between mothers and children, husbands, wives, and lovers promise to perpetuate. The emplotment by both authors of the events they portray tends toward exaggerated senses of the dramatic (Kaledin) and the grotesque (Petrushevskaia). Like their nineteenth-century precursors, however, they do succeed in depicting a vivid sense of contemporary reality in crisis. What distinguishes these late twentieth-century threshold works from the

---

[13] While anti-utopia suggests the impossibility of achieving utopia at all, dystopia is used to denote "the likely [negative] effects" of an ostensibly realized utopia. Morson makes this distinction in relation to Zamiatin's dystopian novel, *We*, in "Parody, History, and Metaparody," *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, ed. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989) 75.

Bakhtinian model, which looks forward to eventual renewal, is a sense of entrapment. The threshold is drawn out, the transition – frozen.

In *Chapaev i Pustota*, Pelevin distinguishes himself from these authors of late and post-glasnost' cruel prose. The elements of violence, victimization and tragedy that figure so strongly on the personal level in the works of Kaledin and Petrushevskaia, and define them as exemplars of cruel prose, are notably absent from his narrative. When blood is shed in this novel (von Ernen's murder in Ch. 1), the violence passes with no discernable impact on the central protagonists, save for Pet'ia's occasional pangs of guilt (43, 47). In consequence, Pelevin has been criticized for his literary pretensions, and position of detached condescension toward both the post-Soviet condition at large, as well as the (pre-)Soviet past. Russian critic Pavel Basinskii, for instance, complains that *Chapaev i Pustota* is:

> saturated with [...] unmotivated filth about the Civil War and the Silver Age; the tuxedo-clad Chapaev drinks champagne and discourses on Eastern mysticism, Kotovskii sniffs cocaine and Pet'ka and Anka argue about Schopenhauer while having sex.[14]

It is feasible to assume that the earlier subversions of the Soviet literary paradigm by full-frontal assault, as in Kaledin and Petrushevskaia, had served its purpose by the time of the novel's publication (1996). Pelevin's take on the contemporary scene is undeniably lighter than that of his late-Soviet predecessors; nevertheless it is a threshold work in various senses. The very absence from *Chapaev i Pustota* of the gruesome represented 'realities' comprising the contemporary dark prose (*chernukha*) of glasnost' suggests its status at the very least as a text on the threshold of stylistic,[15] if not generic, change.

---

[14] Pavel Basinskii, as cited in Evgeny Pavlov, "Judging Emptiness: Reflections on the post-Soviet Aesthetics and Ethics of Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*," *Russian Literature in Transition*, eds. Ian K. Lilly and Henrietta Mondry (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1999) 90.

[15] Russian critic Mark Lipovetskii suggests that Pelevin's *lack* of a "highly individualized style" (along with Sharov and Sorokin) constitutes a distinguishing feature of his prose. See Mark Lipovetsky,

Though this chapter has suggested an affinity between the prose of (post)-glasnost' and Russian Realism as forums for the representation of contemporary issues, the two traditions also diverge. Among the many features distinguishing the prose of (post-)glasnost' from nineteenth-century Realism, a most important one is its refusal to downplay aesthetic devices in its representation of reality; that is, as a rule the prose fiction of glasnost' and post-perestroika is self-conscious in its literariness (*literaturnost'*). Thus, the meta-literary digressions of Viacheslav P'ietsukh ("Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia" ["New Moscow Philosophy," 1989]) and linguistic ornamentalism of Valeriia Narbikova (Okolo ėkolo [1992]), established by pre-perestroika writers such as Sasha Sokolov, Andrei Bitov, and Vasilii Aksenov, link contemporary Russian fiction also to its twentieth-century modernist precursor. Indeed, it has been argued that, like the youth prose of the post-Stalinist Thaw by the so-called 'men of the sixties,' a significant branch of the fiction of (post-)perestroika draws on the prose of Russian Modernism in terms of style. Thus, despite the ideological vacuum that characterizes the late and post-Soviet periods of Russian history, the prose fiction of (post-)glasnost' did not develop in an aesthetic vacuum; rather, it incorporated elements of the preceding traditions of Russian literary history into its various innovations.

Indeed, the reality portrayed by much prose of (post-)perestroika links it, however abstractly, even to its Stalinist predecessor; that is, this fiction also reflects reality on the threshold of the imminent but postponed Radiant Future. However, among the many

---

"Literature on the Margins: Russian Fiction in the Nineties," trans. Karen McDowell and Helena Goscilo, *Contemporary Literature* 24.1 (2000): 148. Similarly, but in a negative sense, S. Nekrasov compares Pelevin's lack of style to "the paranormal phenomenon of 'automatic writing'," in "Geroem stanovitsia liuboi," *Nezavisimaia gazeta* 2 July 1992. Vladimir Novikov, meanwhile, sees in *Chapaev i Pustota* a "Eurocentric literary cliché" in the theme of the mental hospital which, Novikov suggests, following its overuse both in Romanticism and Modernism, is by now thoroughly exhausted, in "Nobless oblizh: O nashem rechevom povedenii," *Novyi mir* 1 (1998): 143.

features that characterize much contemporary Russian fiction, and most starkly distinguish it from Socialist Realism in its various mutations,[16] are (1) a distinctly '*post*-utopian'[17] vantage point and (2) the nature of the threshold it depicts. First, in stark contrast to official Soviet literature, the fiction of (post-)perestroika Russia no longer looks ahead to the Radiant Future of Communist utopia. Rather, it emphasizes the present as a failed attempt at utopia, or *anti*-utopia. Secondly, this prose presents the threshold as crisis. As they do in Dostoevskii according to Bakhtin, the concepts of threshold and crisis dovetail in the literature of (post)-perestroika Russia.

Among the various crises acknowledged during and engendered by glasnost' and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, respectively, a most significant one constituted an identity crisis on the national, transpersonal level, triggered by the massive unearthing and reassessment of events of Soviet history in the mid-eighties.[18] A more critical view of Soviet historiography evolved as a direct consequence of the exposé spirit of this period – 'digging up' the past on the one hand, [19] and 'filling in' historical gaps on the other. Significantly, Robert Strayer underscores the leading role of writers and journalists, rather than professional historians, in re-examining the Soviet past; their

---

[16] Katerina Clark, "Political History and Literary Chronotope: Some Case Studies," *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1986) 230-246.

[17] Coined by Boris Groys in *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), this oxymoron was employed by Viktor Erofeev in "Pominki po sovetskoi literature," *Literaturnaia Gazeta* 8 Aug. 1990: 8, as cited in Edith Clowes, "Ideology and Utopia in Recent Soviet Literature," *The Russian Review* 51 (1992): 385. The term is also implied by the title of Mikhail N. Epstein's *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*, trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

[18] See, for instance George Gibian, "The Quest for Russian National Identity in Soviet Culture Today," *The Search for Self-Definition in Russian Literature*, ed. Ewa M. Thompson (Houston: Rice University Press, 1991) 2-7.

[19] Uncovering the mass grave at Katyń, containing thousands of Polish officers killed by the Soviet army during WWII (1940) is a literal illustration of this process. See Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr M. Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present*, trans. Phyllis B. Carlos (New York: Summit Books, 1986) 403-407.

"return to history," he observes, "sharply challenged the conventional Soviet view of its own past."[20]

In addition to their pivotal role in the nation's historical disclosures, a disparate body of literary critics called also for the re-evaluation of the substance and the openly propagandistic function of official Soviet literature.[21] Ultimately, this would entail the actual rewriting of Soviet literary history[22] to include all previously censored works finally published in full, such as Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita* (written 1928-40, publ. 1989), to cite but one prominent example, as well as those that had been banned entirely in the Soviet Union prior to glasnost,' such as Boris Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago* (written 1957, publ. 1988), and Evgenii Zamiatin's *My* ([*We*], written 1924, publ. 1988]).[23]

Natal'ia Ivanova extends the crisis of trans-personal national identity to the realm of the personal. Shifting emphasis from these rehabilitated works of glasnost' to the realm of literature actually composed in the (post-)perestroika period, she breaks down the identity crisis to encompass a variety of levels, including the "ideological, ethnic,

---

[20] Robert Strayer, *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1998) 100.

[21] Deming Brown, *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature: Prose Fiction 1975-1991* 11-12. While some called for unbridled freedom of the literary press, others argued for restraint, defending the ideological status quo, and Socialist Realism as the Soviet literary canon. In an editorial article typical of the period, one conservative critic proposed that literature "play a more active social role, be more in tune with communist ideology and the nation's character, and that socialist realism [...] be further developed and improved." See Yuri Verchenko, "Perestroika Should be a Constructive Process," *Literaturnaia gazeta* 8 April 1987, in Yevgeni Dugin, comp., *Perestroika and Development of Culture: Literature, Theatre and Cinema* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1989) 3.

[22] Deming Brown refers to the demand by critics for the re-examination of the entire period of Soviet literary history, since the Revolution, in his *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature* 12.

[23] Helena Goscilo notes that "the elastic and imprecise rubric 'glasnost' literature' encompasses at least five dissimilar and largely incompatible categories." She lists them as: 'the "archeological" fund' (including Bulgakov, as above); more recent works, published or not, resulting in their authors' "vilification, imprisonment, or expulsion" (Solzhenitsyn, Siniavskii) or those circulated unofficially in Russia but published in the West (Bitov, Venedikt Erofeev); manuscripts written and kept "for the drawer" since the 1960s (Rybakov, Dudintsev); thinly disguised journalism written during and promoting glasnost'; works debuting in the 1980s, and useful to glasnost' advocates (by Tolstaia, Viktor Erofeev) but written previously. See Helena Goscilo, introduction, *Glasnost:' An Anthology of Russian Literature Under Gorbachev*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Byron Lindsey (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990) xxxi.

religious, and status-related."[24] Referring in particular to Fazil' Iskander, Ivanova suggests a link between the author's own crises and those of his protagonist in "Pshada" (1993) – General Aleksei Efremovich Mamba – who, on the eve of his death in the post-Soviet 1990s, re-examines and re-assesses his Soviet life in light of the new truths about the Soviet empire, and the Great Patriotic War (WWII). Though deprived of his military status, what concerns Mamba most is the loss of his native, Abkhazian language.[25] Ivanova relates this factor to Iskander's own loss of status in the post-Soviet period as "an oppositional, dissident writer" and master of the now defunct "Aesopian" language.[26] Not surprisingly, the motifs of memory(-loss) and the hero as writer/poet surface in the fiction of (post-)glasnost,' as does the recovery of ethnic and, hence, personal roots – in keeping, still, with the extra-literary spirit of revelation and re-evaluation of the times.[27]

Accordingly, Anna Adrianovna, the narrator of Petrushevskaia's "Vremia-noch,'" is a poetess, whose 'diary' (the bulk of Petrushevskaia's narrative) comprises in fact a non-sequential string of predominantly mean-spirited forays into the narrator's personal past and that of her immediate family. There she attempts to justify her pitiful circumstances in the present. Vladimir Sharov's novel *Do i vo vremia* (*Before and During* [1995])[28] follows suit: the forty-five year-old narrator-hero, a writer, has suffered a serious concussion; it subjects him to extended periods of blacked-out

---

[24] Natal'ia Ivanova, "Afterward: Post-Soviet Literature in Search of a New Identity," trans. Laura Givens, *Russian Studies in Literature* 34.1 (1998): 66.

[25] Ivanova 66-67.

[26] Ivanova 67.

[27] The theme of (personal) history is by no means unique to the period of (post)-perestroika. Iurii Trifonov (1925-1981), for example, though an official and, thus, published, Soviet author is known for his discreet but significant forays into sensitive areas of the Soviet past, and into the relationship between heredity and self-identity even in the late seventies ("Drugaia zhizn'," ["Another Life," 1975], "Starik," [*The Old Man*, 1978]). Given the charged atmosphere of (post-)perestroika Russia as/on the threshold, however, the questions of national history and personal identity take on a more profound, and more immediate significance.

[28] Vladimir Sharov, *Do i vo vremia*, (Moscow: L'Age d'Homme – Nash dom, 1995).

memory, which he is hoping to regain after a course of radical chemical treatment in the local hospital's geriatric ward. The concern with the loss of his personal memory motivates Sharov's hero to investigate his family history. In an ironic play on the theme of memory, however, his only remaining source of information is an aunt by marriage, who herself suffers from a loss of memory due to the onset of dementia. Lastly, though not a writer, the narrator-hero of Vladimir Makanin's novella "Utrata" ("The Loss," [1987]),[29] is similar to Sharov's protagonist, in that he too is hospitalized. While a patient in the trauma ward, he attempts to draw on his "genetic memory" in an attempt to decipher and find comfort and direction in a local Ural legend, according to which a certain Pekalov is to have devoted his adult life to digging a tunnel under the Ural River. The themes of memory, the role of the past in the present, and its relation to posterity are central to the narratives of Petrushevskaia, Sharov, and Makanin mentioned here. They serve to reinforce the features of the (post)-glasnost' threshold represented in these works. At the same time, they reveal this threshold as a double-edged sword. That is, in attempting to resolve the crisis of the post-Soviet present and future, this threshold looks back to the past.

Not surprisingly, the terms 'threshold,' 'crisis,' 'transition,' and 'border' constitute catchphrases in the discourse of the times. They are frequently employed in the titles of critical articles, and collections of articles both on this period in Russian literary history in general, on the prose fiction of Viktor Pelevin in particular and, more specifically still,

---

[29] *Novyi mir* 2 (1987): 96-134. Published in translation as "The Loss," in *The Loss: A Novella and Two Short Stories*, trans. Byron Lindsey, Writings from an Unbound Europe (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1998) 3-86.

on Pelevin's novel *Chapaev i Pustota* (1996).[30] Indeed, the novel serves as a literary representation of (post-)perestroika Russia on the threshold, which includes the notion of identity(-loss), the motifs of memory and amnesia, as well as the hero as author/poet and suspected or at least incarcerated madman. Evidently, Pelevin's novel shares important features in common with the works of (post)-perestroika fiction already noted in this chapter, as literary manifestations, or representations, of reality on the threshold, and hence in crisis.

Pelevin's novel comprises two plot lines, which unfold along dual temporal axes. In the first (1919), the hero-narrator Petr Pustota (translated as Peter Voyd) is recruited, after a series of bizarre events turning on a case of mistaken identity, for a mission as commissar with a Red battalion headed by Vasilii Ivanovich Chapaev, the legendary Russian Civil War-hero. A metaphysical, St. 'Petersburg poet' by vocation, Pet'ia quests after the true, possibly transcendent nature of reality, after his true metaphysical identity, while plagued by realistic nightmares about being confined to a Moscow mental hospital.

In the second plot line (1990s),[31] Petr *is* a patient in a Moscow mental hospital, undergoing treatment for amnesia and a delusional disorder. In this context, Petr merely believes he is the commissar assigned to a front-line battalion during the Civil War,

---

[30] These include Aleksandr Genis, "Viktor Pelevin: Granitsy i metamorfozy," *Znamia* 12 (1995): 210-215; Katerina Clark, "Borders, Crossing, and Cross-dressing: Russian Intellectuals in 'the Post-Perestroika Period'," *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 22 (1994): 59-71; Ian K. Lilly and Henrietta Mondry, eds. *Russian Literature in Transition* (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1999).

[31] The precise years in which the two plotlines, above, unfold are difficult to determine, in view of the main protagonist's ostensibly deranged mental condition, and the overall fantastic nature of Pelevin's novel, despite his claims to the contrary in the mock foreword. Presuming that the Civil War plot does indeed transpire in 1919, prior to the death in the autumn of that same year of the historical Chapaev, the year 1991 as a time-frame for the second plotline would be convenient in terms of formal harmony, or rhyme, between the two plotlines, and symbolic of the Soviet State's official collapse. However, the contemporary plot refers to post-1991 events (the shelling of the White House, the storming of Ostankino); moreover, the madman-as-narrator is, traditionally, considered unreliable, at best. Lastly, Gerald McCausland claims the post-Soviet plotline transpires in 1996, in "Viktor Pelevin and the End of Sots-Art, Balina, Condee and Dobrenko 231. Thus, this thesis will refer to the post-Soviet time frame generically, as the 1990s.

headed by Chapaev. His release hinges on his acknowledgement of true 'reality' (in the late twentieth century), and of his true identity.

The two narratives overlap in terms of characters, and a number of somewhat distorted but parallel scenes and events. For example, Barbolin and Zherbunov, the Chekists (members of the pre-KGB secret police) who have been sent to inform Pet'ia of his mission in 1919 also appear as orderlies in the mental hospital. Pet'ia's psychiatrist Timur Timurovich Kanashnikov is the 1990s counterpart of Chapaev and, alternatively, Baron Iungern;[32] Pet'ia suffers a head-wound in both timelines by different means consistent with his circumstances in both 'realities'. In their portrayal of Pet'ia's quest for truth/reality, the juxtaposition of past (history) with present, and the related motifs of memory/amnesia, both plot lines in Pelevin's novel demonstrate the key features of re-examining history in (post-)perestroika literature.

Significantly, the narratives of Pelevin, Sharov, Makanin and Kaledin discussed in this chapter portray (narrator-)heroes who have suffered serious head wounds. Save for the case of the gravedigger Vorobei, these head wounds and the impaired memory they engender act as overt metaphors, firstly, for the trauma intrinsic to the (literary) experience of threshold, as per Bakhtinian theory and, secondly, for the very idea of obligatory transition, after a protracted period of impasse. As if to illustrate this point, Pet'ia's condition – split false consciousness (*razdvoenie lozhnoi lichnosti*) – as diagnosed by Timur Timurovich (54, 112) – has been engendered by his inability to accept change. Pet'ia's condition is a psychic manifestation of frozen transition, or protracted threshold. The notion of frozen transition is asserted beyond the parameters of Pelevin's narrative by

[32] Thought to be a composite of at least two historical personages, including Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), and the notorious anti-Bolshevik Baron Roman Fedorovich von Ungern-Sternberg (1886-1921).

Tat'iana Tolstaia, who sees herself "as a representative of a generation that has become stuck in this complacent post-Soviet period."[33]

The concept of threshold proper informs the various narrative levels of Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*, beginning with the novel's very structure. Firstly, the novel's ten chapters alternate, and are thus evenly divided, between two threshold time frames, which correspond to the dual plotlines. In turn, these represent the two most crisis-laden threshold periods in twentieth-century Russian history – the Civil War (1918-21), and the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union (December 25, 1991), respectively. Many citizens of the former Soviet Union continue to regard the Civil War as the 'most glorious' time of Soviet history, while the State's collapse, by comparison, symbolizes the humiliating demise of a super-power. Regardless of how they are perceived, the notions of threshold and transition are intrinsic to the very framework of Pelevin's novel.

Secondly, the novel employs numerous threshold motifs in both plotlines, particularly in terms of the locations or spaces depicted. The action begins in the 1919 time frame with Pet'ia on the run from the newly instituted Soviet authorities. After interrogation by the Cheka in Petrograd over a potentially dissident poem he has composed, Pet'ia has escaped to Moscow, where he meets, and eventually strangles in self-defense, his former schoolmate-turned-Chekist, Grigorii von Ernen. Significantly, the murder occurs in the hallway of Von Ernen's apartment; for Bakhtin, hallways constitute traditional, crisis-generating threshold spaces. The apartment itself is a transitional space, which very briefly serves as Pet'ia's Moscow base; it is where he meets Chapaev after assuming von Ernen's identity, and the space from which he departs on his

---

[33] Tat'iana Tolstaia, as cited in an unnumbered and untitled introductory page to Serafima Roll, ed., *Contextualizing Transition: Interviews with Contemporary Russian Writers and Critics,* Middlebury Studies in Russian Language and Literature 16 (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).

mission as commissar to Chapaev's division. Newly requisitioned by the Cheka, the apartment still bears traces of the domestic intimacy of its former inhabitants (a nursery, tooth jars, a canopied bed); their juxtaposition with the empty bottles and the "sour smell of leg-wrappings and stale drink" associated with von Ernen and his associates by profession suggests the now provisional spirit of the abode.[34] For the most part, the remainder of the 1919 narrative takes place in spaces of, or connoting, motion. These include Chapaev's armored vehicle (*bronevik*); a Moscow railway platform (where Chapaev addresses his troops); a railway carriage (transport to the frontlines); and a horse-drawn carriage (to a meeting with Baron Iungern). Save for the hallway in von Ernen's apartment, the above locations do not constitute traditional Dostoevskian threshold spaces as delineated by Bakhtin; nonetheless, each of them signifies a threshold and/or transition, as movement toward or departure from one space to another.

The novel's 1990s narrative appears much more static by comparison, in that the primary location for the action (or inaction) of the characters – the mental hospital – is stationary, and closed (or, more literally, locked). Presumably, however, this space is temporary and 'threshold-like,' firstly, in the sense that hospitals represent 'repair shops' for the body or mind, and are not normally considered permanent dwellings. Secondly, it is the setting of a genuine scandal, set off by a clash among patients about the nature of reality, which culminates with the smashing of a plaster bust of Aristotle[35] over Pet'ia's already malfunctioning head. Much of this narrative, furthermore, comprises glimpses into the psyches of Pet'ia's fellow patients, whose subconscious 'hallucinations' involve

---

[34] Viktor Pelevin, *Buddha's Little Finger,* trans. Andrew Bromfield (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000) 5. Unless otherwise indicated, English citations from Pelevin's novel will refer to this edition.

[35] Following the incident, Pet'ia calls Aristotle "the ideological grandfather of Bolshevism" (111), referring, no doubt, to the philosopher's emphasis on form and matter, as opposed to the Platonic vision of a higher order of reality beyond the empirical.

travel by metro (Serdiuk), jeep (Volodin) and Harrier jet (Maria).[36] Similarly, after Pet'ia is discharged from the hospital, he returns to Moscow by commuter-train (*elektrichka*), and to the "Musical Snuffbox Café" by taxi. Lastly, at the end of the novel Pet'ia is transported to his "Inner Mongolia," figuratively at least, in Chapaev's *bronevik*. All in all, the threshold as travel, transition, or temporary dwelling forms a leitmotif in Pelevin's novel. The frequent recurrence throughout the work of the threshold in simple form, as a motif, strongly suggests its presence also on a more complex, thematic level.

Among the myriad of themes that inform Pelevin's novel, a most dominant and distinctly threshold-oriented one concerns the nature of reality – the distinction between reality and illusion – and the traditional (mis-)conception of the four-dimensional space-time continuum – the nature of time and space. Pelevin articulates this theme and reinforces the notion of threshold throughout the novel, firstly, by means of the narrator-hero's passage to and from dreaming and waking states. Indeed, in a manner consistent with the notions of threshold and transition, the chapters are composed according to this principle: they are linked to one another, and even overlap, according to shifts in the state of Pet'ia's consciousness. These shifts include the sharing by Pet'ia and each of his fellow patients (Mariia, Serdiuk, Volodin) of each other's (un-)consciousness during mandatory sessions of drug-induced group therapy. On more than one occasion, Pet'ia is conscious of being on the threshold between states of consciousness – be it between sleep and wakefulness (139), drunkenness and lucidity (355), or ignorance and enlightenment

[36] A U.S. military aircraft, popularized by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the film *True Lies* (1994), the Harrier is characterized by a helicopter-like ability to take-off, hover, and land without requiring a runway; thus, it is an aircraft with increased maneuverability and dynamic potential.

(273). Judging from the relative ease of Pet'ia's passage between states of consciousness, or realities, the boundary or threshold between them, in Pelevin's novel, is amorphous.[37]

The blurring of boundaries is further suggested in the novel by the hero's difficulty in distinguishing between the realms of dream and reality. On the surface, Pet'ia's status as a mental patient contributes to and, technically, even predisposes him to such impaired judgment, by conventional (sane) standards. Within the parameters of the narrative, indications of Pet'ia's situation in one realm or the other seem clear to his psychiatrist, Timur Timurovich, and the hospital orderlies Zherbunov and Barbolin. Beyond the parameters of the text a similar ability to distinguish between the two seemingly opposing domains depicted in the novel is attributed to the reader, who is assumed or at least challenged to possess a level of competence that would enable him to recognize historical inaccuracies in the novel. Contrary to the 'facts' of Pelevin's 1919 narrative, for example, Chapaev's division was not engaged in the battle at Lozovaia Junction during the Civil War; nor was Chapaev known for wearing expensive *eau de cologne*, or drinking fine champagne. Such inconsistencies are not apparent to Pet'ia, whose total immersion, in the relevant chapters of the work, in the era of Civil War Russia deprives him of any historical perspective. Compounding this impediment, his self-professed inclusion in the literary circles of the day would limit his knowledge of military affairs and personnel.

Moreover, Pet'ia is no more amazed by the strangeness of occurrences in one realm, than by those in the other. En route to the frontlines in 1919, presumably to fight

---

[37]Commenting on the theme of boundaries in Pelevin's work, Genis suggests that Pelevin makes habitable the junctions between realities; he observes that, as a writer on the divide between epochs, Pelevin inhabits his works with protagonists living in two worlds at once. See Aleksandr Genis, "Beseda desiataia: Pole chudes: Viktor Pelevin," *Zvezda* 12 (1997): 231.

back enemy forces, Chapaev's 'Bashkir,'[38] on the field commander's own orders, coolly unhooks the dingy boxcars transporting the troops from the luxurious carriages carrying Chapaev, Pet'ia and Anna (107). In the mental hospital, meanwhile, Pet'ia is exposed to such 1990s phenomena as music by the Swollen Ovaries (*Vospalenie pridatkov,* 79) – an all-girl pop-band on the radio, famous for their contemporary renditions of classical music, and visions (through Mariia's subconscious) of Arnold Schwarzenegger in the half-man, half-machine guise of the 'Terminator' (1984). For one as immersed in the pre- and early Soviet times as Pet'ia, such phenomena would be most unusual, if only in their exaggerated contradiction of historical record or, at least, some of the more progressive discourse of those contemporary times. The Swollen Ovaries and the Terminator both contravene, and take to their parodic extreme, respectively, the egalitarian ideals, and the aspirations of scientific conquests written into the official record of the times.

More to the point, however, Pet'ia's ability to discern between dream and reality is impeded by the fact that he awakens and/or regains consciousness (*prikhodit v sebia*) following bouts of intoxication, courses of drug therapy, or sheer exhaustion, in and into *both* time frames. Thus, after having fallen asleep in 1919 at the end of the novel's first chapter, Pet'ia first wakes up in the 1990s hospital in Chapter 2; similarly, in Chapter 3, he wakes up back in 1919, after having fallen asleep in the hospital. To Pet'ia the 'reality' of the mental hospital is no less tangible than that of the Civil War frame, though he refers to it more than once as a nightmare. He explains:

> В себя придешь, так понимаешь, что это просто кошмар был, но пока он снится... Даже и непонятно, что правда на самом деле (248). [Every time I come round, I realize that it was no more than a nightmare...But while I am dreaming, it's impossible to understand what is real in actual fact (205).]

---

[38] By definition, a Bashkir is an inhabitant of Bashkiria (Bashkir Autonomous Republic) located to the southwest of the Ural Mountains, in central Russia.

For all intents and purposes, Pet'ia implicitly accepts the 1919 timeframe as actual reality. His readiness to do so is warranted by the fact that on several occasions throughout the novel (99, 169, 174, 177) Pet'ia (re-)awakens from naps (sometimes dreamless) taken *in* the Civil War frame back *into* the Civil War frame. He does so, again, from a most vivid dream *about* the Civil War frame, in which he is seduced by Anna (344). Upon awakening from the latter, Pet'ia is quick to realize that his amorous encounter with Anna was merely a case of wishful thinking; nonetheless, he fails to recognize the 'dream within a dream' phenomenon he has just experienced. In short, on all of the above occasions Pet'ia assumes that he is waking into reality, as such. For Pet'ia, 1919 is the time frame within which he has a past and a genuine present; he refers to it as "the ordinary world "(226), and "the place [...] where I get drunk with Chapaev in the bathhouse" (220).

However, Pet'ia's decisive acknowledgement of genuine reality in either time frame is stymied further when he glimpses what he perceives as the true nature of reality on the threshold *between* realities – that is, between sleep and waking. More than once Pet'ia feels that he is on the verge, or threshold, of comprehending the 'mechanics' of reality:

> [М]не показалось, что вот-вот я пойму что-то очень важное, что вот-вот станут видны спрятанные за покровом реальности рычаги и тяги, которые приводят в движение все вокруг (279). [... I felt as though I were on the verge of understanding something extremely important, that any moment now the levers and cables of the mechanism that was concealed behind the veil of reality and made everything move would become visible (231)].

Nonetheless, following these moments of lucidity, Pet'ia awakens, or regains consciousness, in 1919.

The better part of the 1919 narrative is devoted to a series of philosophical discussions addressing the essence of reality, whereby Chapaev challenges Pet'ia's world-view. With Chapaev in the role of Socratic interrogator, these arguments force Pet'ia to cast doubt on his own beliefs; the latter comprise an admixture of metaphysical and rational theories, derived from the Western philosophical tradition.

Eventually, Pet'ia comprehends what he has intuitively suspected, to some degree: that *all* 'realities' are mere threshold states linked to a higher 'absolute' reality, upon the attainment of which all thresholds *between* realities – past, present, and future – dissolve. Moments before his deadly altercation with von Ernen, Pet'ia tells him of a poem in which he broaches this very subject, and for which he was detained by the Cheka in Petrograd:

> Там было о потоке времени, который размывает стену настоящего, и на ней появляются все новые и новые узоры, часть которых мы называем прошлым. Память уверяет нас, что вчерашний день действительно был, но как знать, не появилась ли вся эта память с первым утренним лучом? (17). [It was about the stream of time washing away the wall of the present so that new patterns keep appearing on it, and we call some of them the past. Our memory tells us that yesterday really existed, but how can we be sure that all of these memories did not simply appear with the first light of dawn? (7)].

Pet'ia's 'decadent' musings on the amorphous nature of time, on a perpetual threshold, as it were, undercut the concrete linearity of time dictated by the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, such as historical determinism, whose very basis is rooted in the events of a concrete, if ideologically rewritten past and foreseeable, rationally ordained future.

Ultimately, the threshold theme in *Chapaev i Pustota* yields to the theme of impermanence. In its most literal sense, the notion of impermanence connotes a temporary, or transient state. Depending on the context, impermanence can be perceived either as harmless (the 'fleeting-ness' of a moment of anxiety, however intense), or

harmful, if prolonged (the instability of a fluctuating stock market). Most commonly, impermanence connotes an undesirable state or characteristic.

Within the parameters of Pelevin's narrative, however, it lacks any axiological connotation. Imbued with no value, either positive or negative, the notion of impermanence suggests an intrinsic cosmic condition. On one level in *Chapaev i Pustota*, impermanence relates to (and derives from) the novel's overarching theme of Buddhist philosophy.[39] By some accounts (Lipovetskii, Pavlov), Pelevin's Chapaev is a master of Zen Buddhism, whereby one achieves an enlightened state neither through the study of canonical texts (*sūtras*), nor abstinence or meditation. Instead, Zen advocates 'sudden enlightenment.' According to Zen,

> The Teacher [...] cannot 'teach' the Truth to the 'learner.' [...] And by the same token, the Learner cannot 'learn' the Truth; for it is a Truth which he already knows and possesses, in fact already *is*, but a Truth that must be *re*-cognized and *re*-alized.[40]

Evgenii Pavlov asserts the attainment of sudden enlightenment on Pet'ia's part in *Chapaev i Pustota* – not as knowing, but as remembering.[41] In direct contrast to the emphasis on materialism at the core of official Soviet Truth, Zen Truth implies the impermanence of all (non-)sentient beings, concepts, or structures, including time and space.

---

[39] The extent to which *Chapaev i Pustota* is a 'Buddhist novel,' if at all, and the 'school' of Buddhism to which the protagonists might adhere or promote have been topics of lively discussion, predominantly among Russian literary critics (Novikov, Vial'tsev, Arkhangel'skii), since the novel's publication in 1996. This thesis attempts neither to resolve this issue, nor fuel the debate around it. However, the somewhat negative focus on this particular aspect of Pelevin's novel seems unusual, since Buddhist-related themes or motifs are not completely foreign to the Russian literary tradition from Lev Tolstoi (mostly in the form of parables) as translated by Dragan Milivojevic, *Leo Tolstoy and the Oriental Heritage*, East European Monographs DXVIII (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998); Ivan Bunin, as per Thomas Gaiton Marullo, *If You See the Buddha: Studies in the Fiction of Ivan Bunin* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1998); Vsevolod Ivanov ("Vozvrashchenie Buddy" ["The Buddha's Return," 1923]); émigré writer Gaito Gazdanov (also entitled "Vozvrashchenie Buddy,"["The Buddha's Return," 1949-50]), not to mention the more radical sots-artist Egor Radov (*Zmeesos*, 1994).

[40] Conrad Hyers, *Zen and the Comic Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973) 137.

[41] Pavlov 99.

Transposed from the metaphysical plane to one more mundane, the theme of impermanence in *Chapaev i Pustota* most obviously reiterates the essence of Soviet reality, as it has been presented in dissident fiction, criticism, and cultural theory, both in Russia and abroad.[42] Despite seventy years of official rhetoric to the contrary, Soviet reality proved chimerical, and ephemeral in retrospect – the ultimate simulacrum,[43] seen by Gregory Freidin as a theme-park, which he appropriately refers to, in an analysis of works by poet Timur Kibirov, as "Potemkinland."[44]

In *Chapaev i Pustota*, this aspect of Soviet life is reiterated by Mariia, after a heated argument concerning Plato, Aristotle, and the nature of reality:

> "Это при советской власти мы жили среди иллюзий. А сейчас мир стал реален и познаваем. Понял?"(135). [Under Soviet power we were surrounded by illusions. But now the world has become real and knowable. Understand? (108)].

Mariia has evidently adopted an openly anti- and post- Soviet position, though the statement appears to be a mere platitude. First, the declaration seems rehearsed, and almost insincere in its obstinacy. Within the context of the 1990s plotline it seems to have been uttered as a show of rehabilitation, in the hope of imminent release from confinement. Indeed, in most societies the acknowledgment of empirical reality is a prerequisite for the appearance of sanity. Accordingly, Mariia's perspective does secure

---

[42] See, for example, Mikhail Epstein, *Back to the Future*; Iurii M. Lotman and Boris A. Uspenskii, "Binary Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (to the End of the Eighteenth Century), *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, eds. Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 30-66. Set in St. Petersburg of the 1950s and 60s, Andrei Bitov's *Pushkinskii dom* (*Pushkin House* [1978]) portrays impermanence through the family history of Leva Odoevtsev marked by evacuations, arrests, and rehabilitations, which serve in the novel to constantly alter the state and the very existence of family relations, in accordance with official (post-)Stalinist policy. Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* (*Moscow Circles* [1973]) in one sense depicts the epitome of impermanence in the last day of the life of the hopelessly alcoholic Venichka and the various altered states of consciousness he experiences on his journey to the 'end of the line.'

[43] The term *simulacrum*, coined by Jean Baudrillard, is used here in its broadest sense, to designate the notion of "a simulated copy of reality that had lost all reference to the original," as cited in Epstein, *After the Future* 8.

[44] Gregory Freidin, "Transfiguration of Kitsch – Timur Kibirov's *Sentiments*: A Farewell Elegy for Soviet Civilization," Balina, Condee, and Dobrenko 123.

his/her release, despite the violent act of smashing the bust of Aristotle over Pet'ia's head in the heat of the argument. Ironically, her co-discussant, Serdiuk, remains incarcerated for suggesting the existence of a higher order of reality. Given the long-time practice of punitive psychiatry in Soviet Russia, Mariia's pronouncement, and willingness to tow what resembles a new, post-Soviet 'party' line, takes on a morbid hue;[45] it is tainted further by Kanashnikov's self-professed "turbo-Jungian" treatment of his patients (*turboiungianstvo*, 115), his reference to insulin shock therapy and surgical intervention (378) in the case of Serdiuk, and the arbitrarily prolonged detainment of Volodin. Needless to say, Mariia's pronouncement is at odds with the overarching 'Buddhistic' premise of Pelevin's novel, noted above, according to which teachings reality itself is an illusion. Generally speaking, Kanashinkov, his views, and diagnoses represent rational foils to the irrational events and viewpoints propagated by Chapaev and Iungern, and experienced by Pet'ia in the time frame of the Civil War.

Extending beyond the parameters of Pelevin's novel, Mariia's statement suggests a new, but strangely familiar official post-Soviet position, comprising a mere reversal of the former Soviet party line. In this regard, the comment lends credence to the views of Soviet cultural theorists Iurii Lotman and Boris Uspenskii, whose hypothesis of cultural (and ideological) change in Russia stresses radical reversals and covert or perverse continuities, from the adoption for Kievan Rus' by Vladimir I of Orthodox Christianity in 988, through Peter's radical Westernization in the eighteenth century and, implicitly, even

---

[45] On the various diagnostic principles and courses of therapy (including sodium amytal [truth serum], aminazine [a heavy sedative] and insulin shock therapy) administered, often as punishment, to incarcerated Soviet dissidents and other 'mental patients' in the Soviet Union, see Alexander Podrabinek, *Punitive Medicine* (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1980) 75-96. See also a more recent study on the topic by Teresa Smith and Thomas Oleszczuk, *No Asylum: State Psychiatric Repression in the Former USSR* (New York: New York UP, 1996), as cited in Angela Brintlinger, "The Hero in the Madhouse: The Post-Soviet Novel Confronts the Soviet Past," *Slavic Review* 63.1 (2004): 47.

beyond, [46] to the Revolution, and collapse of the Communist State. Read in the light of Pelevin's mixture of Buddhist impermanence and postmodernist déja-vu, the dramatic ruptures of Russian history, demonstrated by Lotman and Uspenskii's zig-zag paradigm, make change itself an illusion, and the changing state becomes the threshold, a venue for protracted and perverse (non-)transition.

Ironically, the simple substitution, in Mariia's assertion about reality, by "Tsarist" of "Soviet" transforms it into a platitude worthy of any given Stalinist 'positive hero.' Pavka Korchagin denounces the lies of bourgeois exploiters in Nikolai Ostrovskii's *Kak zakal'ialas' stal'* (*How the Steel was Tempered* [1934]) as adamantly as Mariia now condemns Soviet reality as illusory. Inverted in this way, the statement could also have been uttered either by the editor Berlioz or his protégé, the proletarian poet Ivan Bezdomnyi, in the opening chapter of Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita,* where Berlioz denounces not just Christianity, but the very existence of the historical Jesus as a myth "of the standard kind."[47] What Korchagin, Berlioz, Bezdomnyi, and Mariia have in common is their zeal in conforming to the official, rational, or at least pragmatic position of the day.

However, the cases of Mariia and Bezdomnyi are linked more closely still. After witnessing a series of inexplicable events shortly after Berlioz's diatribe – a freak accident in which he is beheaded by a tram, which is boarded, in turn, by a talking cat of human proportions – Bezdomnyi suffers a breakdown and is admitted, against his will, to

---

[46] Lotman and Uspenskii, *Binary Models* 31-33. Similarly, Evgenii Dobrenko asserts the fluid and all-encompassing nature of cultural models under and post-Stalin, in which were reconciled both revolutionary and restorative views, in order to accommodate various freezes and thaws. See Evgenii Dobrenko, "Sotsrealizm v poiskakh 'istoricheskogo proshlogo'," *Voprosy literatury* 1 (1997): 31.

[47] Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Connor (New York: Vintage Books, 1996) 5. Hereafter, citations will refer to this edition.

a psychiatric hospital. At the novel's end, and many years after Bezdomnyi's release, the reader is told:

> Everything is clear to Ivan Nikolayevich [Bezdomnyi], he knows and understands everything. He knows that in his youth he was the victim of hypnotist-criminals and that he had to go in for treatment and was cured. But he also knows that there are things he cannot cope with (333).

Like *Chapaev i Pustota*, Bulgakov's novel alternates between the realms of the rational and the supernatural; moreover, its chapters alternate (though irregularly) between time frames. Not unlike Mariia, Bezdomnyi has outwardly adopted a rational position toward the past for his own mental and physical welfare. As a citizen of Stalinist Russia, Bezdomnyi and his fictional experiences are worlds apart from Mariia's in the 1990s, on the one hand. On the other hand, they are linked, it seems, by their fates as protagonists in the ongoing saga of (post-)Soviet literary culture which, in spite of a Revolution, and the various thaws, freezes, and the ultimate ideological collapse that ensued, seems to represent a reality in which *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* In this scenario change is experienced as a repeated return to the same pattern that has always governed Russia's apparent unfoundedness, and ultimately her own reality status.[48] To a similar end, Kevin Platt wonders whether poet Timur Kibirov's splicing together in a particular work of two proverbs ("There's nothing new under the sun," and

---

[48] Unfoundedness is a term well-suited to describing St. Petersburg, since its very establishment (1703) and construction under Peter I on a marshy delta. Similarly, the notion of impermanence is a suitable term for the city as the capital of Russia (1713-1918) until the Bolshevik Revolution. Andrei Belyi's novel *Peterburg* (*Petersburg* [1916]) treats the city's ephemeral nature, while Mikhail Epstein maintains that "[i]nstability was laid into the very foundation of the imperial capital, which subsequently became the cradle of three revolutions," in *Back to the Future* 192. In Pelevin's novel, Pet'ia affirms he is "*piterskii*" (274), or from the capital, in dialogue with Ignat, a Don Cossack in 'limbo' who is about to depart from the karmic cycle of death and (re-)birth, to nirvana.

"There's nothing eternal under the moon") "raises the question, has nothing changed since the bad old days of Soviet existence [...]?"[49]

On the surface, these suggestions are inconsistent with this chapter's premise of a threshold state as intrinsically dynamic; the chapter has illustrated that thresholds, transitions, and movement govern various levels of *Chapaev i Pustota*, even to the point of exemplifying the classic Bakhtinian threshold, which inevitably generates change. However, in Pelevin (as in Buddhism) cosmic impermanence approaches its opposite. As one scholar of Buddhism observes, it is said, for instance, that Truth in Zen is the recognition of one's own "buddha-mind" – a term which has been used to designate both "the ultimate reality, or 'emptiness,' of all things *and* the enlightened state" itself.[50]

Of immediate relevance to the discussion at hand is the elimination of what Joan Stambaugh refers to as the "subject-object split"[51] (simply, between 'I' and 'it'), and the non-dualistic mode of perception both implicit in the preceding statement on Zen, and manifest in the nuanced Buddhist tradition at large.[52] Indeed, it is suggested that "in the realm of Emptiness, time and space as we conceive them are meaningless; anywhere is the same as everywhere, and now, then, never, forever are all one."[53] In essence, Pelevin's Chapaev relays this very message to Pet'ia in the novel's ninth chapter. Upon

---

[49] Platt considers Kibirov's poem *About Certain Aspects of the Present Sociocultural Situation* in Kevin M. F. Platt, *History in a Grotesque Key: Russian Literature and the Idea of Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 177.

[50] Carl Bielefeldt, "A Discussion of Seated Zen," *Buddhism in Practice*, Princeton Readings in Religions, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995) 198 (emphasis added).

[51] Joan Stambaugh, *The Real is Not the Rational*, SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986) 104.

[52] In a word, "'non-dualism' [...] represents the rejection or transcendence of all distinctions," as per Burton Watson, translator's introduction, *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia UP, 1993) xv.

[53] Watson xvi.

remembering the truth of emptiness, or void, Pet'ia fulfills his quest in the 1919 timeframe; he recognizes the essence of his metaphysical self.

At that very moment in the 1990s, Pet'ia attains "complete catharsis" (370), signifying the (ostensible) liberation from his delusional state, and the (re-)unification of his split psyche. The novel's ninth chapter depicts Pet'ia's final moments with Chapaev and Anna; all three dive into the cosmic River Ural. As it happens, however, the chapter as a whole comprises the narrative of Pet'ia's own episode of drug-induced (un)-consciousness-sharing therapy. To the reader, this factor goes unnoticed: Pet'ia's hallucinatory narrative is not italicized, in contrast to those segments depicting the narratives of Mariia, Serdiuk and Volodin. Thus, where events in Pelevin's novel once appeared merely to overlap from chapter to chapter, distinguished as Pet'ia's transitions from dreams (*not* accessible either to the other patients or Kanashnikov) to wakefulness, they are now shown actually to coincide. Whereas previously there existed two narratives, there now appears to remain only one (1990s). As on the level of theme, the seemingly contradictory notions of impermanence and oneness are ultimately reconciled on the level of narrative and plot.

The question remains as to the manner in, and extent to which Pelevin succeeds in representing the paradox of what essentially is reduced, in the (post-)Soviet context both within and beyond the parameters of his novel, to a protracted threshold, or frozen transition between realities. This chapter has already linked Pet'ia's condition – his inability to accept change in the 1990s plotline – to a psychic manifestation of this state of limbo. In the broader context of his novel, Pelevin represents these notions by exploiting the similarities between 1919 and 1990s Russia.

Confirming Ivanova's views on the crisis of identity as a corollary to threshold and transition for the Russian population at large, George Gibian observed, on the eve of the Soviet Union's collapse, that:

> Russians are wading through a mass of recriminations, trying to find a picture of what and who they are that squares with the new facts and with the self-respect and pride they want to feel. [...T]hey talk about what is Russian, what it is, what happened to it. [...] The relationships between being Soviet and being Russian, between being communist and being Russian, are confused, unclearly described, variously argued.[54]

Katerina Clark, meanwhile, shifts her focus to the clash of ideas among the (post)-glasnost' Russian intelligentsia, regarding the current crisis of national or historical identity:

> Intellectuals argued about whether guidance was to be found in the mid-nineteenth century, the early twentieth, or the 1920s, whether the country should opt for Eurasianism or for Russian Orthodoxy as the core of its identity, or should see itself as part of Europe, and as such opposed to America with its despised mass culture.[55]

Though situated in a more general context, Clark's comments can be applied directly to Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*; thus, they extend the thrust of Gibian's observations on Russia's quest for national and cultural self-definition during glasnost' into the post-Soviet realm. Pelevin's novel addresses many of the above questions, to varying degrees.

While some of the issues appear as central themes (Russia's identification with the East or the West), others comprise leitmotifs (morality and conscience, stemming from Pet'ia's murder of von Ernen). Still others function as intertextual references, which evoke and/or complement the treatment of these and related ideas in other texts. The theme of Eurasianism, for instance, is introduced in the mock foreword to the novel, and resurfaces time and again throughout the narrative, in its most basic manifestation as the

---

[54] George Gibian, "The Quest for Russian National Identity in Soviet Culture Today," *The Search for Self-Definition in Russian Literature,* ed. Ewa M. Thompson (Houston: Rice University Press, 1991) 18.

[55] Katerina Clark, afterword, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual,* 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000) 277.

East/West dichotomy which has governed the Russian identity question for centuries. The related 'European question,' meanwhile, is articulated through discussions of Kant, Schopenhauer, Leibniz, Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, and Jung.

The stark binary terms – in this case, East versus West – in which these identity questions are cast, are consistent with the mood of any nation in crisis; the issues themselves also match to a remarkable degree the "eternal questions" that have both absorbed and divided the Russian intelligentsia since its emergence in the eighteenth century, namely "who is to blame?" and "what is to be done?." Both questions are lifted from the titles of two nineteenth-century ideological novels, by Aleksandr Herzen (*Kto vinovat?*[1845-46]), and Nikolai Chernyshevskii (*Chto delat'?*[1863]), respectively. In brief, Herzen's work deals with the plight of the superfluous Russian intellectual, while Chernyshevskii represents his revolutionary vision of a utopian society.

In *Chapaev i Pustota*, one scene in 1919 is devoted to a diatribe on these very questions by an agitated, pajama-clad Kotovskii, who comes to Pet'ia's room at Chapaev's headquarters, with a bottle of champagne and two glasses. Though he rails against the Russian intelligentsia, the revolutionaries, and the "butchers who are so busy killing people nowadays" (147) in a manner worthy of any Slavophile, in fact he pays these questions mere lip service. Indeed, his purpose is not to engage Pet'ia in a serious discussion, but rather to obtain and inhale some of the cocaine Pet'ia carries in the sac-voyage he stole from von Ernen's apartment. By the end of the scene, the term 'thinking of Russia' on Kotovskii's part becomes mere code for 'sniffing cocaine.' A session of nineteenth-century name-dropping, the scene evokes a number of intertextual references, including the works by Herzen and Chernyshevskii, noted above, Turgenev's *Ottsy i deti*

(*Fathers and Sons*, [1862]), and Dostoevskii (*Besy* [*Demons*, 1871-72]). Its purpose is two-fold: to distinguish Pelevin's Kotovskii from his historical counterpart – a respected Red Army man[56] -- and to undercut the weightiness of these questions, from the perspective of the Civil War being waged because, or in spite of them.

In *Chapaev i Pustota* satire provides the main vehicle whereby Pelevin addresses or reflects the issues noted above, by Clark, and exploits the similarities between the two most significant threshold periods in twentieth-century Russian history. In and of itself, a satiric stance or mode of representation is by no means confined to the prose fiction of periods of threshold, crisis, or transition.[57] Primarily, however, the most poignant twentieth-century literary satire does emerge from the two most polemical threshold periods – the 1920s (NEP) and (post)-glasnost.' Broadly speaking, literary satire involves the critical representation, in literary form, of social practices, movements or tendencies in order to criticize, or expose them as somehow ridiculous or fallacious.[58] Though not restricted to the criticism of contemporary norms, much satire targets contemporary society. Like Kaledin and Petrushevskaia, who satirize the late Soviet period represented in their narratives (rampant poverty, food shortages, alcoholism, waning morality, generational conflicts), Pelevin is critical of his own post-Soviet contemporary epoch;

---

[56] Kotovskii is mentioned in this regard in list of notable revolutionaries, including Budennyi and Voroshilov, in a book devoted to Furmanov's *Chapaev*; these men, among others, are said to have 'fought against the counter-revolutionary scum' (*bili kontrrevoliutsionnuiu nechist'*), in A. Berezhnoi, Chapaev *Dm. Furmanova* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965) 7-8.

[57] Indeed, the tradition of Russian literary satire includes such greats as Pushkin (*Evgenii Onegin* [*Eugene Onegin*, publ. 1833]), Gogol' (*Revizor* [*The Government Inspector*, [1836]), Saltykov-Shchedrin (*Istoriia odnogo goroda* [*The History of a Town*, 1869-70]), and Dostoevskii ("Bobok," 1873); these satiric works emerged from a relatively stable nineteenth-century Russia.

[58] Karen L. Ryan Hayes asserts that "[s]atire, unlike most other modes of literature, finds its object outside of art, in the social, political or moral life of the culture it treats," adding that traditionally, "Russian and Soviet criticism has emphasized the reformative nature of the mode." See the introduction to her study of *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 3.

thus, he portrays the "New Russian" 'entrepreneurs' outfitted with cell-phones, bodyguards (doubling as hit-men), and American jeeps.

However, Pelevin's satire is distinguished from that of his contemporaries by the fact that as he is portrayed in the novel, Pet'ia has little 'actual' experience in the reality of post-Soviet Russia – experience that he can recall, at least, in view of his amnesia. Save for the mental hospital, and the novel's final chapter, in which he is released, Pet'ia participates in this 1990s reality only vicariously – at the weekly group therapy sessions, where his fellow patients are induced to recount the series of hallucinatory events leading up to their committal. Two of these hallucinatory narratives (Mariia's and Serdiuk's) pointedly address the East-West dichotomy that has informed the Russian identity question for centuries.

For the most part, the influx of American mass culture into 1990s Russia is portrayed through Mariia – a male patient, named after German writers Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), and Erich Maria Remarque (1898-1970). Imagining herself as "Simply Mariia" (*Prosto Mariia*, 54), star of the Mexican soap-opera of the same title,[59] Mariia is aware of her soothing and captivating effect on countless viewers. Still, she is unfulfilled. Sensing a mission on her part, for the sake of Moscow, "expiring in its suffering" (42), she must unite "a strong hand, [...], capable of resisting evil whenever the need arose" (42), with "her own meek and gentle love" (43). Soon enough, she understands that the answer lies in her betrothal to Arnold Schwarzenegger, who appears to her as the 'Terminator.' Mariia's "alchemical wedlock with the West" is to be

---

[59] Ivanova notes the immense popularity of the program, whose inconvenient scheduling on Russian television threatened the timely milking of cows on collective farms, in Natal'ia Ivanova, "The Nostalgic Present: Retrospectives on the (Post-) Soviet TV Screen," *Russian Studies in Literature*, 36.2 (2000): 59-60.

consummated, symbolically, at least, in a parodic re-enactment of a scene from the latter's film, *True Lies* (1994).[60] When Mariia refuses to accommodate her betrothed in the manner he desires, Schwarzenegger unceremoniously tilts her off the plane; Mariia falls, crashing through what appears to be a window of the Ostankino building. The historic events (shelling of the White House, seizure of the Ostankino television station) in 1993 Moscow provide the backdrop for Maria's smoke-filled hallucination; as expected, CNN films the sequence of events.[61]

Balancing the emphasis on Western mass-culture of the 1990s, however, are the visions Mariia has, during the same session, of Russian Silver Age culture. On two occasions, for instance, she glimpses "a man with an enormous curling moustache and intense, moody eyes" (43), alternately described as "the man with the ecstatic eyes and the long, droopy moustache" (44), bringing to mind the Symbolist poet and philosopher Vladimir Solov'iev.[62] Inadvertently tuned in to another, distant consciousness, Mariia also envisages such Blokian catch-words as "Bridegroom" (*Zhenikh*, 60) and "Visitor" (*Gost,'* ibid.), as well as such references to the Divine Sophia, as "*prekrasnaia dama*" and "*neznakomka*" (59), "beautiful lady" and "unknown woman," respectively,[63] invoking,

---

[60] In the scene in question, Schwarzenegger's daughter escapes her kidnappers by straddling the nose of the Harrier-jet (midair) her father has flown to the heights of the skyscraper in which she is being held. Pelevin's version of the scene in question is sexually suggestive; it involves the phallic symbolism of an antenna-like object emerging from the spine of the plane, across which Mariia sits straddled.

[61] Pelevin's portrayal of such American pop culture phenomena as Schwarzenegger, CNN, and American jeeps in *Chapaev i Pustota* brings to mind Sally Dalton-Brown's comment on the author's earlier works as "comic-book reflections of the world." She compares them to "popart which, like Warhol's or Lichtenstein's pictures, offers its own images as ridiculously sacred," in "Ludic Nonchalance or Ludicrous Despair? Viktor Pelevin and Russian Postmodernist Prose," *Slavonic and East European Review* 75.2 (1997) 227.

[62] See for example the lithographic rendering of Solov'iev by Iurii Selivestrov (1940-1990), in Georgy Gachev, *Russkaia duma* (Moscow: Novosti, 1991).

[63] These particular terms are absent from Bromfield's translation of Pelevin's text, as are various other references to Russia's Silver Age, on occasion comprising significant sections of dialogue. This thesis speculates that the average English-speaking reader would have little or no knowledge of these

again, the lexicon of Solov'iev, Belyi and Blok. Though generally considered in terms of higher aesthetic (if not moral) principles, including a Neo-Platonic vision of reality, than the 'Terminator' or 'Simply Maria,' Silver Age culture is conflated with Latin and U.S. American pop culture. Pelevin's brand of satire reduces the icons of both domains to their best-known clichés. Schwarzenegger's 'dumping' of Mariia symbolizes the unsuitable alignment of post-Soviet Russia with an ungracious, if not hegemonic, robotic and egotistical West.[64] By relegating the cultures of the two realms to the status of mere pop culture, Pelevin exploits, again, the similarities between 1919 and the 1990s. This notion is further emphasized with Pet'ia's identical observation, in both time frames, about the clientele at the Musical Snuffbox:

> Публика была самая разношерстная, но больше всего было, как это обычно случается в истории человечества, свинорылых спекулянтов и дорого одетых блядей (31, 395). [The customers were a very mixed bunch, but as has always been the case throughout the history of humanity, it was pig-faced speculators and expensively dressed whores who predominated (19, 332)].

In his turn, fellow patient Serdiuk recounts his hallucinatory experiences at the offices of 'Taira' – a Japanese firm, to which he has gone in response to an advertisement for employment, and where he is hired. Horrified by the extent to which Russia is already "infected with the repulsive pragmatism of the West" (164), Taira's manager,

---

topics, which are not crucial to the plot, but do provide subtexts and intertextual references; Slavists would read the original version of the novel and (hopefully) make the appropriate connections.

[64] Viacheslav Desiatov compares Mariia's attempt at an alchemical wedlock with the West in the guise of Schwarzenegger to Pil'niak's Civil War novel *Golyi god* (*The Naked Year* [1922]). There, a certain Zilotov encourages the mystical union of Olen'ka Kunts (Russia) and the (Western) Communist Laitis; according to Zilotov, the union is to produce a new savior twenty years hence. The comparison affirms, once again, the observation in this chapter that Pelevin exploits the similarities between the time-frames of 1919 and the 1990s in his novel. See Desiatov's "Arnol'd Shvartsenegger – Poslednii geroi russkoi literatury," *Ekfrasis v russkoi literature: Trudy lozannskogo simpoziuma*, ed. L. Geller (Moscow: MIK, 2002) 195-196.

Kawabata, [65] firmly advocates Russia's alchemical wedlock with the East, based on his belief in a metaphysical void at the core of both Russian and Japanese religious thought:

> В глубине российской души зияет та же пустота, что и в глубине японской. И именно из этой пустоты и возникает мир, возникает каждую секунду (205). [[...] In the depths of the Russian soul lies the same gaping void we find deep in the soul of Japan. And from this very void the world comes into being, constantly, with every second (168-169)].

Following prolonged discussions with Kawabata on eastern philosophy, religion, Russia's eastern leanings and, above all, respect for ancient traditions, Serdiuk finds himself in an orgy of sex and sake. After a back-street trek to the bootleggers in search of more Japanese rice-wine, however, Serdiuk's not unpleasant, though odd, far-eastern experience comes to an abrupt and painful end: he is forced to fulfill an ancient rite of samurai suicide (*seppuku*) together with Kawabata, so that both men may save face upon hearing of Taira's takeover by a conglomerate. Serdiuk's vision achieves a somewhat deeper level than that on which ideas are portrayed in Mariia's segment. Nonetheless, Pelevin again depicts the most popular elements of Japanese culture via a reference to *Seven Samurai*,[66] enactments of Samurai honor in ritual suicide (235), geishas, sake, and the concept of 'saving face.' Despite the apparent failure of Russia's alchemical wedlock with the East, as depicted in Serdiuk's visions, the theme of the East in *Chapaev i Pustota* is thought to be one that Pelevin actually treats in earnest.[67]

Not unlike Mariia's perception of a secondary, Silver Age consciousness in her vision, however, Serdiuk's visions include a subordinate level of perception. It first

---

[65] Japanese novelist Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972) won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1968.

[66] A film (1954) by Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, portraying the hardships of the inhabitants of a village in seventeenth-century Japan, whose land and property is pillaged regularly by bandits, until the arrival of seven disparate Samurai warriors who defend the village, out of a sense of honor.

[67] See, for example Marina Kanevskaia, "Istoriia i mif v postmodernistskom russkom romane," *Izvestiia AN, Seriia literatury i iazyka* 59. 2 (2000): 42. On this point see also Sergei Kornev, "Stolknovenie pustot: Mozhet li postmodernizm byt' russkim i klassicheskim: Ob odnoi avantiure Viktora Pelevina," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 28 (1997): 253, 258.

manifests itself in a nostalgic glimpse of his past, as an innocently delinquent student, with adolescent hopes for the future. The lower level then reappears as the nagging thought that the players in his far-eastern drama (most certainly the geishas, and perhaps even Kawabata himself) are merely foreign-looking Russians, say, from Rostov-on-Don (a port city in southern Russia). Indeed, Serdiuk is aware that Moscow's many exotic-looking black marketeers are simply gaudily dressed and heavily made-up Russians. Reflecting, in turn, on the heavy influx of foreigners in post-Soviet Russia, he notes the irony that foreigners 'dress-down' to resemble native Russians, whom they have been able to observe on CNN, while (New) Russians 'dress-up,' so as to resemble foreigners. More ironically still, in Serdiuk's vision, the 'native Muscovites' filmed by CNN for their Western audience comprise dressed-down foreign embassy employees, in which sense a subtle inversion of the maxim *plus ça change* occurs, this time between the preceding Soviet era and post-Soviet days: native Muscovites remain distinguishable by their dress from Westerners, though in this case the latter are mistaken for the former. CNN's Muscovites, Serdiuk observes, are depicted "doggedly pursuing the phantom of democracy across the sun-baked desert of reforms" (169). His observation provides another suggestion of frozen transition, emphasized further by the fact that the port wine Serdiuk had bought the day before "still tasted exactly the same as it had always done" (154). For Serdiuk,

> [Э]то было лишним доказательством того, что реформы не затронули глубинных основ русской жизни, пройдясь шумным ураганчиком только по самой ее поверхности (188). [[This was] one more proof that reform had not really touched the basic foundations of Russian life, but merely swept like a hurricane across its surface (154)].

Besides cementing the notion of frozen transition – now between Soviet and post-Soviet times – Serdiuk's observation clearly evokes, once again, Lotman and Uspenskii's theory of radical breaks and covert continuity, spanning centuries of Russian cultural history.

Pelevin's satire extends to the novel's Civil War plotline – that is, beyond the parameters of the author's contemporary times to those of his narrator-hero in 1919. Here Pelevin critiques the literary and cultural scenes that dominated the times depicted, as well as the pretensions, and outright hypocrisies they spawned. Thus in the novel's first chapter, set in 1919 Moscow, Valerii Briusov (1873-1925) hosts a soirée, of sorts, at the Musical Snuffbox Café, featuring an array of avant-garde performance artists, while Alexei Tolstoi (1883-1945) appears at the club as a drunken patron. Under the assumed identity of the man he has just murdered, Pet'ia attends the same soirée with two Chekists (Zherbunov and Barbolin) and, just prior to the shoot-out he initiates in the name of the Revolution, a sarcastic Pet'ia and an overly enthusiastic Briusov discuss the symbolism of the ending to Blok's recently published, and controversial, narrative poem, "Dvenadtsat'" ("The Twelve," [1918]). The portrayal of Briusov, Tolstoi and Blok (through his poem) is charged with ironic significance, in view of the respective fates, personal and professional, of these three modernists beyond the parameters of Pelevin's novel. The self-professed 'Decadent' Briusov, who once opposed the Bolsheviks on the question of censorship, becomes a censor/administrator of the new régime himself, until his death.[68] Blok's fate is at once more tragic, and more ironic: having once embraced the Revolution on a grass roots level as a spontaneous, 'elemental' force, a deeply disillusioned Blok, unable to emigrate, dies shortly thereafter (1921), a virtual prisoner of the fledgling

---

[68] Joan Delaney Grossman, *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 287.

Soviet state. By contrast Tolstoi, who had at first fled the Communist regime, returns to Russia *from* emigration in 1923 to enjoy a twenty-year career as one of Soviet Russia's leading official writers. Of the three modernist writers, Blok is most closely associated with the mystical branch of Russian Symbolism. The very premise in Pelevin's novel of dual realities harks back to the Neo-Platonic world-view intrinsic to Russian Symbolism. Blok's eventual disillusionment with that mystical Symbolist perspective fits into the scheme of Pelevin's overall confluence of times, narratives, realities, and cultures, high and low.

More to the point regarding the East/West dichotomy in Russia's (self)-perception, discussed above, Blok was a Scythian – both a member of the literary group bearing the same name (*Skify* – also the title of a poem by Blok [1918]), and in terms of his philosophy of the Revolution: as an elemental force, eternally heretical and opposed to the philistinism, or sense of self-satisfaction, intrinsic to claims of victory, and the subsequent stagnation of the revolutionary spirit.[69] The mention of Blok in this regard is an oblique reference also to Eurasianism, a perspective emphasizing Russia's Asiatic attributes and affinities that existed during the first decades of the twentieth century. Vera Tolz aligns Blok and the Scythians with the Eurasians by virtue of a shared view of the Revolution "as Russia's struggle [in alliance with the East] against Western, Roman-Germanic civilization."[70] Even Lenin, Tolz continues, "saw the importance of Russian-

---

[69] See Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Scythians?," in *A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, ed. and trans. Mirra Ginsburg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) 23. Oleg Maslenikov defines the Scythians as a "mystical-religious group of revolutionaries" whose beliefs included a Messianic view of Russia, destined to lead the world to a new historical era, and the Bolshevik Revolution as a mystical manifestation carrying the "purifying power of destructive cataclysms." See Maslenikov's *The Frenzied Poets: Andrei Biely and the Russian Symbolists* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1952) 88.

[70] Vera Tolz, *Russia* (London: Arnold, 2001) 147.

Asian solidarity in the promotion of world revolution," from 1905 to the early 1920s.[71] Eurasianists condemned Western rationalism, counterposing it to what they saw as the truth sought by a more down-to-earth Russia by means of the Revolution.[72] Claiming that Russians lived neither in Europe nor Asia, but in Eurasia, the Eurasianists saw the Revolution as a positive move in promoting that position, by starkly distinguishing Russia from Europe.

The Bolsheviks themselves, however, were seen in a negative light, as representing "the most extreme example of Western culture."[73] Ironically, though the Soviet Union was indeed cut off from the West for the better part of a century, officially it did retain and enforce the rationality associated *with* the West, to the utmost. Indeed, in 1918, Blok's fellow Scythian, Evgenii Zamiatin, proclaimed that "'[t]he victorious October Revolution' has not escaped the general law on becoming victorious: it has turned philistine."[74] It is perhaps with this knowledge in mind that a gloomy Blok, dressed entirely in black, is depicted by Pelevin in St. Petersburg, speaking to a group of visiting Englishmen about the 'secret freedom' of the Russian intelligentsia (347), amounting to little more than the stifled laughter of one who is 'in' on a backfired, private joke.[75] It must be stressed, again, that Scythians and Eurasianists possessed distinct perspectives but shared common ground in their alliance with the attributes of the East,

---

[71] ibid.

[72] Catherine Andreyev and Ivan Savický, *Russia Abroad: Prague and the Russian Diaspora, 1918-1938* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004) 136.

[73] Andreyev and Savický 138-139.

[74] Zamyatin 23.

[75] In fact, the term 'secret freedom' (*tainaia svoboda* a-la Pushkine, to be precise) is first mentioned in the novel by Kotovskii (346), just prior to his departure for Paris. The words themselves appear in a poem by Pushkin, entitled "K N. Ia. Pliuskovoi" and appear, again, in a poem Blok was asked to compose as a tribute to the Pushkin Museum in St. Petersburg, entitled *Pushkinskomu domu* (1921), as reproduced in Aleksandr Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960) 376-377. For commentary on same see pp. 637-638.

and opposition to Western rationalism. Not unlike Pet'ia's Solzhenitsyn/Slavophile-like gypsy-cab driver[76] in the novel's final chapter, the theme of Eurasianism is another manifestation of the East/West theme so apparent in the novel and, as Clark observes above, in the extra-literary discourse of the post-glasnost' period.[77]

With this theme, however, Pelevin again conflates the past and the present – that is, by means of the contemporary *neo*-Eurasian movement taking shape in post-Soviet Russia. Radically geo-political in its quest for identity and sovereignty from the West as now embodied, specifically, by the United States, neo-Eurasianism, as advocated by Aleksandr Panarin, denounces American globalization, and decries attempts at the universal subject-object split between America (as active, thinking subject) and the rest of the universe (as passive object).[78] As a nation, maintains Panarin, Russia's spiritual tradition adheres to that of the orthodox East (*k pravoslavnomu Vostoku*), and as such it is well-equipped to rise up in the next phase of world history, favoring the post-economic man, given its spiritual, cultural and ecological priorities.[79] Pelevin's Solzhenitsyn-type does not promote neo-Eurasianism per se; still, he represents the post-Soviet Russian conservative faction, and decries what he considers to be the loss of spirituality revealed by Pet'ia's views of the world's non-reality (389).

As such, the theme of the East is overtly manifest in only one of the glasnost' texts discussed in this chapter in comparison to Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota.* The legend

---

[76] Pavlov makes the Solzhenitsyn connection in Pavlov 92; the extension to Slavophilism is my own.

[77] Leonid Filippov notes, not without humor, that "Pelevin has solved the problem of 'the East and Russia' [...] which for so long has tormented us, with the formula 'Russia is the East,' in "Flying with the Hermit: Variations on a Given Theme," in *Russian Studies in Literature* 36.3 (2000) 91.

[78] Aleksandr Sergeevich Panarin, afterword, *Revansh istorii: Rossiiskaia strategicheskaia initsiativa v XXI veke*, ed. O. V. Kir'iazev (Moscow: Logos, 1994) 385.

[79] ibid., author's emphasis. For an overview of the neo-Eurasian movement in Russia, including the myths of Slavic origins created by Lev Gumilev, see Svetlana Boym, "From the Russian Soul to Post-Communist Nostalgia," *Representations* 49 (1995): 153-156.

recalled by the hero of Makanin's "Utrata" is a local Ural legend, where a certain Pekalov attempts to dig a tunnel under the Ural River; in Russia, the Ural mountain range serves as the natural dividing line between the East and the West. In Petrushevskaia ("Vremia-noch'") and Kaledin ("Smirennoe kladbishche") the East is replaced by, simply, the foreign as 'exotic.' Anna Adrianovna's parasitic son-in-law, Sasha, is said to be from "darkest Ternopol'" (33) which, in fact is a parody of the exotic since Ternopol' is only in the Ukraine.

In Kaledin's cemetery, meanwhile, a burial takes place, "according to the oriental custom: all day until late wails were heard in the cemetery, there came the guttural sounds of strange instruments and the beating of a peculiar tall drum... ."[80] In the original Russian, the burial is carried out "по-южному" (79 ["in the southern manner"]),[81] in the sense of Caucasian implying, again, the foreign exotic, and not necessarily the Eastern, as such. In these works, the East/West question is treated more subtly, even in Makanin, than it is in Pelevin; thus, its role is less prominent here than in *Chapaev i Pustota.*

In conclusion: this chapter has established Pelevin's novel, as a threshold text, within the tradition of other (post)-glasnost' texts in terms of common themes, including memory(-loss), identity crises (personal, national, professional), and motifs, such as the hero-as-writer/madman, physical trauma, (in-)voluntary hospitalization, as well as the difficulties of coping with the realities of (post-)glasnost existence, be it portrayed as a quagmire, or a situation in constant flux.

In and of itself, Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* has been presented as a threshold text on various levels, including the structural, thematic, and narrative. Firstly, the novel

---

[80] Sergei Kaledin, "The Humble Cemetery," in *The Humble Cemetery with Gleb Bogdyshev Goes Moonlighting*, trans. Catriona Kelly (London: Collins Harvill, 1990) 90.

[81] Translation mine.

portrays the two most important threshold periods in twentieth-century Russian history – that of the Civil War, and of the collapse of the Communist State. In the novel, these threshold periods are reflected by two distinct timelines – 1919, and what has been referred to in this chapter as the 1990s, in order to accommodate ambiguities in events depicted, and the perspectives of other analyses of the novel, as noted above. The notions of threshold, transition, and movement from one space, or timeline, to another are encompassed in the novel by the theme of impermanence. This is reinforced, in turn, by the novel's overarching theme of Buddhist philosophy. Pelevin's narrator-hero moves effortlessly between timelines. Though he feels most at home in 1919, he is unable to distinguish definitively between dream and reality. Throughout the course of the novel, Pet'ia understands that, in fact, there is no distinction to be made between realities, that all realities are dreams, or illusions. Thus, ultimately in Pelevin, the theme of impermanence yields to what seems to be its opposite: frozen transition, and protracted threshold.

Pelevin reconciles these ostensibly opposing concepts, or states, by exploiting in his novel the similarities between the two timelines he portrays, representing early Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, respectively. He does so in cultural terms, and with respect to the questions regarding the Russian identity, by extending these from the mid-nineteenth century, through the revolutionary years, up to the present. Through Mariia, Pelevin conflates the high culture of Russia's Silver Age with Latin and U.S. American mass culture, thereby portraying each as merely the popular culture of their respective periods. By means of Mariia's catastrophic misalliance with Schwarzenegger, Pelevin depicts an equally catastrophic alchemical wedlock between Russia and the West. Through

Serdiuk, meanwhile, Pelevin illustrates a problematic alchemical wedlock with the East, and the frozen transition between Soviet and post-Soviet times. Pelevin's forays into the clichés of mass culture, be it Russian, American, or Japanese, attest to the status of his own novel as a threshold text between high and low culture. Ultimately, Pelevin reveals that, in keeping with Lotman and Uspenskii's paradigm of perverse (dis-)continuities throughout the course of (Soviet) Russian cultural history, the more things change, the more they (appear to) remain the same. He accomplishes this task through satire – that form of critical discourse, which cements Pelevin's novel as a threshold text, now linking extra-literary reality with its literary representation.

Chapter II continues the analysis of *Chapaev i Pustota* as a threshold text, with a shift of focus; it will consider the properties of the various (un-)official myths of Chapaev, and their manipulation by Pelevin, through parody.

Chapter II:
Myth, Manipulation, and Parody as Threshold

The preceding chapter of this thesis examined the notion of threshold in relation to Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*. With Bakhtin's threshold chronotope as a theoretical point of departure, it examined the role of the threshold in Pelevin's novel on various narrative levels. The satiric elements in the novel extend the notion of threshold beyond its textual parameters; because satire is directed outward, it embodies the link in Pelevin between literary and extra-literary manifestations of threshold and transition. By means of its satire, *Chapaev i Pustota* becomes a threshold text in that it situates itself on the threshold between the worlds of fiction and non-fiction; that is, between reality and its representation.

This chapter continues to treat Pelevin's novel as a threshold text. It shifts, however, to the more literary-specific perspective of parody. Though parody also extends beyond the parameters of a given text, it is a *meta*-narrative device, genre, or mode; that is, it evaluates not so much society, as other narrative texts, from a specific work, the entire oeuvre of a given author, to a stylistic trait, or even genre.
Thus, some theorists suggest, parody is necessarily contained within the domain of the aesthetic.[1] Three specific models of parody – formulated by Gary Saul Morson, the Russian Formalists, and Linda Hutcheon – are outlined below and applied to several texts. The aim will be to establish points of comparison and/or contrast for the analysis in

[1] While Linda Hutcheon, for one, insists on the confinement of parody to the aesthetic realm, Gary Saul Morson suggests that parody can be found "in the most diverse forms and most various contexts of everyday life." For Morson, "any symbolic act, whether artistic or nonartistic, verbal or nonverbal, can become the object of parody." See Morson's "Parody, History, and Metaparody" 63.

this chapter of Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* as a text of parody, on the threshold between genres (canonical to anti-canonical). For the purposes of the analysis at hand, these literary constructs will be divorced from issues outside the text.

Broadly speaking, parody recasts the elements of its narrative precursor-text(s) in a new key. The goals of parody are diverse, and its relationship to the aesthetic canon often perplexing. In most cases, (post-)Soviet parody is anti-canonical in its orientation; that is, it is geared toward undermining the authority of the canon of Socialist Realism – seen as a vehicle for the dissemination of Soviet (utopian) ideology and repository of the Soviet myth in its various guises. On its simplest, most evident level, parody involves the outright subversion of its target, be it a single text, or a target broadly conceived as an entire body of texts.

Outright subversion brings to mind the model of parody provided by Gary Saul Morson, who uses the premises of Bakhtinian parody as a point of departure for his own theory. For both Bakhtin and Morson, "[a] parodic utterance is one of open disagreement"[2] between voices. However, where even the most "hostilely counterposed"[3] models of discourse outlined by Bakhtin allow for an element of 'unfinalizability,' Morson's text of parody asserts definitive final authority over its target. Morson's three essential criteria for the parodic utterance are concise: parody must clearly evoke a target, to which it is somehow antithetical, and over which it is clearly intended, by its author, to have "higher semantic authority."[4] Though Morson's theory of parody concentrates on the adversarial relationships between utopian, anti-utopian, dystopian and meta-utopian texts, it can be regarded in more general terms, whereby

---

[2] Morson, "Parody, History, and Metaparody" 66.
[3] Bakhtin, as cited in Morson 67.
[4] ibid.

genre is undermined by anti-genre. Thus, it lends itself well to the analysis of such openly anti-utopian, and overtly anti-canonical, glasnost' works as "Svoi krug," "Vremia-noch'," and "Smirennoe kladbishche" discussed in Chapter I of this thesis. All three represent reality at the nadir of stagnation, thereby counterposing late Soviet reality to the image of the Soviet ideal. Most importantly, they satisfy Morson's criteria for parody: they recall the target of Socialist Realism (as utopian genre, mode, or mega-text), to which they constitute an indisputable antithesis or anti-utopia, which the reader clearly understands to possess higher semantic authority.

In "Opisanie predmetov" ("Description of Objects" [1979])[5] Dmitrii Prigov parodies official Soviet positivism and the declarative mode of official Soviet discourse. Exaggerating a formulaic nature, pragmatic orientation, and overt tendency toward systematization, Prigov reproduces the style of a dry Soviet catalogue. He thus demonstrates the absurdity of an excessively taxonomic perspective. The very premise of the descriptions is absurd. Their introduction asserts the intent to demystify the given objects, and to facilitate "an eventual exhaustive inventorization of the entire surrounding world" (292). The description of each of nine disparate objects (egg, cross, pillow, tree-stump, scythe, wheel, ape, woman, hammer-and-sickle) is formatted the same way: after an exclamatory "Comrades!" (*Tovarishchi!*) comes a proclamation of the object's universality, and indispensability "in all of man's social, industrial, and cultural activity" (292). Each object is then uniformly classified with respect to dimensions, semaphoric equivalent, usage, origins, religious-mystical symbolism (and the refutation thereof on

---

[5] Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Prigov, "Opisanie predmetov," *Sovetskie teksty* (St. Petersburg: Ivan Limbakh, 1997) 89-104; Dmitry Prigov, "Description of Objects," *The Penguin Book of New Russian Writing*, eds. Victor Erofeyev and Andrew Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 1995) 292-299. Hereafter English citations will refer to this edition.

scientific grounds), and broad social symbolism (as well as the Marxist correction thereof). The conclusions reached about each of the objects are equally absurd: they include the unlikelihood of their very existence. As an exemplar of conceptualist sots-art, Prigov's parody constitutes a clear anti-genre to the Soviet 'text-at-large;' though it does not evoke the genre/mode of Socialist Realism per se, it calls forth and mocks the positivism and pragmatism at the core of Soviet ideology. Through repetition, imitation, and exaggeration, Prigov employs principles similar to those of his target, though to opposite ends.

Depending on the nature of the parody (structural, thematic, stylistic), its mechanics can be more or less apparent. The unambiguous model provided by the Russian Formalists presents parody at its most mechanical. Though parody by most definitions presupposes subversion, it is also regarded as a useful tool in the development of an author's style (in the effort to distinguish himself from a precursor), or the evolution of a genre. As described by Viktor Shklovskii, parody 'lays bare' the devices of the hypotext, exposing them as defunct. Shklovskii's version of parody is adversarial, and its purpose – unrelentingly subversive.[6] By contrast, Iurii Tynianov saw in parody a process that was both destructive *and* constructive; parody, he argued, infuses old forms with new functions.[7] Quoting Tynianov, Iurii Striedter notes that in fact "parody fulfills a dual task: (1) it mechanizes a particular device; and (2) it organizes new material, in which is

---

[6] One might take as an example of Shklovskii's position on parody his essay on Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Throughout the piece, Shklovskii illustrates the formal techniques whereby Sterne subverts the traditional form of the novel "by a simple transposition of its parts," in order to "impede the action of the novel," thereby revealing "the aesthetic laws" that underlie traditional compositional devices. Sterne is shown to lay these devices bare. See Viktor Shklovsky, "The Novel As Parody: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*," *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990) 170.

[7] Iu. N. Tynianov, "O parodii," *Poètika – Istoriia literatury – Kino*, ed. I. G. Drevlianskaia (Moscow: Nauka, 1977) 293.

included the old, now mechanized device."[8] Victor Erlich affirms Striedter's summation; confirming, on the one hand, that "the motivating force of literary motion is conflict," Erlich, too, stresses Tynianov's insistence that this conflict constitutes a "reshuffling, rather than wanton destruction, a shift in the *function* of the esthetic device, rather than its elimination."[9] Formalist parody both arises from and effects a 'crisis and break' in the literary process, thereby setting in motion the process of literary evolution from genre to anti-genre, and beyond.

Composed at the height of Soviet stagnation, Prigov's parody, above, clearly demonstrates and exploits crisis and break in the perception of Soviet rhetoric and ideology. In 'laying bare' its mechanics of repetition, "Opisanie predmetov" does, in a sense, provide fertile ground for the cultivation of a more meaningful form of discourse. However, the work's conspicuous anti-generic status impedes its integral consideration in Tynianov's terms; though clearly subversive, Prigov's parody does not articulate fully the two-step, deconstructive *and* constructive process of Formalist parody.

At its most subtle and neutral, parody hinges less on negation or subversion than on *in*version (or transposing), and the tension evoked by the irony perceived between a work of parody and its target. To paraphrase Linda Hutcheon, parody constitutes repetition or imitation with a difference, and a critical distance, signaled by ironic inversion.[10] Though Hutcheon sees in parody a process inscribing both continuity and change, her vision of parody differs from that of the Formalists in that it refutes the sense

---

[8] As cited in Jurij Striedter, *Literary Structure, Evolution, and Value: Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989) 42.

[9] Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History – Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965) 257-58, (emphasis added).

[10] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (New York: Routledge, 1985) 37. Though addressed only narrowly in this chapter, Hutcheon's paradigm of parody forms the basis of Chapter III of this thesis.

of amelioration[11] implied by the very notion of evolution. The absence of an overt evaluative element as a corollary to parody is what most distinguishes Hutcheon's paradigm from Morson's, and that of the Formalists. Moreover, where the two preceding models of parody evidently 're-contextualize' their targets, Hutcheon's parody is said to *trans*-contextualize;[12] rather than simply negate or even oppose its target, Hutcheon's parody works to super-*im*pose one text over another. In theory, then, Hutcheon's model tends less toward the stricter, binary (anti-)canonical orientation underlying the models of Morson and the Formalists. With irony as its main rhetorical device, Hutcheon's parody lends itself to the analysis of a broader spectrum of texts, including those that might fail to meet the criteria of either preceding model.

The short stories of Tatiana Tolstaia provide a case in point. Though anti-canonical in their break with the formal and ideological requirements of Socialist Realism, their parody of the canon is best illustrated not by Morson's criteria or Formalist mechanical means, but by considering their ironic inversion of the ostensible balance in the Soviet context between expectations and their reasonable fulfillment. In three different short stories, protagonists Peters, Natasha, and Rimma (of "Peters" ["Peters"], "Vyshel mesiats iz tumana"["The Moon Came Out"], and "Ogon' i pyl'" ["Fire and Dust"], respectively)[13] must all come to grips with the fact that life has somehow passed them by. Ostensibly en route to the Radiant Future, they find themselves stranded in a barren, seemingly eternal present, despite a lifetime of playing by the rules. Lovelorn,

---

[11] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 36.

[12] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 37.

[13] The stories "Peters" and "Ogon' i pyl'" appear in a volume by Tatiana Tolstaia, entitled *Na zolotom kryl'tse sideli* (Moscow, 1986), translated by Antonina W. Bouis as *On the Golden Porch* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). The story "Vyshel mesiats iz tumana" appeared in a second volume of short stories, entitled *Sleepwalker in a Fog*, trans. Jamey Gambrell (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). Hereafter, English citations from these stories will refer to their respective English editions.

lonely, and thoroughly humiliated by years of petty persecution by mean individuals, Peters and Natasha accept destinies determined not by their failure to play by the rules of Soviet existence, but by their unattractive bodies. In the case of Peters, a "pink belly [...], tiny eyes" (183), flabby legs, soft hands, and a "white hairless body sprinkled with tender red birthmarks" (191) ruin his hopes with Faina – workmate and girl of his dreams – who sees in him not a man, but "a wimp. An endocrinological sissy" (188). After Faina's rejection, Peters' already pathetic romantic situation spirals evermore downward: he is ignored by Valentina, the young school-girl about whom he fantasizes, robbed by a prostitute with whom he becomes infatuated, and duped by an equally lonely old woman posing as a German instructor. Eventually, Peters ceases trying to enter the stream of extra-curricular life; instead, he marries a "cold, hard woman with big feet" (197), who is as oppressive and domineering as the grandmother who raised him, thereby coming full-circle. In opposition to the physically fit, clear-headed, decisive and goal-oriented 'New Soviet Man,' for whom a love interest would, in any case, be secondary to ideological commitment, Peters bows out and admits defeat.

Tolstaia's play on the New Soviet Man in "Peters" is echoed in a feminine variant in "The Moon Came Out." There, contrary to any aspirations that might have been elicited by official rhetoric denouncing gender inequality and bourgeois role expectations, Natasha's "eggplant nose, [...] dejected chest, and short, bulging bicycle calves" (53) diminish her sex-appeal, and contribute to her figurative 'enslavement' to non-fulfillment, not even in the traditionally lamented sense of the Soviet woman's 'double-burden' of career and household, but rather as a spinster. Ironically, Natasha's status as an unattached, working woman free of domestic obligations would have been

one of envy – a goal in itself – in revolutionary Russia. Rimma ("Fire and Dust"), meanwhile, dreams of acquiring a private apartment by appropriating the room of Ashkenazy – her aged and ailing co-tenant – upon his seemingly imminent death. In keeping with Tolstaia's overall thematics of dashed hopes, however, Ashkenazy lives on, and Rimma's story comes to represent but another narrative of fruitless desire – this time, however, for the trappings of an ostensibly eradicated bourgeois life-style. In the stories examined here, Tolstaia evidently parodies what have long been deemed Soviet clichés (New Soviet Man, gender equality, disdain for *byt*). Important for the interpretation of her parody by Hutcheon's standards is the ironic discrepancy she portrays, in the glasnost' narrative, between the expectations of a mundane Soviet reality and the once coveted but now abased Soviet 'ideal.'

A general observation should be made here: the above analysis has illustrated the compatibility of certain works of parody with one theory or another. Further analysis of the same texts might reveal their ability to accommodate any, if not all, of the above theories. Indeed, the consideration of parody in favor of one paradigm over another can hinge on a simple shift in emphasis, say, from theme, to motif, or to compositional element, affirming the fact that, rather than mutually exclude one another, theories of parody can and do dovetail. The following analysis of Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* will demonstrate this point.

In general terms, *Chapaev i Pustota* is an overt parody of what may be called the Soviet 'Chapaev myth' – that is, of the image of Chapaev that has been engendered and perpetuated by various narratives, (some officially sanctioned, others rejected) since the death of the historical Chapaev in 1919. To the student of (post-)Soviet literature or

culture, the very title of Pelevin's novel instantly recalls the various versions of the myth. These include Dmitrii Furmanov's novel *Chapaev* (1923); the Vasil'ievs' film of the same title (1934); the numerous anecdotes (Chapaev jokes) spawned by these two official precursors; and the various Chapaev tales of the manufactured Stalinist folk tradition (*noviny*).[14] Using its forerunner as a point of departure either for subtle changes, shifts of emphasis or blunt inversions, each version of the myth was (re-)created with a specific purpose in mind; that is, to promote either the premises of (pre-)Stalinist ideology (Furmanov, the Vasil'ievs, and the officially sanctioned folk tales), or the anti-Soviet popular sentiment which emerged following Stalin's death in 1953. Pelevin follows the (anti-)ideological thrust of his precursors, now simply modifying, now expressly parodying the various versions of the myth of Chapaev. In so doing, he continues the tradition of his forbears: Pelevin recycles and refashions the Chapaev myth in keeping with the new post-Soviet times.

Unlike his precursors, each with their own single-text focus on the negative or positive evaluation of the Chapaev myth, however, Pelevin's parody is complex precisely because it recalls, manipulates, and/or inverts all four versions. This chapter examines each of these versions in succession for three reasons: to demonstrate shifts of emphasis between official versions of the Chapaev myth, as specific examples of the not altogether static Soviet myth-at-large; to establish the elements of rupture and break between the official and popular versions of the myth; to examine the degree to which Pelevin manipulates and/or undermines elements of the myth that are most crucial to its

---

[14] The term *noviny* was coined by Marfa Kriukova, "the most celebrated performer" of epic songs and poems, to distinguish her new, Soviet inspired songs, from her old ones (*stariny*), as in Frank J. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1990) 12.

representation of the Soviet canon, or anti-canon, as the case may be. Pelevin's novel accommodates those models of parodic discourse provided by Morson, and Hutcheon. In synthesizing old and new through parody, it is also in keeping with the dialectic outlined by the Russian Formalists. Like the post-Soviet threshold discussed in the preceding chapter, Pelevin's parody looks back in order to move forward.

Common knowledge has it that the notion of 'myth' possesses both positive and negative connotations. By and large, the Soviet myth is aligned with the latter, its many component parts having been exposed as false almost since its very inception as a whole in the years following the Revolution and the Civil War. Traditionally, literature and myth – both human constructs – are mutually dependent: myth is crucial to literature while literature is instrumental to the extension, and propagation of myth,[15] as has been the case with Soviet literature as the repository of the Soviet myth-at-large. A spin-off of the greater, Soviet myth, the Chapaev myth both adheres to and departs from the general practice of creating a national hero in its aspiration to exploit facts of human biography to ideological ends. Depending on the world-view of a given society, human biography is more or less predisposed to mythification.[16]

Accordingly, all four versions of the Chapaev myth draw on the actual biography of a historical prototype; even those anecdotes which exploit Chapaev's near illiteracy and his largely unsuccessful interval at the General Staff Academy (November 1918 –

---

[15] Laurence Coupe, *Myth*, The New Critical Idiom (Routledge: London, 1997) 4.

[16] Yael Zerubavel makes a similar observation in an article on the story of the legendary Jozef Trumpeldor, a Russian Jew, who died a heroic death in the historical battle of Tel Hai, defending the early Zionist settlers there in 1920. Zerubavel notes that "[a]s with other historical heroes, Trumpeldor's life and character lent themselves to the formation of his 'legendary' image." Indeed, the same is true of the historical Chapaev. See Zerubavel's "The Historic, the Legendary, and the Incredible: Invented Tradition and Collective Memory in Israel," *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) 108.

February 1919) in Moscow, are based on recorded fact.[17] More significantly for this chapter, the broad outlines sketched below[18] testify to the predisposition of Chapaev's biography to Soviet mythification.

Born in 1887, one of nine children to a poor carpenter in Budaiki, Chapaev was employed variously throughout his youth as a waiter, merchant's apprentice, and carpenter. In 1908 he married a merchant's daughter, fathered three children, and lived modestly as a skilled laborer; he served briefly in the military later that year, and again in 1914. Embracing the Revolution from a populist perspective, Chapaev initially rejected the Bolsheviks for their insistence on discipline; leaning more toward an anarchistic stance, he organized a loosely structured revolutionary militia in Nikolaevsk. By the spring of 1918, however, Chapaev had joined the Bolsheviks, leading the partisan Saratov Special Army in defense of the new regime. In May 1919, he was made commander of the 25th Division of the Fourth Army by the Red General Mikhail Frunze, receiving the Order of the Red Banner for taking Ufa. By August, Chapaev's division was fighting for Lbishchensk, where he made the strategic mistake that would cost him his life: positioning his men on the perimeter, he left his headquarters in town open to a surprise attack by a Cossack cavalry corps under White General Sladkov. In the skirmish that ensued, Chapaev was wounded. Carrying their leader, Chapaev's troops fled toward the Ural River, only to be ambushed again. In a final effort to escape across the river, Chapaev drowned after being hit by enemy gunfire; his body was never recovered.

---

[17] See, for example, various articles commemorating the historical Chapaev in Russian historical journals, such as those by M. A. Zhokhov, "Legendarnyi narodnyi geroi," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 2 (1987): 79-81; K. Il'butenko, "Legendarnyi nadchiv," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 2 (1972): 121-123; A. Kadishev, "Legendarnyi geroi Grazhdanskoi voiny," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 2 (1967): 124-128.

[18] Joseph L. Wieczynski, ed. *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, vol. 6 (Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1978).

The student of Soviet literature would be hard-pressed to overlook the uncanny resemblance between Chapaev's life and that of the traditional Soviet 'positive hero.' Chapaev's biography resonates with several heroic codes (populist, anarchist, romantic), as does that of the Socialist Realist positive hero as described by Katerina Clark.[19] Not unlike the Chapaev of historical record, the Soviet positive hero was regularly shown to have worked at various appropriate positions; his life story also included exploitation or betrayal in one way or another by an employer, member of the clergy, or another representative of the pre-Revolutionary Tsarist regime. Furmanov himself affirms the presence of these elements in Chapaev's biography, by stating that:

> On the whole it was quite a commonplace biography, with nothing really remarkable about it, But if you looked closer into it, you would see that all the events in it, and the privations and experiences that fell to Chapayev's [*sic*] lot in private life, impelled him to dissatisfaction and protest.[20]

Though intrinsically virtuous, this hero-in-making[21] is not altogether without vice; often temperamental, or even anarchic, he is prone to bucking authority. These same characteristics are exemplified by Maksim Gorkii's Kashirin (*Detstvo* [*My Childhood,* 1913-14] and *V liudiakh* [*My Apprenticeship,* 1916]) and Nikolai Ostrovskii's Pavka Korchagin (*Kak zakalialas' stal'* [*How the Steel was Tempered,* 1932-34]), to name but two such heroes from an essentially tautological canon: they illustrate prerequisite components of the Socialist Realist paradigm.

---

[19] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 8-9. Clark argues that although Socialist Realism was imposed 'from above' to a certain extent, the genre also utilized motifs from the pre-revolutionary tradition, reworking myths and tropes common to Russian radical fiction of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[20] Dmitri Furmanov, *Chapayev,* 1935 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1941) 120. Unless otherwise indicated, references to and English citations from Furmanov's novel will refer to this edition.

[21] The reference to the 'positive hero' as a hero-in-making corresponds to Clark's view that "the positive hero should be viewed more dynamically, not as a character type but as a characteristic progression," however depersonalized and simplistic he may seem in comparison to characters of the Western novelistic tradition. See Clark's "Socialist Realism *with* Shores: The Conventions for the Positive Hero," *Socialist Realism Without Shores,* ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham: Duke UP, 1997) 28.

Clark observes that a primary unifying and structuring force of the canonical works of the Soviet literary tradition is the "scheme of human biography" underlying each work of Socialist Realist fiction.[22] The official Chapaev myths both adhere to and depart from Clark's observation. On the one hand, they follow the basic chronological and ideological outlines of Chapaev's officially recorded biography. His biography affirms his populist roots, and in most variants of the myth his death signifies the end of the narrative. On the other hand, the biographical scheme, per se, is not as central to the structure of the Chapaev myth even in its most authoritative official representations. Though Furmanov's novel includes "Chapayev's Life Story" (115-120) ("*Biografiia Chapaeva*")[23] as a particularly colorful segment from Klychkov's diary, as reported to him by Chapaev, Klychkov himself doubts its authenticity, even suggesting its fantastic nature (115). Except for a few token references testifying to his ignorance and near illiteracy (confusing veterinary and human medical practice, learning to read only two years before), Chapaev's biography is omitted from the Vasil'ievs' film. Lastly, Chapaev's biography begins too late (at age 32) and ends too soon (with his death in the Ural River six months later) for it to assume as central a narrative position as it does in other canonical novels.[24]

Rather, the two primary official versions of the Chapaev myth – Furmanov's novel and the Vasil'ievs' film – are built around three distinct, but interdependent

---

[22] Clark, *History as Ritual* 44.

[23] As cited in Dm. Furmanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, eds. A. G. Dement'ev, E. I. Naumov, and L. I. Timofeev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1960) 130-136. Hereafter, citations from the Russian text will refer to this edition of *Chapaev*; they will be employed either for emphasis, or to replace translations deemed inaccurate in the English edition.

[24] Furmanov's novel portrays, roughly, a six-month period representing the relationship between Furmanov/Klychkov and Chapaev. Furthermore, though he is referred to by name earlier on, Chapaev does not actually appear in the novel until the fifth chapter. By contrast, a more traditionally central biographical scheme underlies Ostrovskii's semi-autobiographical *Stal,'* portraying Korchagin's development from his earliest youth, along a linear trajectory.

constructs: the Soviet positive hero, the mentor/disciple relationship,[25] and the 'spontaneity/consciousness' dialectic. In combination with those building blocks of Socialist Realism – the broader principles of *ideinost'* (uplifting ideological thrust), *partiinost'* (Party-mindedness), and *narodnost'* (maximum accessibility to a largely illiterate, or only recently literate 'folk') – these more mechanical constructs underwrite the basic 'master-plot' of the early Stalinist novel.

As Clark describes it, the opposition of spontaneity (*stikhiinost'*) to consciousness (*soznatel'nost'*) functions as an (extra-)literary device; a didactic, ideological tool, it is intended to operate both within and beyond the parameters of the Stalinist narrative text. In conjunction with the mentor/disciple relationship, it serves to educate both the fledgling positive hero and the reader in the basic principles of Communist ideology. Typically, the Stalinist Civil War narrative focuses on the instruction, throughout the course of the narrative, of the potential positive hero by a Bolshevik mentor in Party politics, emphasizing all the while the importance of discipline – of harnessing all spontaneous and potentially anarchistic energies,[26] and channeling them to rational, and purposeful, ends. Thus, the opposition is multi-faceted:[27] it can also be interpreted as the opposition of ignorance/enlightenment, instinct or intuition/reason, elementalness/civilization,[28] and nature/culture, which terms are easily written into the

---

[25] Alternatively, the relationship in Socialist Realism between mentor and disciple is referred to as the father/son relationship, as part of "that Great Family which was the Soviet state or the Bolshevik Party," as in Clark, "Socialist Realism *with* Shores" 30. On ideological versus biological kinship, also see Clark's "Utopian Anthropology as a Context for Stalinist Literature," *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1977) 180-98.

[26] Clark, *History as Ritual* 15.

[27] On the multi-faceted nature of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic, see Clark, *History as Ritual* 15-16.

[28] Andrei Sinyavsky cites Aleksandr Blok's poem about the Revolution (*Dvenadtsat'* [The Twelve, 1918] as the "most sublime and satisfying expression of the revolution's primal forces" in all of Russian literature. Originally, Blok aligned himself with the organic irrationality, or cosmic elementalness,

East-West debate discussed above in Chapter I. Ideally, having evolved from spontaneity to consciousness in any of the above manifestations, the hero-as-disciple becomes a mentor in his own right. To sum up, the mentor/disciple relationship gives narrative form to the mechanics behind the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic, whereby the Soviet positive hero is produced.

Ronald Vroon notes that at the time Furmanov was creating his novel, "the Chapaev legend was only beginning to take shape."[29] Of the few songs honoring Chapaev's bravery and devotion to the Communist cause that, like Furmanov's novel, were composed in the years immediately following the Civil War (and preceding Stalinism), thus contributing to this legend-in-making, the authorship of at least two is attributed to members of Chapaev's division.[30] This factor, and the status of the spontaneity/consciousness opposition as a fixture particular to later, Stalinist, folklore and fiction explains the construct's absence from the songs. Indeed, as tributes to a beloved field-commander from the not yet fully indoctrinated troops who survived him, the songs would not have been composed with Chapaev's ideological education (or lack of it) in

---

of the revolutionary movement, "overturning and transforming everything," however potentially destructive the process. By contrast, in Furmanov's *Chapaev*, Sinyavsky notes the shift in official attitudes toward such energy, to be subjugated or channeled. On Blok and *Chapaev* in this regard, see Andrei Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*, trans. Joanne Turnbull and Nikolai Formozov (New York: Arcade, 1990) 14-24.

[29] Ronald Vroon, "Dmitrii Furmanov's *Chapaev* and the Aesthetics of the Russian Avant-Garde," *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment,* eds. John E. Bowlt and Olga Matich (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996) 232.

[30] Richard Stites ascribes one of the most enduring of these, "Chapaev the Hero," to Marusia Popova, a female machine-gunner in Chapaev's unit, in *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900*, Cambridge Soviet Paperbacks 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 46. Another such song, first transcribed in 1920 ("*Sredi peskov sypuchikh*"), is reproduced in L. V. Domanovskii, comp., *Russkii sovetskii fol'klor: Antologiia* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1967) 23. The song depicts Chapaev's troops carrying their leader – heavily bloodied due to a massive head-wound – through desert sands, where they bury him. Though Chapaev was wounded in the head in battle, this song (said to be fashioned after an older tribute to the ataman Churkin) takes considerable liberties in depicting the circumstances of Chapaev's death, including the substitution of an arid (desert) locale for the river in which the commander drowned.

mind. With no formal guidelines as yet in place for their composition, the point of the songs would have been to tell of Chapaev's bravery and devotion to the Cause, not the process of his transformation from ignorance to awareness.

Furmanov was the first to manipulate the early Chapaev legends to ideological ends. In a letter to Anatolii Lunacharskii (1924), he states explicitly that his writings are "intended not so much for aesthetic pleasure as for education in the spirit of the times."[31] Accordingly, the main storyline in his *Chapaev* can be summarized as follows. Against the background of the Civil War, Fedor Klychkov, political commissar to Chapaev's division (*25-aia Chapaevskaia*) and Furmanov's own fictional persona, strives to temper Chapaev's anarchistic tendencies, eradicate his superstitions and quasi-religious beliefs, and to educate him politically. The narrator affirms that Klychkov aims not simply to "curb and control [Chapaev]," but also to set him "on the path of conscious struggle;" to "enlighten him a bit", to awaken in him "aspirations towards knowledge [...] – something outside the sphere of war" (112-113).[32] Thus, by the time of his death, "Chapaev had thoroughly memorized about a dozen correct and indisputable arguments [...]."[33] Elsewhere in the novel, the narrator states:

> There was much that he had not yet grasped, but there was much that was reasonable and enlightened to which he already aspired intelligently [*soznatel'no* (288)], not just instinctively (276).

Chapaev's death in the fatal ambush of his division by Cossacks prevents him from attaining the level of ideological consciousness of later full-blown Stalinist positive

---

[31] As cited in Vroon 220.

[32] Segments of these quotations are also cited in Vroon 230, as taken from the Russian original. See also Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization* 23-24 on the taming of Chapaev as a wild horse of the steppe, and John Kachur, "The Peasant Chapaev: Spontaneity is Ignorance, Consciousness is Bliss," 4 April 2001 <http://www.pitt.edu~mmbst35/JK.Chapai.html>.

[33] As cited in Vroon 231.

heroes.[34] Nevertheless, the above citation states, and Clark also notes, that Chapaev does, in part, progress from spontaneity to consciousness.[35]

In his role as mentor Klychkov managed both to educate his disciple, and to "[...] restrain Chapaev and his 'Chapaevism' [*chapaevshchinu*, (310)], [...] all his unpleasant, at times even dangerous, outbursts against the political workers, the Cheka, [and] headquarters...."(295). As Vroon suggests, by setting his version of the myth within the parameters of a "factographic"[36] literary narrative based on his own personal experiences as political commissar to Chapaev's division,[37] Furmanov pursued a two-fold purpose: (1) to dispel the legendary aura of the oral Chapaev legends, and (2) to re-configure a legitimate, literary history of Chapaev, exemplifying qualities worthy of emulation from the Soviet perspective. Just as his fictional persona (Klychkov) had succeeded within the parameters of the narrative text, Furmanov was successful beyond them. To the extent that Chapaev's maverick reputation preceded him during his lifetime,[38] Furmanov succeeded in 'setting the record straight' after Chapaev's death. Acknowledging the role of Chapaev's spontaneous leadership for the Civil War times on the one hand, his narrator

---

[34] By the end of Ostrovskii's Socialist Realist classic, for example, Korchagin has not only served as mentor in his own right to various other young Communists; he even marries less for love, than out of comradely and pedagogical interest. When he proposes to Taia, he asks if she will be his "friend, wife" (*podrugoi, zhenoi*), in *Kak zakalialas stal:' Roman v dvukh chastiakh* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1947) 338. Once he has educated her fully in the ways of Communism, she will be free to leave the marriage.

[35] Clark, *History as Ritual* 86.

[36] The term "factographic" stems from the notion of 'literature of fact' (*literatura fakta*) promoted by the early Soviet avant-garde literary group known as LEF, or the Left Front, as per Vroon 223.

[37] For another account of Chapaev and his division, co-authored by three surviving members of the division, see *Legendarnaia Chapaevskaia*, by N. M. Khlebnikov, P. S. Evlampiev, and Ia. A. Volodikhin (Moscow: Znanie, 1970).

[38] In a diary entry dated 26 February 1919, Furmanov notes the extent of Chapaev's reputation, before even having met him: Chapaev's name alone inspires horror among the Whites and the Cossacks, while the peasant population greet him with gratitude (*s blagodarnost'iu*). In the same entry Furmanov mentions Chapaev's independence, and his contempt for plans and military strategies; he underscores Chapaev's political ignorance, and instinctive understanding of the need to fight poverty, in *Dm. Furmanov: Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, eds. A. G. Dement'ev, E. I. Naumov, and L. I. Timofeev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1961) 166-7.

firmly relegates it, on the other, to an outdated and undesirable status beyond those very times (294).[39] Clark suggests that by undermining the larger-than-life reputation of the legendary Chapaev, Furmanov successfully "demythologizes" his hero.[40] She also notes the irony in Furmanov's deflating the (oral) myth around Chapaev by means of the mythopoetic master-plot of Soviet literature[41] – in other words, his attempt to supplant an existing popular myth by a second, official myth.

In view of this irony, and of the lasting popularity, through to the 1990s and beyond, of the Chapaev myth in its various manifestations, it seems more accurate to regard Furmanov as the first to succeed in *re*-mythologizing Chapaev. Though the publication in 1923 of his novel precedes the official institution of Socialist Realism by nearly a decade, its ideological slant and construction around the premise of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic assured its status as an exemplar of the Socialist Realist genre by 1934. More important for this chapter – Furmanov's shaping of the myth inspired the Vasil'ievs' film version of 1934.

By rehearsing such key elements as Chapaev's heroic status, his charismatic and populist appeal, and his death by drowning following a surprise attack, the Vasil'ievs'

---

[39] In point of fact, Clark notes that Furmanov's *Chapaev* was one of a number of novels written during the 1920s in which authors celebrated the notion of 'consciousness' on their own initiative, to counteract the effect of works by authors such as Pil'niak, who "idealized" spontaneity. In particular, Clark names *Chapaev* (as well as Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*, and Fadeev's *Rout*) as a novel "important in shaping the master plot as a parable of triumph of 'consciousness' over 'spontaneity'." See Clark, *History as Ritual* 83-84.

[40] Clark, *Ritual as History* 88.

[41] ibid.

version of the Chapaev myth is analogous to Furmanov's rendering,[42] in terms of its basic storyline, or *fabula*.[43] In the words of Isaak Babel:'

> [C]траницы книги Фурманова распахнулись, и из них вышли живые люди, настоящие герои нашей страны [...]. [[T]he pages of Furmanov's novel flew open and living people emerged from them, genuine heroes of our country [...]].[44]

Just as Furmanov's work became an archetype of the Stalinist novel, the Chapaev film was held up as a model for Stalinist filmmakers.[45] As it had the novel, *Pravda* heralded the film for its historical accuracy in representing the events of the Civil War, and for its balanced portrayal of both positive and negative attributes of the Red Army.[46] Perhaps the most prominent example of this point in both 'texts' is the depiction of looting, by both sides, in villages occupied by White and Red troops, in succession.

The film resembles Furmanov's novel in other respects, as well. In it, Chapaev is no less impulsive, arrogant, or ideologically ignorant than he is in Furmanov's novel. In a scene adapted from the novel (274-6), Chapaev has threatened to "waste two bullets" on two terrified veterinarians in his division, for having refused to certify an unschooled peasant in medicine. When Furmanov (whose alter-ego, Klychkov, has been eliminated) sides with the former, Chapaev threatens to shoot him as well and, in a fit of temper, defiantly hurls a chair against the floor. In the film, this scene is the first of two intense confrontations between Chapaev and his impetuous political commissar whose mission, again, is to tame, educate, and make him worthy of emulation as a 'proper' Soviet

---

[42] James Goodwin, scholar of Soviet film, concurs that the Vasil'ievs' film is indeed "a close adaptation of the novel *Chapaev* written by Dmitrii Furmanov," in *Eisenstein, Cinema, and History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 148.

[43] Traditionally, the term *fabula* connotes the raw material comprising the elements, or events, of the basic storyline of a narrative text; by contrast, the manner in which the events unfold in the narrative, having been arranged by the author, constitutes the plot, or *siuzhet*.

[44] Isaak Babel,' *Sochineniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990) 360. Translation mine.

[45] S. M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor, vol. 3. (London: BFI, 1988) 364, note 87.

[46] Goodwin 148.

commander. Chapaev's tantrum shows the raw energy of rebellion, but at the same time allows the commissar to assert his authority as mentor. 'Furmanov' alludes to the chair-smashing schoolmaster and enthusiast of Alexander the Great in the opening act of Gogol"s *Revizor* (Inspector-General [1836]), and in so doing puts education – consciousness – at the center of the real subject of their altercation: what it takes to be a leader. 'Furmanov' and those viewers with the cultural background or Soviet schooling to recognize the classic allusion can appreciate the joke; the newly literate Chapaev cannot – his training is incomplete.

In the second scene of confrontation, Furmanov goes so far as to challenge Chapaev's authority as commander of the division by arresting and threatening to court-martial a partisan deputy, and Chapaev's own comrade-in-arms, for looting. In each instance, Chapaev defers to his commissar. Thus, the mentor/disciple mechanics at the core of Furmanov's novel remain central to the Vasil'ievs' filmic plot. They even extend beyond the portrayal of Furmanov-as-mentor to include Chapaev in the role of mentor, in his own right, to Pet'ia and An'ka. Thus the construct is permitted to develop more fully along the mentor-disciple continuum whereby, Clark specifies, "each positive hero can potentially play father to any less conscious character and son to any more conscious one."[47] Chapaev takes Furmanov's advice in earnest; a lesson in grooming, and the importance of observing a dress code worthy of commanders, figures among the pointers Furmanov gives Chapaev, who next appears in the impeccable Cossack attire worthy of his rank. In turn, Chapaev is seen instructing Pet'ia on the importance of good grooming, and instilling in Pet'ka and An'ka ideologically correct optimism. In Furmanov's novel, though Chapaev is idolized by his troops, his own status as mentor is less evident. The

[47] Clark, "Socialist Realism *with* Shores" 47.

most prominent example occurs in Chapter 6, where Chapaev censures the troops for looting. The notion of enlightening the politically ignorant constitutes a leitmotif throughout Furmanov's novel; so much so that, as Vroon points out, physical fighting is shown to be secondary to the battle waged on the ideological front.[48] Even before the appearance on the scene of Chapaev and the start of his one-on-one training by Furmanov, the weavers enlighten peasants they encounter on their way to the front, handing out leaflets. Later, the agitprop organizers of the division stage didactic plays in an attempt to educate the troops and Cossack women of the steppe. The mentoring of disciples in ideology is crucial, then, to Furmanov's novel.

In and of itself, however, the related spontaneity/consciousness construct does not define the film as overtly as it does Furmanov's novel, its precursor text. By contrast, in the film the authority of mentorship is tempered by various means. Firstly, it is for the most part confined to the two confrontations noted above; thus, it does not dominate the film to the extent that it dominates Furmanov's novel. Consequently, though Chapaev is shown to mentor Pet'ka and An'ka, his own ignorance prevents him from any ideological instruction beyond a touching, but naively idealistic monologue, just hours before the fatal assault on the division, about the radiant future awaiting the young couple. Secondly, the film includes the stuff of entertainment – a strong, though controlled, element of humor, bordering on slapstick. This includes the comic exaggeration of Chapaev's volatile temper, and intellectual shortcomings; a more prominent role for Pet'ka as Chapaev's enthusiastic adjutant and faithful disciple; the introduction of An'ka, a no-nonsense female machine-gunner; and of a romantic liaison (Pet'ka's wholesome

---

[48] Vroon notes, for example, that Furmanov pays particular attention to the political section; indeed, physical fighting on the front is said to interfere with the political activity in the form of propaganda, and education of the troops and villagers (228).

flirtation with An'ka, to whom he becomes engaged prior to his own heroic death just moments after Chapaev's). The humor in the film, intended to evoke wholesome laughter, serves, unintentionally or not, to diffuse the didactic message that pervades Furmanov's novel – although it is a humor that knows its limits.[49]

Thirdly, the very mechanics of film adaptation necessitate the screenwriter's "selection and compression" for the screen[50] of the events depicted in Furmanov's novel. In other words, the film also differs from the novel in terms of plot, or *siuzhet*. Among the elements in Furmanov's narrative that were omitted by the Vasil'ievs are the descriptions of atrocities (decapitation, dismemberment, castration) committed by the Cossacks upon the Reds, and their sympathizers. Similarly, there is no depiction in the Vasil'ievs of the physical suffering of the Red troops due to shortages, especially of water, in the steppe regions. By the same token, the Vasil'ievs *add* elements to the story: exploiting the benefits of complete narrative omniscience, they include scenes from behind enemy lines. They portray the Whites as privileged: Colonel Borozdin is shown playing "Moonlight Sonata" on a grand piano at White headquarters, in a requisitioned mansion. They add a secondary dramatic interest to the film, involving the execution by the Whites of a man whose brother, servant to the enemy colonel, then defects to the Reds to avenge his brother's death.

Furmanov devotes the first four chapters of his work to setting the scene, and to establishing the didactic premise of his novel. In them, he describes the mixed emotions of parents as their sons and daughters depart for the frontlines (17-18); the chaotic state

---

[49] On the notion of life-affirming laughter, see Evgeny Dobrenko, "Soviet Comedy Film: Or the Carnival of Authority," trans. Jesse M. Savage, *Discourse: Journal for the Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 17.3 (1995): 49-57.

[50] Joy Gould Boyum, *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film* (New York: Universe Books, 1985) 78.

of affairs in the countryside as a result of civil war (19); the harsh conditions endured by Red soldiers on the front; the difficulties encountered by the political department in educating the local population (20); the political and ideological ignorance of the Red army men, the majority of whom were of peasant origin (50). By the time Chapaev appears in the narrative (Chapter 5), the reader is well acquainted with the chaotic state of affairs in Civil War Russia, and with Furmanov/Klychkov's didactic mission in the novel.

By contrast, the Vasil'ievs' film begins *in medias res*, with action.[51] The opening scene portrays a Red battalion in desperate retreat from a skirmish, until the timely arrival of Chapaev, with Pet'ia manning the machine-gun. The White battalion begins its own retreat at the very sound of the name "Chapaev!" (shouted out by the troops). The commander then bravely leads his men onward to reclaim the town. Significantly, Chapaev is introduced prior to the appearance on the scene of Furmanov, whose role in the film is secondary in pedagogical or narrative interest and popular appeal, to that of the heroic commander. Indeed, Chapaev's bravery, heroism and fearlessness are emphasized from the very outset. Even the White enemy colonel (Borozdin) affirms Chapaev's invincibility; putting a price on Chapaev's head, he affirms that both the hero *and his reputation* are dangerous forces to be reckoned with. Apparently, Borozdin refers here to the oral legend of Chapaev which existed prior to Furmanov's novel and which provided the point of departure for Furmanov's work, according to Vroon. In a sense, then, the statement is a form of tribute to, or acknowledgement of, both legends, popular and

---

[51] Stephen Crofts suggests that the 'action' in the Chapaev film is secondary in importance to the relationships between characters; he notes that throughout the film there is more emphasis on heroizing Chapaev and/or the Party, than advancing the plot, in "Ideology and Form: Soviet Socialist Realism and *Chapayev*," *Essays in Poetics* 2.1 (1977): 50. From a different, comparative perspective, this thesis argues that the film's heroizing of Chapaev and/or the Party does indeed *constitute* the plot – a point Crofts seems to overlook.

official. Thus, Chapaev's heroic status and 'action-hero' prowess also serve to temper the authority in the film of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic.

Chapaev's heroism is also important in a different sense – one that proves more pivotal to the promotion of the Socialist Realist perspective and, subsequently, to the distinction of the Vasil'ievs' film, as a Stalinist endeavor, from Furmanov's novel. Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein remarked that Chapaev was "remarkable precisely because he was shown as a heroic figure whom everyone felt he could identify with."[52] As if to complement this notion, James Goodwin notes the "typical heroism of the Vasil'ievs' *Chapaev*, where the famous Red Army commander of the civil war period is an earthy, passionate and fallible character."[53] The Vasil'ievs, then, were among the first to portray on film a Soviet positive hero as prescribed by the tenets of Stalinist Socialist Realism – that is, a human being not without flaws *or* the potential to overcome them, with the guidance of a mentor, who assures his advance along the ideological trajectory from spontaneity to consciousness.

Indeed, Chapaev's very fallibility, as opposed to his heroics (as acts of heroism), per se, contributes most to his hero status in the film, from the official, Soviet perspective.[54] That is, it permits the viewer's vicarious experience of the enlightenment process modeled for him/her by Chapaev; in addition, it confirms by contrast just how effective enlightenment can be, if even this flawed hero benefits from it. Ultimately, Chapaev's fallibility affirms the supremacy of consciousness over spontaneity, and the

---

[52] Eisenstein 130.

[53] Goodwin 164.

[54] Richard Stites observes two complementary self-images in Soviet Russian popular culture – a certain sense of 'bigness' (as simplicity, openness, lack of pretense, spontaneity) and a sense of morality (stemming from village life, and encompassing kindness, self sacrifice, patriotism, and friendship). These very qualities in Chapaev, especially as depicted by the Vasil'ievs, add to his national appeal. See his *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900*, Cambridge Soviet Paperbacks 7 (Cambridge; Cambridge UP, 1992) 5-6.

utmost importance of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic both within and beyond the parameters of the Stalinist Socialist Realist narrative.

One last comparison between the novel and the film clarifies this seemingly paradoxical observation. Though an exemplar of Socialist Realism, Furmanov's model was a precursor to the genre. As such, it is more ambivalent regarding the question of responsibility for the enemy's fatal assault on Chapaev's division, offering more than one possibility, and ultimately laying no blame for the attack. Having received orders to leave the division prior to the attack, Klychkov does not witness the event first-hand; rather, he hears of it after the fact. Thus, direct finger-pointing at anyone besides the enemy (in this instance a brigade of local Cossacks, devoted at that time to the Whites) would be at odds with the 'factographic' premise of the narrative, which is ostensibly limited to Klychkov's narrative point of view.[55] The narrator does note that the military students whom Chapaev had ordered to stand guard were dismissed; he asserts, however, that precisely *who* relieved them from their posts "remains a mystery to this day," adding that "Chapaev issued no such order" (303). Thus, he absolves the commander of guilt in this regard. By the same token, both Chapaev and his new commissar (Baturin) are said to have ignored a Cossack woman (whose son had recently joined the Reds) forewarning them of imminent danger, having seen Cossacks "flitting in the fields" (ibid.). Though not altogether unfamiliar with the territory, Chapaev was not on home-turf in the steppe. Aware, moreover, of the regional Cossacks' anti-Red position, Chapaev might have done

---

[55] In Mieke Bal's terminology, Klychkov is the novel's primary 'focalizer;' that is, Klychkov's point of view predominates in the narrative. On the relationship between narration and focalization, see Bal's *On Story-Telling: Essays in Narratology*, ed. David Jobling (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1991) 75-108.

well to heed the warning of this sympathetic insider, who may have been able to better interpret Cossack codes of behavior.[56]

In the film, meanwhile, Chapaev is more clearly shown to have exercised poor judgment prior to the ambush that cost him his life. The Vasil'ievs make no secret of Chapaev's vanity; like Furmanov, they have the hero refer to himself in the third person, as Chapaev, on more than one occasion.[57] Closer to the discussion at hand, he is overly confident of his own *in*fallibility and superior strength in strategy. Chapaev's delight at his own legendary reputation as an invincible maverick hero impedes his strategic assessment, in this case, of the White forces, so that ultimately, his spontaneity – manifest as excessive self-assurance – is overtly to blame.[58] Of necessity, the film is clearer on this point than the novel; as a Stalinist endeavor it was subject to more stringent ideological codes than was Furmanov's pre-Stalinist work. Thus, although the prominence of the spontaneity/consciousness construct is tempered in the film by the presence of other elements, including the comical and the romantic, its value is in the end re-asserted. In this sense, then, the film version constitutes a further official re-mythologization of the Chapaev legend. At first glance, the re-mythologization might seem idiosyncratic, if not paradoxical, in that it is effected at the expense of the main protagonist's heroic, infallible status. However, it will be recalled, firstly, that the Soviet positive hero's conversion to complete consciousness is to some degree contingent on his

---

[56] It is interesting to note that by the end of the novel Chapaev has progressed further than the Cossacks along the continuum between spontaneity and consciousness.

[57] The practice of referring to himself by name is a corollary to the spontaneous element of Chapaev's character: it recalls children's speech, and immaturity on Chapaev's part. Moreover, vanity is emotional and highly individualistic – in effect, doubly 'elemental' – and not part of the desired Bolshevik behavioral code.

[58] In one scene in the film, following a successful skirmish against the Whites, Chapaev finds a White Army poster on the wall of their just-captured headquarters, in which he is depicted as a force to be reckoned with. Pleased with his reputation as a menace, he rolls up the poster and presents it to An'ka as a souvenir.

fallibility. Furthermore, though Chapaev's death does cut short his progression to consummate consciousness, it constitutes not so much punishment for reckless behavior, as an opportunity to introduce an important sub-code of Socialist Realism – that of martyrdom.[59] Finally, Chapaev's death is timely: it not only conforms to the historical record and hence the mimetic demands of Socialist Realism, it leaves open the possibility that had he survived, Chapaev might have overcome his vanity, a vestige of petty bourgeois individualism. The Vasil'ievs modify and manipulate various aspects of Furmanov's narrative in order to comply both with the principles of narrative adaptation from one medium to another, and of Stalinist Socialist Realism. The absence of dissension between the semantic orientation of the two texts, or of any irony-driven tension between them, precludes the possibility of parodic relations between Furmanov's novel and the Vasil'ievs' film version of the Chapaev myth.[60]

Of interest here too is what might be considered the third official version of the Chapaev myth – that of the Stalinist folk tradition – which developed parallel to the Socialist Realist literary tradition, and was subject to similar constraints. For the most part, the popular mythology devoted to Chapaev's memory emerged during the Stalinist thirties. This decade launched a collaborative effort by folklorists and the State to renew interest in (and the legitimacy of) the folk tradition after its denigration throughout the

---

[59] Clark touches upon several features of this code. Socialist Realism looked to pre-Bolshevik models for the motifs of the ascetic life and dedication to the cause. The ideal martyr sacrifices his/her life; thus, martyrdom serves as the utmost vindication of the cause and the most persuasive example for emulation. She observes, furthermore, that death assumes great importance in the Soviet sense of (revolutionary) history and national identity. See Clark, *History as Ritual* 49; 179.

[60] In a recent public lecture, Linda Hutcheon affirmed the similarity between parody and adaptation, while underscoring the differences between them. Both parody and adaptation comprise a defining relation to another text; thus, both are experienced as palimpsests, and forms of intertextuality. Unlike parody, however, the mechanics of adaptation constitute a complex (and more complete) appropriation of the original text, prior to its transposition to another genre or medium. As paraphrased from Linda Hutcheon, "Familiarity and Contempt," presented at McGill University, March 2004.

1920s by such literary and cultural organizations as RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), KOMFUT (Communist Futurism), and the Proletkul't (Proletarian Culture).[61] Performers of traditional Russian folklore were assisted by professional folklorists in composing their own legends and new epic songs (*noviny*) in keeping with the tenets of Soviet ideology and Stalinist policy. Soviet "pseudo-folklore," as Miller terms it, offered the Party an opportunity to "foster patriotism" and "advance communism" among the largely illiterate masses.[62] The *noviny* and the somewhat later, so-called 'Soviet tales' "described contemporary Soviet life in a pseudofolklore genre."[63] Successor to the oral tradition of Russian folklore – that embodiment of *narodnost'* before the fact – Stalinist folklore would also accommodate the principles of *ideinost'* and *partiinost.'* Not unlike the Vasil'ievs, the composers of the Chapaev tales and songs both adhere to and depart from Furmanov's version of the myth, varying in their portrayal of the events of the hero's life, and circumstances of his death.

The more 'historical' of these accounts are (semi-)biographical, some more accurate than others. Miller notes that one such *novina*, Kriukova's "Chapai," employs motifs, personages (including Pet'ka, as "Petrushka," and Furmanov himself), and events from Furmanov's novel[64] wherein, it will be recalled, are recounted various details of Chapaev's biography. He asserts, however, that "Kriukova does not include in her novina [*sic*] any references to Furmanov's efforts to re-educate Chapaev in the proper

---

[61] Miller 4-7.

[62] Miller 9-12. In the preface to another study of Russian folklore, Felix J. Oinas and Stephen Soudakoff emphasize the social orientation (especially for purposes of propaganda and agitation) of studies of Soviet Russian folklorists since the twenties. See Felix J. Oinas and Stephen Soudakoff, eds. and trans., *The Study of Russian Folklore* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 4 – 6.

[63] Miller 92.

[64] Miller 35.

revolutionary spirit [...]."[65] The absence from Kriukova's "Chapai" of the didactic element at the core of relations between Furmanov and Chapaev distinguishes it from Furmanov's account and the Vasil'ievs' film.[66] Yet, at least one tale ("Zhiv Chapaev!" ["Chapaev lives!"])[67] does attribute an inkling of Soviet consciousness and mentorship to Chapaev. He speaks to his own men of living 'collectively' (*kollektivno*) after the Civil War, and spares politically 'unconscious' (*nesoznatel'nykh*) enemy prisoners, recruiting them, instead, with his fairness. By offering to set them free, he convinces them to remain in his ranks. However, the same tale openly incriminates Chapaev in the night-raid on his battalion in Lbishchensk. Having beaten back the enemy, Chapaev decides to rest, dispersing his regiments, save for one; he drops his guard, though, and oversleeps (*ne dogliadel, prospal...*), so that, as it had in the Vasil'ievs' film, Chapaev's self-satisfaction – a spin-off of spontaneity as vanity – gets the better of him.[68] Indeed, the tale opens with a description of Chapaev as "proud and courageous" (*gordyi i smelyi*).[69]

Also relevant to the discussion at hand are the variations in some Chapaev tales on the circumstances of his death.[70] This point distinguishes them starkly from both

---

[65] Miller 36.

[66] For a detailed synopsis and substantial analysis of Kriukova's "Chapai," see Miller 33-36.

[67] As reproduced in A. M. Gor'kii and L. Z. Mekhlis, eds., *Tvorchestvo narodov SSSR* (n.p.: Pravda, 1937) 262-65; also reproduced in L. V. Domanovskii, comp., *Russkii sovetskii fol'klor: Antologiia* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1967) 55-57.

[68] On the question of rest, this tale is directly counterposed to an episode in Furmanov's novel (Chapter 12) in which, during a lull in the fighting, while Chapaev's troops recuperate, he fumes, curses and swears about what he considers "criminal procrastination" of the Reds' advance: "Why should we rest? [...] Who is fool enough to rest at the front? Who wants this damned rest?," he is quoted as shouting (225).

[69] Gor'kii and Mekhlis 262.

[70] Vroon notes, for example, that "Chapaev's status as a folk hero would prove to be so great in the southern-steppe region where he served that his death, documented in the press, in Furmanov's novel, and in the Vasil'ev brothers' famous movie would be disputed in the folklore that arose around him" (Vroon 231).

official precursors. In "Smert' Chapaeva" ["Chapaev's Death"],[71] Chapaev is foiled by a female spy, who informs the White General Kolchak of his brigade's position.[72] In the same tale, Chapaev drowns because the magic ring given him by his aunt as a talisman is powerless in water. Meanwhile, in "Zhiv Chapaev!," discussed above, Chapaev is wounded in the attack on his division but escapes and, with Pet'ia's help, survives the crossing of the Ural River; in a further a twist to the story, he changes his name because of the "mistake" at Lbishchensk and, it is rumored, becomes an important – though still fair and kind – local authority (*nachal'nik*). Indeed, the very fact that Chapaev's body was never recovered could feasibly provide the basis for this particular variation of the tale, which affirms Chapaev's guilt, and the importance of 'consciousness' – confirmed by his recognizing his 'mistake' and ascending to authority.

Differ though they may in form and/or content, the common denominator linking the tales is Chapaev's portrayal as a hero of the Civil War, if not a martyr to the Cause. Fantastic elements notwithstanding, the image of Chapaev as fearless, peasant warrior of the Soviet folk tradition remains within the parameters set by the official portrayals by Furmanov and the Vasil'ievs. It underscores his tireless bravery in battle, and devotion to the Communist cause. He stands up for his country and freedom ("Zhiv Chapaev!"), and leaves his family to protect the fledgling Soviet power ("Smert' Chapaeva"). The tales and *noviny* differ from the film and the novel in their general omission of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic as a textual construct; they advocate courage and

---

[71] As reproduced in Gor'kii and Mekhlis 256-61. Reproduced and translated as "Chapaev" in James von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays and Folklore 1917-1953* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995) 280.

[72] This episode is evidently a variation of a similar incident in Furmanov (228-30). There, however, Klychkov apprehends the young woman, interrogates and breaks her down; in the end, she provides the Reds with much valuable information. The same incident forms the basis of an anecdote, to be discussed in more detail below.

devotion, but emphasize neither discipline, nor the active progression in Chapaev from a lesser to a greater state of ideological enlightenment. Rather, the Chapaev tales and *noviny* promote his status as a man of and for the people – primarily distinguished from his precursors, however, as a defender of the distinctly Soviet land.

The relationship between this third version of the Chapaev myth and its forerunners – by Furmanov and the Vasil'ievs – is one of adaptation, from one genre and medium, to another, and not parody. In terms of Bakhtinian discourse types, the *noviny* and tales may best be considered a form of "semi-stylization."[73] They vacillate between the stylization of canonical Socialist Realism in terms of semantic intention or the message they carry, on the one hand, and the imitation, on the other hand, of traditional folklore in terms of the aesthetic means they employ to do so. In imitating the folkloric tradition they are permitted on the one hand a certain latitude in fulfilling every requirement of official, Stalinist discourse. On the other hand, they evidently uphold the semantic intention of the canon, in contradistinction, again, to parody.

Ironically, the absence from the officially sanctioned Chapaev tales and *noviny* of the didactic element as the progression from spontaneity to consciousness, links them to their *un*official successors in perpetuating the myth of Chapaev – the Soviet anecdotes[74]

---

[73] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Theory and History of Literature 8, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984) 190. Bakhtin notes that "while a clear-cut semantic boundary exists between stylization and imitation," the transitions between them are discreet, to the point of being imperceptible (190). In a paradoxical twist on such a nuanced distinction between the two discourse types, the very imitation by Stalinist composers/performers of the traditional folkloric style, is precisely what leads to its consideration as a form of stylization of the Stalinist canon.

[74] In an article published during the first 'Thaw,' William Henry Chamberlin observes that Soviet anecdotes "began to crop up as soon as the Soviet regime was established and abolished freedom of the press," giving voice to illicit humor, as opposed to the officially sanctioned brand of humor that appeared in Soviet publications. Chamberlin maintains that anecdotes both preserved the "Russian reputation for sardonic wit" and sometimes even acted as "corrective footnotes to official versions of Soviet history," targeting now particular events (Lenin's death), now general Soviet policy (collective farms, or even Stalin himself). Chamberlin provides several examples of early Soviet humor in anecdote form in "The 'Anecdote': Unrationed Soviet Humor," *Russian Review* 16.3 (1957): 27. In the introduction to a more

devoted to his memory as a popular hero. In general terms, the Soviet anecdote as a genre (as distinguished, for example, from that of the *post*-Soviet anecdote) appears to have inherited the responsibility for perpetuating spontaneity in terms of production (of necessity a form of oral discourse), content, and reception (illicit laughter) – in short, those elements ostensibly lost in the act of officially sanctioning Soviet folklore.[75]

By and large the anecdotes, or source of what will be called here the fourth Chapaev myth, do subvert the efforts of their three official precursors: they utterly dethrone Chapaev as a Soviet hero, and reclaim him as a popular hero of the oral tradition. Chapaev's perpetual drunkenness, lack of personal hygiene, and downright dimwittedness are part and parcel of his anti-Soviet plunge, at the hands of the Soviet public, from the heights of the official canon to the depths of the fictional Ivan Chonkin[76] who, like the Chapaev of the anecdotes, appeals to the public precisely *because* of his gross failings as a canonical Socialist Realist positive hero. In these anecdotes, the mentor/disciple relationship between Chapaev and Pet'ka remains in tact, at least nominally; however, there is no evidence of any transformation whatsoever on the part of the former from spontaneity to consciousness. On the contrary, as Seth Graham suggests, the Chapaev of the anecdotes is immortalized by virtue of his incorrigible *stikhiinost'*,[77]

---

recent survey of the Soviet anecdote, Dora Shturman and Sergei Tiktin maintain that in Stalinist times the political anecdote could earn both narrator and listener up to ten years in prison for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, in *Sovetskii soiuz v zerkale politicheskogo anekdota,* 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Ekspress, 1987) 13.

[75] Abram Terts noted, for instance, that the anecdote was the one remaining contemporary folk genre in Soviet Russia. See Terts' "Anekdot v anekdote," *Odna ili dve russkikh literatury?*, ed. Georges Niva (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1981) 176.

[76] Vladimir Voinovich, *Zhizn' i neobychainye prikliucheniia soldata Ivana Chonkina: roman-anekdot v piati chastiakh* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1976). The points in common between Voinovich's novel (or, 'anecdote in five parts') and the Chapaev anecdotes include both heroes' peasant origins, bawdy humor, and drinking, while maintaining an element of underlying 'good-natured-ness' on the part of both men.

[77] Seth Graham, "Chapai shagaet po planete: From Stalinist Film Fakelore to Post-Stalinist Jokelore," 4 April 2001 <www.pitt.edu/~mmbst35/chapai.html>.

particularly as it refers to his hopeless ignorance, both cultural and intellectual. Let us consider two typical Chapaev anecdotes:

> Чапаев поступал в Академию.
> -- Ну как, Василий Иванович?
> -- Да как, как... Почти все сдал: и кровь, и мочу, а вот политграмоту...
> [Chapaev goes to the Academy. "So how'd it go, Vasilii Ivanovich?"[, he is asked.] "How, well... I passed almost all the tests: blood, and urine, but as for political education ..."]. [78]

> Чапаеву в госпиталь Петька и Фурманов прислали шампанского и боченок красной икры. Чапаев пишет Петьке: "Спасибо, Петька, за самогонку, мы её всю выпили, жаль – мало, а клюкву твою – к чортовой матери выкинули – рыбой воняет! [Pet'ka and Furmanov sent the hospitalized Chapaev a bottle of champagne and a little pot of red caviar. Chapaev writes Pet'ka: "Thanks for the hooch, Pet'ka, we drank it all up, too bad there wasn't much of it, but your cranberries – we threw them the hell out – they reeked of fish!]. [79]

Some of the Chapaev anecdotes constitute sheer fabrication (Chapaev in the hospital), while others are based on factual events (Chapaev at the Academy); still others derive from scenes in Furmanov's novel or the Vasil'ievs' film.

Though they invariably exploit the spontaneous elements of Chapaev's character, sometimes reaching the nadir of bad taste, those anecdotes grounded in 'truth,' as a matter of historical or fictionalized record, are doubly humorous in their manipulation of actions, events, and relationships. In Furmanov's novel, for instance, a young female spy for the Whites hitches a ride on the Red Army baggage train, claiming to be en route to her family in Ufa. Suspicious of her from the start, Klychkov interrogates her, and succeeds in breaking her down. In the end, she furnishes their division with "much valuable information" (230). A variation of the female enemy spy motif also appears in a Chapaev tale; here, however, she wanders into Chapaev's encampment, ostensibly having lost her way en route to visit her husband, a Red Army man. Chapaev takes her in, but while his division sleeps, the woman – a Pole – reveals the location of Chapaev's regiment to the

---

[78] Vasilii Betaki, (ed.), *Rossiia smeetsia nad SSSR* (Paris: RITM, 1980), no pagination. Translation mine.

[79] ibid. Translation mine.

enemy Admiral Kolchak, whose men then lead the fatal assault on Chapaev the next day.[80] Lastly, the motif inspires an anecdote, in which Pet'ia, posing as a woman, is permitted by the Whites to enter Red territory across the bridge, in what appears to be a horse-drawn cart, to see his/her dying father. Upon reaching the Reds, Pet'ia takes off his costume and is congratulated by the men on his disguise. However, not until Pet'ia tells them to un-harness Chapaev, do they realize that he has been posing as the horse.[81] This lack of recognition speaks to Chapaev's spontaneity as 'animal nature' – a play, in particular on Furmanov's characterization of Chapaev as a "proud horse of the steppe" (59) [*kon' stepnoi*, 76] and, on a somewhat less poetic level, the instinctive 'horse sense' the official Chapaev is shown to possess.

The number of Chapaev anecdotes, and the many versions/variations thereof attests to the popularity of Chapaev as an endearingly ignorant (anti-)hero. In the anecdotes, Chapaev the officially sanctioned hero is transformed into an unofficial cult hero.

Though each version of the Chapaev myth has been shown to modify the formal or thematic elements of its precursor text(s) by adapting the narrative from one medium or genre to another, the anecdotes are the first to actually parody their forerunners.[82] In fact, they confront their hypotexts on the broader, even trans-textual level where canon meets anti-canon. They meet all three criteria of Morson's model of parody: (1) the very mention of Chapaev and Pet'ia evokes either Furmanov's novel or, most likely, the

---

[80] Von Geldern and Stites 280-283.

[81] Paraphrased from Vasilii Betaki, (ed.), *Rossiia smeetsia nad SSSR* (Paris: RITM, 1980), no pagination.

[82] In a more general context, the parodic nature of the anecdote (as the embodiment of dual, clashing contexts, points of view, or systems of logic) in both its Soviet and post-Soviet manifestations is noted by Irina Kaspe in "Krivoe antizerkalo: 'Sovetskii' i 'postsovetskii' anekdot: problemy zhanrovoi transformatsii," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 43 (2000): 331.

Vasil'ievs' film;[83] (2) the anecdotes are overtly antithetical to these canonical texts (by glorifying 'spontaneity' in its various manifestations, and/or eliminating hierarchical relations between characters, including Furmanov); and (3) they assume higher semantic authority than their target. They embody the genuine sense of spontaneity presumed in the production and transmission of the Soviet anecdote (traditionally a popular, oral and, as such, more authentic, genre than Socialist Realist literature). They restore to spontaneity its raw energy and celebrate the anarchistic force that Socialist Realism had sought to contain. Ultimately, as a loose, constantly evolving body of texts they subvert the very premise of order and stability upon which Socialist Realism was built. In this sense, the Soviet Chapaev anecdote constitutes a large if amorphous anti-utopia to the utopia of Socialist Realism as a state-ordered and state-controlled mega-text.

Comparing the three models of parody proposed at the outset of this chapter, Morson's seems at first glance the most applicable. Though not impossible, it is difficult to treat the Chapaev anecdotes as parody in the Formalist sense, unless one considers the anecdotes as a stepping-stone between the official versions of the Chapaev myth and Pelevin's novel, in which one critic sees little more than an extended anecdote, or a collection of them, at best.[84] Hutcheon's paradigm also falls short of the mark here; the anecdotes do indeed comprise repetition with a difference, but the sense of irony that could permit their classification according to Hutcheon is too extreme, and one-sided,

---

[83] Though the political anecdote per se is necessarily satirical, in that it targets State or Party policy and thus exceeds any purely aesthetic parameters, the evocation by the Chapaev anecdotes of a specific narrative, be it Furmanov's novel or the Vasil'ievs' film, affirms their classification under the rubric of parody; a Chapaev anecdote that is politically oriented might be considered within the domain of satirical parody, but could not technically be considered simple satire, according to the paradigms of parody proposed in this chapter.

[84] See for example a review by Andrei Nemzer, who sees this tendency (of extended anecdotes) in all of Pelevin's writing, in "Kak by tipa po zhizni: *Generation II* kak zerkalo otechestvennogo infantilizma," *Viktor Pelevin: Sait tvorchestva*, 12 Dec. 2004 <http://pelevin.nov.ru/stati/o-nemz2/1.html>.

favoring – again – Morson's stricter, binary-oriented definition of parody. Moreover, the Chapaev anecdotes rely, for their popularity and successful reception, almost exclusively on an element of humor and/or overt ridicule; though not entirely excluded by Hutcheon, these elements are expressly de-emphasized in her vision of parody.

Briefly summarizing thus far: The four (un-)official manipulations of the Chapaev myth differ in terms of genre, medium, as well as emphasis. The one element they all share, however, is the aspiration to create a hero, or anti-hero, as the case may be, of and for their respective times.

In *Chapaev i Pustota*, Pelevin follows suit: by parodying the constructs of the Soviet positive hero, as well as his transformation from spontaneity to consciousness by means of the mentor/disciple relationship, Pelevin reworks both canon and anti-canon, thereby re-appropriating and revamping the myth of Chapaev to suit the post-Soviet perspective.

Pelevin's version of the myth presents a patchwork version of Chapaev, derived from all four preceding variants. His Chapaev's penchant for moonshine and vodka is a characteristic of spontaneity clearly inherited from the anecdotes, so that he remains a somewhat drunken, but in this sense very accessible, if unpredictable, (anti-)hero from both Soviet and post-Soviet perspectives. Pelevin's Anna, in the role of Chapaev's niece, comments on her uncle's drinking and erratic behavior:

> Пьет [...]. Черт знает что творится, даже страшно. Вчера выбежал на улицу в одной рубахе, с маузером в руке, выстрелил три раза в небо, потом подумал немного, выстрелил три раза в землю и пошел спать (159). [He drinks [...]. God knows what is going on, it really is quite frightening. Yesterday he ran out into the street with his Mauser, wearing nothing but his shirt, fired three times at the sky, then thought for a moment, fired three times into the ground and went to bed (129)].

Pelevin's Chapaev clearly retains an element of the 'incorrigible *stikhiinost'* attributed to the Chapaev of the anecdotes by Graham; his behavior, above, represents the apex of 'spontaneity' as impulsiveness.

In keeping with the official versions of the myth (Furmanov's novel, the tales and *noviny*, the Vasil'ievs' film), however, Pelevin's Chapaev remains an honorable, fearless commander who, despite his violent outbursts of temper (the most notable of which occurs during a discussion in Chapter VII between Pet'ia and Kotovskii), is highly respected by his troops (until their revolt against him – with Furmanov at the helm– at the end). Setting off for the frontlines, they hang on his every word. Pet'ia observes the effect of a speech by Chapaev on a battalion of workers at Moscow's Iaroslavskii station:

> Смысл его убыстряющейся речи ускользал от меня, но, судя по тому, как рабочие вытягивали шеи, вслушивались и кивали, иногда начиная довольно скалиться, он говорил что-то близкое их рассудку (94-5). [The meaning of his ever more rapid speech escaped me, but to judge from the way in which the workers strained their necks to hear and nodded their heads, sometimes even grinning happily, what he was saying made good sense to them (74)].

This scene from Pelevin's novel conflates elements from various scenes in Furmanov's novel. First and foremost, it refers to Furmanov's opening scene at the Ivanovo-Voznesensk station, in which Klychkov is asked to address a detachment of weavers, just prior to their departure for the front.[85] Pelevin's play on this scene is significant; in his version, Pet'ia addresses the troops after Chapaev, thereby carrying out his first official duty as Chapaev's new commissar. Moreover, it is here that Pet'ia first meets Furmanov, to whom he takes an immediate dislike. Furmanov, in turn, informs Pet'ia of his own mistrust of Chapaev, referring to him as "an eagle [...] that has to be watched," since he

---

[85] Natal'ia Nagornaia has noted that the speech given by Chapaev at Iaroslavskaia Station has been excerpted and (slightly modified) from the farewell speech to the troops by an old weaver at Ivanovo-Voznesensk Station. See Nagornaia's "Istoriia i snovidenie v tvorchestve V. Pelevina," *Literaturnyi al'manakh Likbez*, 12 Dec. 2004 < http://tbs.asu.ru/likbez/Kritika/nagor.htm>.

frequently gets carried away (74). The reference in Pelevin to Chapaev as an eagle links his novel to the Soviet folkloric tradition discussed above.[86] In the historical Furmanov's novel, meanwhile, Klychkov observes that Chapaev, in his unenlightened state, is like a hooded eagle (*kak orel s zaviazannymi glazami* [127]).[87] Both references to Chapaev as an eagle emphasize his spontaneous character, though they are nuanced in their emphasis. Pelevin's Furmanov stresses an element of volatility, or recklessness, in need of containment, while Klychkov's analogy portrays a source of untamed energy, or un-harnessed potential, to be channeled to proper ends. Like his mythmaking precursors, Pelevin borrows motifs, constructs, events, and scenes from Furmanov's version of the Chapaev myth. However, his relationship to Furmanov's narrative – like that of the anecdotes to the official versions of the myth – tends to the parodic.

The scene under discussion possibly alludes to a number of scenes in Furmanov's novel in which Chapaev addresses his own men, or crowds of peasants (as he does in the Vasil'ievs' film, on at least one occasion). As above, the gist of Chapaev's speeches in Furmanov are, almost invariably, said to be beyond comprehension; without fail, however, his words are received with unrestrained enthusiasm by his listeners – again, in keeping with the general spirit in the above citation from Pelevin. In the first of these scenes, Chapaev chides his men for looting: "His speech absolutely lacked coherence and unity," but "it produced an overpowering impression," revealing "an indisputable power to move and influence his hearers profoundly" (98). Later in the campaign,

---

[86] Miller notes that, in the lyrical introduction to her *novina* entitled "Chapai," Marfa Kriukova refers to Chapaev as "golden-winged eagle" and a "fighting eagle"(Miller 33); similarly, in a song devoted to Chapaev it is said that, guiding his troops along the length of the Ural River he flew like an eagle (*Kak orel, Chapai letal*), in *Russkii sovetskii fol'klor: Antologiia* (53).

[87] By contrast, though in keeping with bird imagery, Furmanov's Klychkov agrees with the apparently common view that "[t]he Cossack is a black raven [...]" (71); Pet'ka, meanwhile, is said to be "sallow, [and] bird-faced" (76).

Chapaev delivers a speech to a village. Again, "[t]he theme of it cannot be defined [...]. Nevertheless, his words appealed to the crowd. [...] They listened with strained attention to the very end of this tortuous, muddled speech, and when he broke off they wagged their heads in appreciation [...]" (114). In yet another scene in which Chapaev rallies his men, he reportedly employs "[w]ords of no intrinsic value," which nevertheless produce "an inexpressible effect" (146). Furmanov's narrator is quick to add that the more educated weavers would not react as favorably to Chapaev's speeches, noting that "his manner would be ridiculed" (98). Apparently, Pelevin relies more heavily on Furmanov as a source for his novel than is posited by those critics who presume that, in view of its comic orientation, the work refers predominantly to episodes from the Vasil'ievs or the anecdotes. As concerns Pelevin's parody, these excerpts of speeches by Furmanov's Chapaev dovetail with a comment made by Pelevin's *own* Chapaev, to Pet'ia, about public speaking:

> Знаете, Петр, когда приходится говорить с массой, совершенно не важно, понимаешь ли сам произносимые слова. Важно, чтобы их понимали другие. Нужно просто отразить ожидания толпы (98). [You know, Pyotr, when one has to address the masses, it is quite unimportant whether one understands the words that one speaks. What is important is that other people understand them. One has simply to reflect the expectations of the crowd (76)].

Despite Vroon's observation, noted earlier, of the emphasis in Furmanov by Klychkov and the weavers on the supremacy of the written word,[88] the preeminence of the ideological battle over physical warfare, and, ultimately, of asserting linguistic mastery, Furmanov's Chapaev succeeds in getting his simple, barely comprehensible message across to his listeners. Pelevin has apparently picked up on this point; not only does his Chapaev advocate popular oratory as a form of spontaneity bordering on insolence

---

[88] Vroon observes, that "[t]he general principle that equates oral discourse with what is false and written discourse with the truth is emplotted throughout *Chapaev*" (233).

(improvisation in accordance with the mood of the crowd), he undercuts the value, so emphasized in Furmanov and Socialist Realism as a whole, of language as the bearer of ideology.

Most importantly, Pelevin's Chapaev continues to possess a certain inherent wisdom. However, the nature of this wisdom, or consciousness, has been considerably altered. No longer the horse sense of the instinctive revolutionary portrayed by Furmanov and the Vasil'ievs, Chapaev's mystique comprises something far deeper, and potentially far more threatening to the Reds than simply a non-conformist, anti-authoritarian predisposition. Neither Red nor White, Pelevin's Chapaev is a Buddhist – an oriental sage, whose metaphysical erudition, had it not been kept secret for decades, as is contended in Pelevin's mock foreword to the novel, might have had significant ramifications for the Soviet readership. This Chapaev is by no means a traditional positive hero, nor has he developed along the trajectory from spontaneity to consciousness in the Soviet sense.

Chapaev's inherent wisdom is a quality that both conforms to and deviates from the official versions of the myth. Though he remains a legendary figure, in Pelevin's text the mythic Chapaev is now also the *mystic* Chapaev – "one of the most profound mystics" his niece Anna has ever known (121). This mystical element of the new Chapaev's characterization constitutes a considerable manipulation by Pelevin of the Chapaev myth, and accommodates all three paradigms of parody discussed in this chapter as regards the three official versions, and their anecdotal *sub*-versions.

Pelevin's manipulation of the Socialist Realist positive hero is clearly a parody by Morson's concise definition, whereby the formal and/or thematic elements of one text are

manipulated, in another, to contrary and more meaningful ends. Though Chapaev remains a positive figure within the parameters of Pelevin's narrative, he is not worthy of emulation in the Soviet sense of the term. Unlike his official precursors in Furmanov and the Vasil'ievs, Pelevin's Chapaev advocates immaterialist, and utterly apolitical beliefs; from the post-Soviet perspective of many of his fans, these could indeed have proved more meaningful in the long run. Not unlike the Chapaev anecdotes in their day, Pelevin's novel seems today to have higher semantic authority than Furmanov's. Like the Chapaev anecdotes, Pelevin's text meets Morson's criteria for subversive, anti-canonical parody.

On a somewhat less serious note, in keeping with the overall tone of Pelevin's narrative, the author's take on the positive hero also corresponds to the paradigm of parody provided by Hutcheon, whose vision of parody hinges on ironic inversion. There is little or no apparent irony in the juxtaposition of Pelevin's mystical Chapaev with the Chapaev of the Stalinist *noviny* or so-called Soviet tales, in at least two of which he is already endowed with supernatural powers, in one form or another.[89] However, the ironic implications of Chapaev's mysticism are clear as regards Furmanov's novel and the Vasil'ievs' film. In part, the irony here hinges on the condemnation in Pelevin's mock foreword of the preceding versions of the myth (by Furmanov, the Vasil'ievs, and the anecdotes) as false (8-9), and the affirmation of the author's own version (ostensibly a 'found' manuscript, suppressed for decades) as the truth. Thus, it is humorously ironic

---

[89] "Smert' Chapaeva" ("Chapaev's Death"), in which Chapaev drowns when the magic ring his aunt gives him as a talisman proves impotent in water, has been discussed, above. In yet another tale that has Chapaev survive his swim across the Ural River, however, he comes upon the hut of an old Kirgiz, who gives him a silver sword, a golden revolver, and a steed as fast as lightning, who takes him to the secret mountain of the Black Eagle; there he will be safe, and able to descend at will to lead Red brigades against the bourgeois exploiters of the working Soviet people. According to the legend, Chapaev appeared numerous times, inspiring the troops, then disappearing without a trace. See "Chapai," as reprinted in *Krasnoarmeiskii fol'klor*, ed. Iu. M. Sokolov (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel,' 1938) 106-108.

that the Chapaev who admitted in Furmanov to blessing himself, just in case (127), and who believed that sugarloaves grew in fields (107) could actually have been a *bodhisattva*, an incarnation of Buddha, or a Zen-master who was privy to the secrets of the universe, though ostensibly unable to distinguish between the philosophies of Kant and Schopenhauer (174-175). The very idea presents the notion of Furmanov's "*chapaevshchina*"[90] (a reference, in Furmanov's case, to Chapaev's outbursts, mistrust of and tirades directed at Red Army headquarters) in an entirely different light – again, in keeping with the belligerent mock foreword to Pelevin's novel.

Pelevin's parody of the anecdotes is slightly more complex: by adding a mystical, otherworldly element to a still drunken civil warrior, Pelevin manages to rescue Chapaev from the gutter of the anecdotes, while preserving those unsophisticated, human elements of his character that continue to endear him to the post-Soviet public.[91] On the one hand, the new Chapaev speaks of abstract and elevated concepts; like his anecdotal precursor on the other, however, Pelevin's Chapaev fractures and mispronounces the names of these concepts ("*ento logiia*," instead of "*ontologiia*" ["ontology"]), frequently uses colloquial language (*Chivo?* [slang for 'What?'] versus *Chevo*?) and munches on raw onions[92] with

---

[90] Traditionally, and especially in Soviet times, a name or noun, suffixed with '-shchina' takes on an extremely negative connotation, as an undesirable practice or way of thinking. The English equivalent as '-ism' does not do the Russian original justice. Thus, the connotations of the Russian terms *'chapaevshchina' or 'dostoevshchina'* are much harsher than those that might be implied by 'Chapaevism' or 'Dostoevskyism.' Pet'ia uses *dostoevshchina* (translated as Dostoevskian obsession [22]) to refer to the avant-garde staging of the Raskol'nikov-Marmeladov skit (in 1919) at the Musical Snuffbox in *Chapaev i Pustota*.

[91] Chapaev's drunkenness is also indicative of the new post-Soviet interest in altered states of consciousness (depicted in Pelevin variously as the consumption of cocaine, psilocybin, ecstasy, as well as psychiatric drug therapy and, simply, dream states) and alternate realities; this factor accounts for much of Pelevin's popularity as a writer on fantastic and narcotic themes. Sergei Kornev, suggests, for instance, that in Russia Pelevin occupies a position among authors like Jorge Luis Borges and Carlos Castaneda, neither of whom are strangers to the depiction of altered, even drug-induced states. See Kornev 246.

[92] This Chapaev's munching on raw onions might be seen as a remote allusion to a famous scene from the Vasil'ievs' film, in which Chapaev, having demonstrated his strategic expertise using potatoes as

his moonshine. Rather than utterly subvert the image of the Soviet anti-hero, then, Pelevin enhances and redirects it. Thus, his parody of the anecdotes is, again, more in keeping with the fluid and accommodating paradigm provided by Hutcheon, whereby the relationship of parody to its target can combine critical distance with a complicity bordering, in this case, on nostalgia.[93] Through his parody of the anecdotes Pelevin pays ironic tribute to the Soviet days of "secret freedom" (347) achieved by 'underground laughter,' from the perspective of a post-Soviet time where nothing is sacred, and everything can be denigrated; a time when 'everything is permissible,' and thus no longer a target for illicit parody alone.

The complexity of Pelevin's parody of the anecdotes goes further still. The author pays open tribute to the anecdotes' own subversion of the official Chapaev myth; at the same time, however, he asserts Chapaev's 'unfinalizability' as either an official Soviet hero or an unofficial Soviet clown. In fact, just prior to his release from the psychiatric ward, Pet'ia spends considerable effort attempting to set the record straight against what he perceives as the skewed and tawdry versions of events depicted in the Chapaev anecdotes with which fellow patients Serdiuk and Volodin tease him. For Pet'ia, who is still immersed in 1919 reality, despite the ostensible catharsis and merging of selves he is supposed to have achieved through therapy, the anecdotes are cruel, and juvenile distortions of what he believes to be the truth about himself, Anna and Chapaev. After one such anecdote, Pet'ia replies:

> Я, господа, нахожу все это странным. Вы неплохо информированы, но у меня постоянно возникает такое чувство, что кто-то, знающий, как все было на самом деле,

---

pawns, bites afterwards into an apple (virtually indistinguishable, on the black and white screen from a potato, which enhances the comic effect).

[93] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 32-33. Nostalgia as a corollary to, or symptom of, (post-)Soviet threshold parodic literature will be examined at length in Chapter III.

> попытался чудовищным образом извратить истину. И я не могу понять, с какой целью (373-374). [I find this all very strange, gentlemen. In some ways you are really quite well informed, and yet I keep on getting the feeling that someone who does indeed know how everything really happened has attempted to distort the truth in the most monstrous fashion possible. And I simply cannot understand the reason for it (313)].

Naturally, the more urgently Pet'ia tries to explain the *real* story behind any given anecdote, the more cautiously his ward mates regard him. Thus, following his statement, above, "[n]obody broke the silence again for a while (ibid.)."

With his mystical and 'unfinalizable' Chapaev, Pelevin lays the foundation for the makings of a cult hero relevant to his own, post-Soviet times – a sophisticated, cerebral and exotic figure with a spiritual aura; an intoxicated seer, at once *of* the people and *above* them; a strange new hero for strange new times.

The esoteric nature of Chapaev's wisdom and the extent of his mysticism are fully revealed in Pelevin's narrative through Chapaev's mentor/disciple relationship with Pet'ia, whereby the latter is transformed from a state of ignorance to one of spiritual enlightenment. By means of his parodic take on the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic, Pelevin elevates the figure of the mystical Chapaev to unprecedented mythical heights.

Though parody ultimately evokes and thrives upon the difference between texts, it is necessarily contingent on a degree of similarity. As described by Alexander Genis, the Socialist Realist plot is motivated by a "progression [...] from falsehood to Truth," [94] on the part of the positive hero, as he is transformed from a state of spontaneity to one of consciousness. It can be said that a construct resembling the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic underlies Pelevin's narrative, in which Pet'ia is indeed on a quest for the truth.

---

[94] Alexander Genis, "*Perestroika* as a Shift in Literary Paradigm," *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture*, Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover 88.

However, Pelevin's parody manipulates the mechanics of the Socialist Realist master-plot, as portrayed by Furmanov and the Vasil'ievs. First, Chapaev's role as disciple to the political commissar (Klychkov, and Furmanov) is eliminated, while his role as mentor to Pet'ka (and Anna) is enhanced. Secondly, as mentor in Pelevin, Chapaev guides Pet'ia along the path from falsehood to a different truth, directly opposed to the so-called general truths of the Soviet narrative[95] both within and beyond the parameters of the official Soviet narratives. In keeping with the premises of Buddhism noted in Chapter I of this thesis, for example, Pelevin's Chapaev reveals that form and matter are void, and that time and space are mental constructs, as is Pet'ia himself. Similarly, in answer to Pet'ia's queries as to which narrative time-frame (1919 or 1990s) corresponds to 'reality,' Chapaev reveals that objective reality and dream reality are equally illusory. Both, he contends, yield to a type of *ultimate* reality, out of space and out of time which, in a specifically Buddhist context signify a *pure* consciousness. As understood within the more general context of Pelevin's parody of Soviet ideology, Chapaev refers to a consciousness that is free from the trappings of logic, reason, and causes. To quote Pelevin's Chapaev:

> Весь этот мир – это анекдот, который Господь Бог рассказал самому себе. Да и сам Господь Бог – то же самое (356). Все на свете – просто водоворот мыслей, и мир вокруг нас делается реальным только потому, что ты становишься этим водоворотом сам. Только потому, что ты знаешь (352). [This entire world is a joke that God has told to himself. And God himself is the same joke too (298). Everything in the world is just a whirlpool of thoughts, and the world around us only becomes real when you yourself become that whirlpool. Only because you *know* (294-5, translator's emphasis)].

In Pelevin, then, knowledge is not freedom, as it is in Furmanov, the Vasil'ievs, and the Stalinist (extra-)literary narrative at large; rather, it is a form of captivity – of surrender, to the authority of any temporal realm of existence. What Pet'ia learns through

---

[95] ibid.

Pelevin's take on the spontaneity/consciousness construct is how *not* to know – again, in direct opposition to Furmanov's novel in particular, and the Socialist Realist genre as a whole.

Thus, Pelevin's parody once again meets Morson's criteria. The underlying notion in Pelevin that consciousness determines being, and not the reverse,[96] provides a clear antithesis to the essential materialist premise of Soviet ideology and, by extension, Soviet fiction. Pelevin's thesis can *only* have higher semantic authority than Furmanov's, again, from the post-Soviet perspective, which, at the very least, reveals the Soviet ideological position as tried, but not true.

Herein, of course, lies the basic irony that might also motivate the characterization of Pelevin's parody according to Hutcheon's view – that is, the irony that the ethereal, illogical, often contradictory, and utterly fantastic thesis of Pelevin's text could even be *considered* more viable than the dogmatic but rational, and positivistic premise of Furmanov's 'factographic' account of Chapaev, the Civil War, and his projection of the Soviet ideal. Indeed, the irony of the ostensible viability of the events depicted in Pelevin's novel provides a link between Hutcheon's parody theory and the stricter, emphatically antithetical criterion of higher semantic authority – be it in the guise of truth, meaning, relevance, or perspective – required by Morson, above.

As an anti-genre, how does one situate Pelevin's parody within the context of other contemporary works of subversive Russian fiction? Most (post-)glasnost' prose

---

[96] To quote Marx, for the record, "The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness [*bytie opredeliaet soznanie*]. Excerpted from Karl Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, as reprinted in Howard Selsam and Harry Martel, eds., *Reader in Marxist Philosophy: From the Writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 1964) 186.

inverts the spontaneity/consciousness construct, in the sense that the protagonists (Tolstaia's Peters, Natasha, and Rimma) have all been 'enlightened' to the enormous discrepancy between the Soviet utopian ideal and the (post-)Soviet dystopian real, the former having been exposed as an illusion in the extra-literary, collective Soviet pre-history to these works. Pelevin acknowledges this particular point early on in his narrative, through the voice of Mariia, who chooses to embrace the concrete, empirical reality of post-Soviet times (in contrast to the illusory nature of Soviet reality) in order to facilitate his/her release (135). The tone in his/her assertion is heavily ironic, even sarcastic, the better to underscore just how repeatedly the latter point has been made in sots-art in particular, and post-Soviet literature in general.

Like some of his contemporaries or immediate precursors, Pelevin also subverts the eschatological premise of Socialist Realism, whereby the present is "emptied out," rendered worthless, except as part of the path toward the Great Time of the Radiant Future.[97] In this he joins Petrushevskaia,[98] Kaledin, Tolstaia, and even Sorokin, whose conceptualist novella *Ochered'* (*The Queue* [1985]) focuses exclusively on the protagonist's present as he waits (or has someone hold his place while he drinks vodka and otherwise cavorts) in a line-up to buy whatever is being sold from the depot at the front of the line. Like these (post-)glasnost' authors, Pelevin emphasizes the present – not, however, as a deflated 'anti-climax,' or 'booby-prize' as the only reality there is, now

---

[97] In "Epic and Novel," Bakhtin distinguishes between the two narrative genres by their relationship to time; while the epic empties out the present of any value, in its emphasis on the absolute, Great Time of the Past, the novel focuses on the present – that is, on the life-span of the hero, endowing it with value. Socialist Realism operates like the epic, in reverse: emptying out the present of any value except as a time that must be lived through on the way to the Great Time of the utopian Communist future. See Bakhtin's "Epic and Novel," Holquist 15-16.

[98] The idea of a valueless present in Petrushevskaia is emphasized by Josephine Woll's observation of the very vagueness of the present in which many of the author's stories are situated – sometime between Khrushchev's deposal and the collapse of the Communist State, in "The Minotaur in the Maze: Remarks on Lyudmila Petrushevskaya," *World Literature Today* 67.1 (1993): 126.

that the Iron Curtain has risen, to expose the plain truth. Rather, in Pelevin, the present is valued as the 'grand prize' – not the road to the future, or even the door to eternity, but as eternity itself (237). As such, the present becomes the source of infinite possibilities for the individual, to paraphrase Lipovetskii, in whatever 'reality,' or illusion, he chooses to create for himself.[99] Thus, in opposition to other subversive (post-)glasnost' works, in Pelevin there *is* an ideal that can be achieved – indeed, a utopian one at that, in the thoughtless, timeless, conflict-free *no-place* of Buddhist Nirvana or, in Pelevin's terms, of the "Inner Mongolia" to where Pet'ia, Chapaev's disciple, ultimately withdraws.[100]

This factor does not detract from the consideration of Pelevin's parody according to Hutcheon's criteria, in view of the irony that a post-and openly anti-Soviet work would propagate what could be construed as a utopian point of view.

By contrast, Morson's paradigm of straight parody appears to fall short of the mark at this point, as Pelevin's narrative begins to transcend the parameters of the simple anti-genre, toward the notion of 'meta-parody' – a more evasive, non-committal type of parody, which does not subvert its target but, rather, perpetuates it, and suspends it for the reader's consideration as a "dialogue between parody and counterparody," and ultimately, an "inconclusive dialogue" between the two.[101]

Of the three paradigms of parody discussed at the outset of this chapter, the Formalist view seems most suitable, and constructive, in the consideration of Pelevin's novel as a threshold text, for the simple reason that the mechanical dialectic which

---

[99] Mark Lipovetsky, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos*, ed. Eliot Borenstein (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1999) 197. More specifically, Lipovetskii maintains that Pelevin's ironic reproductions of Buddhist philosophy prove that he depicts Buddhism as simply another illusion, worth no more and no less than any other reality/illusion portrayed in either of the narrative's two timelines.

[100] McCausland 235. McCausland notes that Pet'ia's retreat to his own Inner Mongolia, "within which he can create any new reality he pleases," and not either of the two empirical realities is a frustrating moment for some readers.

[101] Morson, "Parody, History and Metaparody" 81.

underwrites Tynianov's model best illustrates the workings of parody as a threshold process, linking old and new. In his analysis of the parodic relationship between Dostoevskii and Gogol,' Tynianov suggests that by juxtaposing hypo- and hypertexts, parody revitalizes mechanized or obsolete devices, and recharges them with new significance. To quote Tynianov on this point:

> [... A] device that is organic in Gogol' acquires a new significance in Dostoevsky's hands through the principle of *contrast*.[102]

Similarly, Formalist Boris Tomashevskii observes that:

> [D]evices are born, live, grow old, and die. To the extent that their use becomes automatic, they lose their efficacy and cease to be included on the list of acceptable techniques.[103]

In the Formalist context parody functions as a catalyst, of sorts, in the process of literary evolution.[104] Pelevin's novel embodies the process of literary evolution from Socialist Realism to sots-art, as the exposure and manipulation of its worn out devices, and even beyond, in new directions as yet largely undefined. McCausland concurs; he asserts that "[w]ith daring and bravado, Pelevin deforms, reforms, and builds a new cultural edifice out of the rubble of the old, the outdated, the discredited, the foreign, and the cheap," thereby linking him, as an author, to sots-art.

McCausland also suggests Pelevin's potential status as "the first representative of a new wave of Russian writers," who "has no need to neutralize or aestheticize" his raw material – namely, Soviet reality; thereby he distinguishes Pelevin from the practitioners of sots-art.[105] Thus, just as the constructs of Socialist Realism discussed in this chapter

---

[102] See Yury Tynyanov, "Dostoevskii and Gogol': Towards a Theory of Parody; Part One: Stylization and Parody," *Dostoevsky and Gogol: Texts and Criticism*, eds. Priscilla Meyer and Stephen Rudy (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979) 113, (emphasis added).

[103] Boris Tomashevskii, "Thematics," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Regents Critics Series, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) 95.

[104] Victor Erlich 258.

[105] McCausland 236.

are shown to be defunct in late- and post-Soviet times, Pelevin's text suggests that *newer* times no longer respond to the purely subversive ethos either of anti-Soviet *chernukha*, or radical sots-art. The sheer popularity of Pelevin's novel among readers attests to this observation. Indeed, one need only juxtapose the outright debunking in Prigov's "Opisanie predmetov" ("Description of Objects"), analyzed at the outset of this chapter, of the premises and rhetoric of official Soviet discourse, with the notably more good-natured recycling by Pelevin of the positive hero and the spontaneity/consciousness construct, to discern the effort on his part to attain a different level of post-Soviet discourse through parody. Pelevin's incorporation, as opposed to mere manipulation or subversion, of the four (un-)official versions of the Chapaev myth into his own affirms the basis for this observation. This chapter has demonstrated the manipulation by each version of the (un-)official myth of Chapaev to its own end; Pelevin follows suit.

In conclusion: Genis and McCausland have commented, either directly or indirectly, on Pelevin's re-appropriation (Genis' term) of Socialist Realist motifs. From his post-Soviet perspective, Pelevin reveals the spontaneity/consciousness construct and that of the positive hero to be defunct, as they had originally been designed to function, even in the Soviet context – having become obsolete rhetorical devices by virtue of the equally obsolete 'knowledge' they had been designed to impart to a reader, who, like Furmanov's Chapaev, was expected not to think, but to accept, and, ultimately, to know.

By contrast, in Pelevin, the same constructs are renewed as vehicles to convey a different message, of significance to the post-Soviet Russian reader – one that encourages him *not* to know, in the positivistic sense. Rather, if nothing else, it inspires him to look beyond the confines of the 'post-utopian' *status quo*; that is, of a reality in perpetual flux,

in which the only constant is not objective truth, but subjective perception. Indeed, the theme of solipsism looms large in Pelevin's corpus. As the bearer of these ideas in *Chapaev i Pustota*, Pelevin's Chapaev becomes the new hero required of the new times.

Chapter III:
Parody – Irony – Nostalgia

Chapter II emphasized the goals and mechanics of Pelevin's parody in the Formalist sense – as a crucial step in literary evolution, seen as an adversarial, if non-linear process on the levels of device (or construct) and genre. In the case of *Chapaev i Pustota*, parody was shown to have facilitated the progression from genre to (anti-)genre; more specifically, from Socialist Realism to sots-art, and even beyond.

This chapter examines more closely the parameters set, however loosely, by those critics of *Chapaev i Pustota* (Ivanova, Lipovetskii, McCausland) who affirm the work's innovative contribution to the post-glasnost' literary scene. First, proceeding from the premise of Pelevin's novel as a work of parody, the chapter considers in more detail the properties of the fluid paradigm put forward by Linda Hutcheon. It will be recalled that Hutcheon's parody denies a mandatory element of subversion, negation, or ridicule of its target. Instead, Hutcheon argues for parody as the *in*version of target text(s) by means of the irony dominating the relationship between the parodying and parodied texts.

The notion of ironic inversion is multi-faceted, and in Hutcheon's view, potentially "characteristic of all parody."[1] It is best defined by contrast with subversive parody, which seeks to undermine, or destroy outright, the formal, thematic, and/or ideological principles of its target text. A nineteenth-century case in point might be Dostoevskii's polemic in *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (*Notes from the Underground* [1864]) with Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?* (*What is to be Done* [1863]). Insisting on the primacy of

---

[1] Linda Hutcheon, "Modern Parody and Bakhtin," in *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, eds. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989) 88.

free will (whereby the mathematical equation 2 x 2 = 5 is possible) over reason, Dostoevskii's 'underground man' subverts the notion of a society based on positivistic models. Pelevin's own novella *Omon Ra* (1993)[2] provides a more recent example of subversive parody. By portraying the Soviet space programme as a cruel and sinister charade – imposing amputations upon, and demanding vows of suicide from, its participants – Pelevin undermines the notion of heroic struggle and self-sacrifice for the mother-land demanded of the traditional Socialist Realist positive hero at large and, more specifically, as depicted in Boris Polevoi's *Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke* (1969). Polevoi depicts the heroics of real-life Soviet fighter pilot Aleksei Meres'iev, who loses both legs after crashing his plane behind enemy lines during WWII, but then returns to combat duty.[3]

Ironic inversion, meanwhile, is less drastic. By establishing a "critical distance" between the texts in question, irony serves to signal the difference between them. Thus, in Pelevin's short story "Deviatyi son Very Pavlovny" ("Vera Pavlovna's Ninth Dream" [1991]),[4] Chernyshevskii's enterprising and imaginative heroine dreams she is an underground lavatory attendant in perestroika Russia. With this foray into a future witnessing the world's submersion in an ocean of human waste, Pelevin derides Chernyshevskii's utopian visions, as expressed in the original Vera's four prophetic

---

[2] Viktor Pelevin, "Omon Ra," *Znamia* 5 (1992): 1-63.

[3] Boris Polevoi, *Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969).

[4] Viktor Pelevin, "Deviatyi son Very Pavlovny," *Vstroennyi napominatel'* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2002) 88-115; translated as "Vera Pavlovna's Ninth Dream," *A Werewolf Problem in Central Russia and Other Stories*, trans. Andrew Bromfield (New York: New Directions, 2003) 36-58.

dreams.[5] However, he does so at the expense of his own narrative, which is reduced – literally – to an imaginary segment of Chernyshevskii's novel, the target text.

For Hutcheon, parody *can* be subversive, but *need* not be; her model of parodic discourse allows for varying degrees of manipulation by the text of parody of its target(s) along a continuum, or sliding-scale, with relations between hyper- and hypotext ranging from antagonistic, to reverential, and even beyond. In other words, though parody motivated by ironic inversion underscores the critical distance between the works in question, the criticism need not be directed at the target text.[6] Rather, parodic discourse of this type borders on *self*-parody;[7] in this sense it more than accommodates what Hutcheon refers to as parody's potentially conservative function,[8] paying tribute to its target,[9] often at its *own* expense. Though such reverential parody continues to hinge on the ironic difference between hypo- and hypertexts, in this case it also necessitates a conscious element of "complicity" with its target.[10]

As a work of parody, *Chapaev i Pustota* is positioned midway along the continuum between an antagonistic position toward its target(s), at one pole, and self-parody at the other. The element of complicity with its precursor texts (Furmanov's novel, the Vasil'ievs' film, the *noviny*, and the anecdotes) is easily surmised from the re-mythologized Chapaev it portrays, by means of Pelevin's inversion of the fundamental constructs of the Socialist Realist narrative: the positive hero, the mentor/disciple

---

[5] For an analysis of Chernyshevskii's innovative use of dreams as allegory, see Michael Katz, "Vera Pavlovna's Dreams in Chernyshevskii's *What is to be Done?*," *Issues in Russian Literature Before 1917: Selected Papers of the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, ed. J. Douglas Clayton (Columbus: Slavica, 1989) 150-161.

[6] Hutcheon, "Modern Parody and Bakhtin" 87-88.

[7] Hutcheon, "Modern Parody and Bakhtin" 91.

[8] Hutcheon, "Modern Parody and Bakhtin" 101.

[9] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 67.

[10] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 53.

relationship, and the hero's rite of passage from spontaneity to consciousness. By recycling, rather than simply rejecting, these constructs and preserving the image of Chapaev as a positive character within much broader parameters, Pelevin pays ironic tribute to the official versions of the Chapaev myth delineated in Chapter II.

This conservative function of parody in *Chapaev i Pustota* provides the basis for the present chapter's two-fold, second consideration – the correlation between parody and nostalgia in the context of (post-)Soviet prose fiction in general, as well as Pelevin's own treatment of the theme of nostalgia in *Chapaev i Pustota*. Indeed, Pelevin's manipulation of nostalgia in his novel is pivotal to its consideration in this chapter as a work of (post)-sots-art fiction. In it, he expresses nostalgia both implicitly and overtly; more importantly, he both parodies nostalgia as a prominent theme of post-Soviet literature, and satirizes it as a tendency marking the extra-literary post-Soviet times. The distinction between the concepts, and the workings, of parody and satire has been delineated in the preceding chapters of this thesis. To recapitulate, briefly: parody is treated here as a meta-literary device, mode, or genre whose target, or object, comprises another work of literature, whereas satire targets society, or social practices beyond the parameters of the literary text presenting the satirical critique.

Nostalgia has long been relevant to the discussion of the Western postmodern condition.[11] There, contemporary nostalgia has been regarded somewhat cynically, as a "cultural phenomenon," which deals with "the present through its falsification of the past" – that is, as the commercially (or politically) viable (re-)creation of an image of a safe, cozy or heroic past. Typical venues include theme parks, 'vintage' clothing, or festivities

---

[11] See, for example, Roger Rosenblatt's "Look Back in Sentiment," *New York Times*, 28 July 1973, p.23. Cited in David Lowenthal, "Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn't," *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989) 28.

celebrating symbolic events in a nation's history. More often than not, these practices cunningly omit any negative aspects of that past.[12] Thus, James Phillips treats nostalgia as a selective process, which singles out only certain moments and assigns them "more nostalgic valency."[13] He notes, further, that during the nostalgic process "[e]vents are fashioned into a kind of imaginary product in which memory, distortion, forgetting, and reorganization all play a role.[14] By revealing these constituent elements of the process of nostalgia, Phillips affirms its cynical nature, and suggests both its evaluative power, and necessary position of bias. Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* both exemplifies and manipulates the nostalgic process.

According to most views, nostalgia comprises a yearning for a time in the past, conceived of as better, [15] be it one that is only partially whitewashed, or entirely fabricated, consciously or not.[16] This is the stance Pet'ia adopts in the 1990s plotline of *Chapaev i Pustota*, looking back with something close to longing, to the metaphysical, poetic, and romantic stimulation of his encounters with Chapaev and company. Yet Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw posit that nostalgic sentiments are unlikely in

---

[12] Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia," *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia,* eds. Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989) 1. David Lowenthal asserts, however, that "[t]he view of nostalgia as a self-serving, chauvinist, right-wing version of the past foisted by the privileged and propertied" is only a half-truth. He contends that "[t]he left no less than the right espouses nostalgia," citing those who mourn the "pre-Marxian proletariat," in "Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn't," in Shaw and Chase 27-28.

[13] James Phillips, "Distance, Absence, and Nostalgia," *Descriptions*, eds. Don Ihde and Hugh J. Silverman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985) 66.

[14] Phillips 67.

[15] More recent reflection reveals an increasing diversity of views and nuances; see Shaw and Chase for a compilation of articles from a 1985 history workshop (History Workshop 20), which included a nostalgia 'strand,' or branch.

[16] It should be noted that here the notion of conscious fabrication, or whitewashing, of the past refers to commercial and/or national displays of nostalgia, appealing to cultures at large, and not to individuals, with the exception, of course, of those who, consciously or not, falsify their personal pasts. In the case of nostalgic attitudes in glasnost' Russia, Walter Laqueur affirms the tendency "to glorify a past which was in fact far from idyllic," in *Soviet Realities: Culture and Politics from Stalin to Gorbachev* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990) 7.

cultures prescribing to a belief in time that is either cyclical, or eschatological. They observe that a deficient 'present' in both cases is inevitably either supplanted by ever-recurring, better times in the first case, or overcome completely by a better future at the *end* of time, in the second.[17] Technically, the future-oriented, utopian perspective of the former Soviet Union accommodates the latter paradigm, the more so as it devoted itself to total severance from and wholesale devaluation of the past. Instead, Soviet utopianism cultivated what could be considered a sense of nostalgia for the future, endowing the present with no value, other than its intrinsic worth as the means to an end. In Bakhtinian terms, forward-looking nostalgia would constitute a particular type of "historical inversion."[18]

Nostalgia, it turns out, is not confined to the backward glance. Chase and Shaw suggest that those Western societies maintaining a view of time and history that is linear and secular "would be especially prone to the syndrome of nostalgia."[19] James Phillips, meanwhile, does not limit the experience of nostalgia to the past or future; he also suggests the possibility of experiencing nostalgia for the present, from the perspective of what will have been lost in the future.[20] The case of post-Soviet Russia might accommodate these various nostalgic positions; the ideological vacuum in which the nation finds itself meets the criteria for Western nostalgia, above.

---

[17] Chase and Shaw 2-3.

[18] In various writings, Bakhtin expounds the notions of historical inversion and eschatology; in particular he discusses the concepts as they apply to the literary representation of time and space. See Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 147-48. Bakhtin implicates canonical Socialist Realism as one genre exploiting the historical inversion of time, while Katerina Clark provides a survey of the various manifestations of the dual nature of the Socialist Realist chronotope, from Stalinism to stagnation, in Katerina Clark, "Political History and Literary Chronotope: Some Case Studies", *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1986) 230-246.

[19] Chase and Shaw 3.

[20] Phillips 66.

However, decades of Communist utopianism – both within and beyond the parameters of Socialist Realism – having surely left their mark on the post-Soviet psyche and its representation in contemporary prose fiction, also provide the basis for a nostalgia directed toward the present, but on different grounds than those posited by Phillips. The nostalgic target, in other words, is not what will have been lost in the future (youth, innocence, including the idealism of a society at large), but rather a Radiant Future that was promoted officially, but never materialized. Thus, in the glasnost' works of Petrushevskaia ("Svoi krug"; "Vremia-noch'"), Tolstaia ("Peters"; "Vyshel mesiats iz tumana"), and Kaledin ("Smirennoe kladbishche") protagonists remember and, to some degree, may even yearn for the past as a better time. Nevertheless, they live – often in spite of that past – not for the future, but for the present as the only *palpable* time. Not surprisingly, then, Andrei Voznesenskii entitles both a poem, and a collection of poetry, *Nostal'giia po nastoiashchemu* (*Nostalgia for the Present* [1978]),[21] wherein mention is made of the dual significance in Russian of the word *nastoiashchee* as both 'present' and 'real' (meaning 'genuine', or 'authentic').[22] The significance of the present is reiterated in *Chapaev i Pustota*. Pet'ia knows "that the only real moment of time is 'now'" (237), be it in 1919 or the 1990s. But when he wonders whether the present, as "the boundary between the past and the future, is itself the *door* to eternity," Chapaev corrects him: "This moment, Pet'ka, *is* eternity, and not any kind of door" (ibid., emphasis added).

Whatever its orientation in time, the most widely applicable condition for nostalgia is the sense on the part of the nostalgic subject (collective or individual) of a

---

[21] Andrei Voznesensky, "Nostalgia for the Present," trans. Vera Dunham and H. W. Tjalsma, in *Nostalgia for the Present*, eds. Vera Dunham and Max Hayward (Garden City: Doubleday, 1978) 2-5.

[22] Voznesensky 259.

present that is somehow deficient.[23] Very often, the deficiency emerges from comparing the present 'reality' to the aspirations of previous generation(s), whose vision of our present (or their future) now proves to have been sorely, if not tragically, mistaken.[24] This corrective hindsight, of course, is particularly relevant to Pelevin's articulation and parody of nostalgia, as will be seen below. Nowhere does this incongruity between hopefulness and reality ring truer than in post-Soviet Russia, whose post-utopian present,[25] finally liberated of totalitarian constraints, leaves much to be desired for a populace twice deprived: first, of the Radiant Future propagated by official Soviet propaganda; second, of the instant happiness envisioned by exaggerated hopes for, and unrealistic and frustrated expectations of, a Western-style capitalism either in emigration, or at home on post-Communist Russian soil. The theme of frustrated expectations – not in attaining the Western ideal, but in the disappointing recognition of its status *as* an ideal – is articulated in various works of (post-)glasnost' fiction.

This sense of frustrated expectations is represented in Viktoriia Tokareva's "Kheppi end" ("Happy End, [1995]),[26] whose very title, not unlike Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*, signals a parodic predisposition toward the Soviet canonical narrative. Specifically, Tokareva inverts the compulsory forward-looking 'happy ending' of the conventional Soviet novel, by means of irony which cuts both ways. The story begins

---

[23] Lowenthal traces the development of 'nostalgia' from the status of a potentially fatal medical affliction akin to severe homesickness (first medically diagnosed and coined by Johannes Hofer in 1688) to what he regards as its contemporary status as a "state of mind." David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 10-11.

[24] Chase and Shaw 3.

[25] Edith Clowes observes that there exists a considerable body of fiction, ranging from Abram Terts' "What is Socialist Realism?" (1959) to Petrushevskaia's oeuvre, which treats "the heritage of utopian thought," and ironically portrays contemporary Soviet reality as a "realized utopia," in *Russian Experimental Fiction: Resisting Ideology After Utopia* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993) ix.

[26] Viktoriia Tokareva, "Kheppi end," *Kheppi end: Povesti i Rasskazy* (Moscow: SP Kvadrat, 1995) 89-144. Hereafter, Russian citations will refer to this edition. English translations are my own.

with the twenty-something Elia, overstuffed on home-baked fruit turnovers, and bored to tears with the scenario of rural domesticity she must endure, every weekend, at the simple home of her provincial in-laws, in a Ukrainian village. Unwilling to accept this fate, Elia sets herself three goals: to move to Moscow, marry a millionaire, and emigrate – with America as her chosen destination. Though not without substantial effort on her own part, and at the expense of her first husband, and their child, Elia achieves her three goals – more or less: instead of America, she emigrates to Italy as the wife of an ageing, but wealthy, Italian widower. Elia's happiness is compromised in more ways than one; her marriage is one of desperation, both on her own part, and on that of her Italian husband, for whom she plays second fiddle to Karla, his rude and demanding daughter, and the memory of his first wife, Paula. Ironically, save for a change of venue and a dose of gentility, the story ends as it began – with Elia, overstuffed on fruit turnovers (store-bought, now), and bored with the scenario of rural domesticity she must endure, every weekend, at the home of her new, Italian in-laws. Of the various possible morals to Elia's story,[27] the one most relevant to this chapter derives from the maxim that the more things change, the more they remain the same. Elia is not overtly nostalgic in either of the two classical senses, noted above: she is neither homesick for the Ukraine, nor does she yearn for her past life, per se. However, she is clever enough to understand that she has sacrificed much for the sake of very little, and to recognize the irony of her situation:

> Когда-то уже было все это: та же тяжесть в теле, та же тоска, [...]. Стоило ехать так долго и многоступенчато, чтобы прибыть в ту же самую точку (142). [All of this had already been, at one time: the same stuffed feeling, the same longing [...]. Was it worth it to have traveled for so long and past so many milestones, just to arrive at the very same point?].

---

[27] The three morals that come to mind most immediately might be "Money isn't everything," "Be careful what you wish for," and "Hindsight is twenty-twenty."

Elia's frustrated expectations of happiness in the West do not openly affirm a nostalgic position toward the past; they do, however, underscore a present which, by comparison with the future she had once imagined for herself, is markedly deficient.[28] Thus, Elia yearns neither for a place nor a specific time in the past, but rather for her youthful, though ultimately misguided, hopes for the future.

Vera Kalashnikova's "Nostal'giia" ("Nostalgia" [1998])[29] also treats the theme of post-Soviet nostalgia from the perspective of the heroine's potential emigration, in this case, to Germany. Unlike that of Elia, above, Polina's quest for happiness in the West ends tragically: she is killed in a car-crash on a Spanish island, where she has gone in an attempt to solve the mystery behind the suicide of Manfred, her German fiancé. As sole beneficiary to Manfred's modest fortune, money is much less of a concern for Polina than finding the guarantor she now lacks in order that she may obtain a German residency permit. She is impressed with Germans and their culture; but in the many weeks she spends there – interviewing potential husbands, and/or guarantors through an advertisement she posts in the personals column – she misses the warmth and simple contentedness of her best friends, the Kuliapocheks, in St. Petersburg. Again, the heroine longs not so much for Russia, or for her past (which includes her ex-husband, Nikita), per se; indeed, she seems more to yearn for the future as she had envisioned it as Manfred's wife. However, in light of Manfred's suicide – which throws a considerable wrench into

---

[28] For a survey of main themes in Tokareva, in what are distinguished as three periods in her literary career, see Richard Chapple, "Happy Never After: The Work of Viktoriia Tokareva and *Glasnost'*," *Fruits of Her Plume: Essays on Contemporary Russian Women's Culture*, ed. Helena Goscilo (Armonk: Sharpe, 1993) 185-204.

[29] Vera Kalashnikova, "Nostal'giia: Povest'," *Zvezda* 9 (1998): 33-104. Kalashnikova's tale is a work of popular fiction; its mention here is intended to indicate the range of the nostalgia theme in late- and post-Soviet prose fiction.

her plans to emigrate, (re-)marry, and live happily ever after – the deficiency of her present, in the weeks preceding her death, is apparent.

Meanwhile, Tat'iana Tolstaia's "White Walls" (2000)[30] more obliquely addresses the phenomenon of post-Soviet nostalgia from a local, Russian perspective. Primarily, the story stands as an allegory for the decay and collapse of the Soviet Union, and the superficial (re-)construction of the post-Soviet Russian identity after Western models. It relates the history of the narrator's family dacha, from 1948 – when it was built by a certain Janson, a Russified Swede – to the summer of 1999, two years after their "real European-style renovation" (69) of what had once been Janson's bedroom. Determined to "do it right" (ibid.), and not just paste over the old wallpaper, four generations eagerly scrape the walls down to the wood, destroying as they go, the past as it had been meticulously preserved there by Janson, in layer upon glued layer of newspaper stories and advertisements that he had saved, dating back from the apex of Stalinism, past Lenin's death, to the pre-revolutionary days of Janson's childhood. Aided by Western "aerosols to erase memory, [and] acids to eliminate the past" (ibid.), their renovation is flawless, but looks garish and inappropriate. In contrast to Tokareva's apparent erasure of the distinction between East and West, Tolstaia seems here to underscore their discordance. More to the point: though her narrator's retrospective glance is not devoid of affection for the past, it does not *yearn* for the past. Rather, it seems to recognize the politics and pitfalls of nostalgia, and opts, ultimately, for a view of the past *as* the past, and for its organic integration into a life situated in the present.

---

[30] Tatyana Tolstaya, "White Walls," trans. Jamey Gambrell, *The New Yorker*, January 17, 2000. Hereafter references to this work will be cited in text.

Natal'ia Ivanova observes that post-Soviet nostalgia is expressed to varying degrees and in various ways, "from Stalinist posters [...] to the refusal to part with Lenin's corpse."[31] Ivanova equates cultural nostalgia in today's Russia with the desire for a return to order from the chaotic state of post-Soviet affairs, generated, in turn, by abrupt historical change.[32] The yearning for the certainty of an orderly past from the perspective of an uncertain, disorderly present is a basic characteristic of nostalgia, and by no means restricted to contemporary 'new Russian' times.[33] Reflecting on the nostalgic experience in the post-Soviet Russian context, Tolstaia concurs:

> It's hard to say why a person has a particular attitude towards the past. Let's take the recent Soviet past: when the Soviet system was in place it was negative; yet, the principle 'what's in the past will seem pleasant' holds true. In this respect the Soviet era is no different from any other. [...] I wouldn't go back to the past for anything, God forbid! But now, once it's at a safe distance, it's an object of poeticization. ... One could say that this is postmodern but, in fact, it's simply a feeling of nostalgia.[34]

In her comments, Tolstaia affirms yet another principle of nostalgia according to Phillips – that every nostalgic memory or image is accompanied by the knowledge of that moment's irretrievability. For Phillips, and Tolstaia, nostalgia is bittersweet – bitter for conjuring up moments that are lost, but sweet *because* they are lost.[35] Through their (in)-direct comments relating to nostalgia's bittersweet characteristic, Phillips and Tolstaia suggest a sense of irony underlying the nostalgic process.

Meanwhile, Linda Hutcheon's recent reflections (2000) on nostalgia overtly articulate this very factor. Indeed, the crux of Hutcheon's argument lies in her

---

[31] Natal'ia Ivanova, "The Nostalgic Present: Retrospectives on the (Post-)Soviet TV Screen," *Russian Studies in Literature* 36.2 (2000): 63.

[32] ibid.

[33] Lowenthal maintains, for example that nostalgia almost always envisages "a past that was unified and comprehensible, unlike the incoherent, divided present," in Shaw and Chase 29.

[34] Excerpted from an interview with Tolstaia in Serafima Roll, ed. and trans., *Contextualizing Transition: Interviews with Contemporary Russian Writers and Critics*, Middlebury Studies in Russian Language and Literature 16 (New York: Peter Lang, 1998) 103.

[35] Phillips 66.

identification of irony at the core of the postmodern nostalgic process; Hutcheon sees irony as the tool whereby the nostalgic subject distinguishes between the past as experienced, and the past as remembered. For Hutcheon, irony undercuts "the power of nostalgia" to distort the past, and exaggerate its appeal, putting into perspective the tendency of nostalgia to idealize and memorialize the past. In a word, irony makes postmodern nostalgia "palatable."[36] In Hutcheon's view of nostalgia, irony clarifies the distinction between the 'real' past, and the ideal past. In her model of parody (1985; 1989), meanwhile, irony distinguishes the text of parody (hypertext) from its target (hypotext).

Irony, then, is as crucial to Hutcheon's vision of nostalgia as it is to her theory of parody. Indeed, all three concepts – irony, nostalgia, and parody – function by stratifying at least two levels of discourse, be it in terms of implicit and explicit meanings (irony), past and present (nostalgia), or hyper-/hypotexts (parody). It should be noted, though, that Hutcheon does not openly suggest a link between parody and nostalgia; nor does she propose nostalgia as a corollary to parody per se, even in its reverential, conservative function, which serves to assimilate tribute and complicity.[37]

---

[36] Linda Hutcheon, "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern," *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory*, Textxet: Studies in Comparative Literature 30, eds. Raymond Vervliet and Annemarie Estor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000) 207.

[37] In fact, in her various writings on postmodernism in the 1980s, Hutcheon explicitly rejects nostalgia as a symptom or attribute of the postmodern, stating that "[t]he ironies produced by that distancing [of past and present] are what prevent the postmodern subject from being nostalgic: there is no desire to return to the past as a time of simpler or more worthy values." See Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 230, and *Theory of Parody* (New York: Methuen, 1985). Elsewhere, Hutcheon suggests that "the act of ironizing" in the twentieth century has worked to undermine the "burden of the past," in opposition to the nostalgic idealizing brought on by "the nineteenth-century fin-de-siècle panic," in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2002). In her article on nostalgia (1998/2000), though Hutcheon posits, after Svetlana Boym (1997), the inevitability of irony in nostalgia, she does not refer to parody as either a contributing factor in or offshoot of nostalgia, or vice-versa. For Boym's view on the relationship between irony and nostalgia, and their place in late- and post-Soviet aesthetic expression, see Svetlana Boym, "From the Russian Soul to Post-Communist Nostalgia," *Representations* 49 (1995): 149-151.

In the forum of late- and post-Soviet aesthetic expression, however, a triad comprising parody, irony, and nostalgia seems likely, if not inevitable. Sots-art, the definitive anti-genre to the Soviet canon, particularly in its earliest phase at the beginning of the 1970s, for example, thrives on this very combination (parody, irony, nostalgia) for its effectiveness in articulating the 'love-hate' attitude of the dissident late-Soviet consciousness toward Soviet ideology, and Socialist Realism as the vehicle for its dissemination. Without actually linking parody, irony, and nostalgia outright, Ekaterina Andreeva, for one, considers all three concepts in relation to those works of sots-artists Vitalii Komar and Aleksandr Melamid created in exile, from which perspective, she maintains, "the legends from Soviet national history and reminiscences about Soviet art gave rise to a nostalgia which transformed the image of the Soviet world into a grand but crude and even partially ruined decoration." Rather than wither in exile, then, the works of these sots-artists flourished; Andreeva suggests that their nostalgic hue is a by-product of exile,[38] where their series entitled "Nostal'gicheskii sotsialisticheskii realizm" ("Nostalgic Socialist Realism," [1982-83]) was created.

Moreover, in the realm of (post-)glasnost' parody, irony comprises the fine line separating tribute and complicity (as per Hutcheon's concept of parody) on the one hand, from nostalgia bordering on sentimentalism, on the other. That is, whereas nostalgia always entails a form of (implicit) tribute, the reverse is not always true: neither tributes to D-Day nor commemorating the victims of the Holocaust suggest that we yearn either for the battles, or concentration camps, of WWII. Though it may be true that surviving veterans look back on the war and yearn for the spirit of heroism, self-sacrifice, and

---

[38] See Ekaterina Andreeva, *Sots Art: Soviet Artists of the 1970s –1980s* (Roseville East: Craftsman House, 1995) 64.

camaraderie they once experienced, nostalgia, as one position among many that can be expressed toward the past, is nuanced, at best.

In the post-Soviet context, the nostalgic experience is more complex still. Though the historical and political pasts of the West are by no means blemish-free, the very notion of post-Soviet nostalgia can only be decidedly more complicated than its Western counterpart, in view of the many weighty, if not tragic, connotations of the Soviet past. Bearing this factor in mind, one may assume that the mechanics of (re-)fabrication necessitated by post-Soviet nostalgia production might require different combinations, or degrees, of memory, distortion, forgetting and reorganization – those constituent elements of Western nostalgia production posited by Phillips, above. Gregory Freidin states that, however problematic it might have been, "Soviet civilization was the only one its inhabitants had."[39] Decades of Soviet revisionism, however, have complicated the entire process of recollection, and nostalgia as an offshoot thereof. Indeed, George Gibian notes the difficulties encountered by the late-Soviet citizenry in "the search (and nostalgia) for a *usable* past."[40] Among the many bones of contention that have arisen with regard to the past and its relation to the present and future, alike, Stalinism is, as might be expected, most prominent.

To be sure, displays of genuine (not ironized) nostalgia for Stalinism are not unheard of among the ranks of Communist 'hardliners,' or outright Stalinists, in the extra-literary context of the (post-)Soviet community at large. It would seem, however, that a yearning for a Soviet past renowned for its lineups and labor camps – if at all possible –

---

[39] Freidin 139.
[40] Gibian 3, (emphasis added).

could only be articulated by means of parody, punctuated, in turn, by a considerable dose of irony – tinged almost with sarcasm.

By the same token, a nostalgic look at Stalinism need not signify yearning for purges, persecution, or the gulag. The well-known 'double self-portrait' depicting likenesses of Komar and Melamid – their middle-aged heads on the uniformed bodies of young boys, saluting a bust of Stalin[41] – provides a good case in point. This incongruity emphasizes the complex nature of the relationship between parodic expression and a nostalgic attitude toward the Stalinist past – a past which evidently relies heavily on irony as its legitimizing agent, and which, in this case, seems to suggest an expression of nostalgia from which the customary suggestion of tribute is markedly absent. Once again, tribute and/or commemoration should not be confused with nostalgia, in spite of their basically common orientation toward the past.

However, tribute and nostalgia can and do coexist in the (post-)glasnost' narrative of parody, even in its more mainstream variant, as represented in Bulat Okudzhava's novella, "Prikliucheniia sekretnogo baptista" ("The Adventures of a Secret Baptist" (1978-86)].[42] First, the novella includes a discreet parody of the Socialist Realist narrative, as represented by Nikolai Ostrovskii's classic, *Kak zakal'ialas stal'* (*How the Steel was Tempered* [1934]) after Hutcheon's fluid model, hinging on ironic inversion. Secondly, it offers a model which combines nostalgia and tribute in a manner entirely distinct from that of sots-art – the current of (post-)Soviet parody most commonly

---

[41] The painting in question is entitled "Dvoinoi avtoportret v vide iunykh pionerov," as reproduced in Lev Rubinshtein, comp., *Lichnoe delo* (Moscow: Soiuzteatr, 1991) 97.

[42] Bulat Okudzhava, "Prikliucheniia sekretnogo baptista," *Vest': proza, poeziia, dramaturgiia* (Moscow: Knizhnaia palata, 1989) 80. Future citations from and references to this work will appear in text.

associated with irony and nostalgia. Authored by a renowned 'man of the sixties,' "Prikliucheniia" avoids the element of sarcasm and sense of jadedness intrinsic to much of sots-art, while maintaining the critical distance between itself and its target necessary for a parody whereby nostalgia is expressed in a form of ironic tribute.

The analysis of Okudzhava's "Prikliucheniia" as a point of contrast with and comparison to Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* is warranted by a number of significant structural and thematic parallels between the two works. Like Pelevin's novel, Okudzhava's story comprises two narratives corresponding to two time periods, in which the present (1955) constitutes the frame narrative housing the plot, the events of which, in turn, are instigated and complemented by events from the protagonist's past (from approximately 1937). These are introduced as flashbacks – almost daydreams – and alternate throughout the work with the events of the frame narrative, much like the interplay of past and present from chapter to chapter in *Chapaev i Pustota*, though without the latter's crucial confusion of time frames. Secondly, Okudzhava's story is a glasnost' text, which also depicts a threshold period – Khrushchev's first Thaw – despite its ultimate failure as one of genuine transition, ideological or otherwise. Thirdly, although Okudzhava's text differs from Pelevin's in terms of narrative voice, both are punctuated by moments of quasi-direct discourse that function to similar ends. In Okudzhava the strategy makes more immediate the young Shamin's experiences, as narrated by an older Shamin, in third-person form. In Pelevin, whose narrator speaks predominantly in the first-person, the rare instances of quasi-direct discourse that can be observed in the text occur in the 1990s timeline, during the narration by Pet'ia, from a third-person perspective, of his fellow patients' hallucinations. Again, the strategy

provides a more immediate glimpse into the given patient's hallucinatory psyche. Furthermore, throughout the 1955 plotline, Okudzhava manipulates the Socialist Realist constructs of the hero's transformation from spontaneity to consciousness, much like Pelevin has been shown to do in Chapter II of this thesis. The last point of contact between the works of both authors is their common reference to Chapaev. That Okudzhava's protagonist recalls the game of 'Chapaev' (a Soviet version of 'Cowboys and Indians') he and his apartment block neighbors routinely played in their adolescence provides an incidental but revealing link.

The selection of Ostrovskii's *Stal'* for parodic juxtaposition with Okudzhava's "Prikliucheniia" (and, implicitly, with Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*) is warranted, firstly, by the novel's status as a Civil War narrative[43] – in keeping with Pelevin's Civil War parody as the primary focus of this thesis. Secondly, Ostrovskii's novel shares enough common ground with Okudzhava's text to fulfill the prerequisite of similarity between texts in order to sustain their parodic contrast. Both works in question here – Okudzhava's and Ostrovskii's – comprise semi-autobiographical accounts, portraying the experiences from boyhood to maturity of their respective heroes. Both Pavka Korchagin and Andrei Shamin have embraced the Soviet utopian ideal. Both are devoted to building and defending the Communist Purpose to the best of their ability. In further keeping with the plot of traditional Stalinist Civil War fictions, the efforts of both protagonists to assist their nation in building the road to its 'Radiant Future' are hindered by seemingly

---

[43] The selection of Ostrovskii's novel for parodic juxtaposition with Okudzhava is further warranted by the sheer popularity of *Stal'* (and Furmanov's *Chapaev*, for that matter) and its hero, Pavka Korchagin, among readers, even in the years following the Great Patriotic War, as noted by Evgeny Dobrenko in *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 285-90. Indeed, Dobrenko speaks of the "Korchagin myth" as part of "the heroic myth of Soviet literature" (290).

insurmountable obstacles: they endure bitter cold and food shortages, and must struggle to suppress their emotions and any desire for personal gratification for the good of the collective cause. Unwavering faith in the Purpose and the State, and the subordination of emotional self-indulgence in the name of the collective constitute key motifs in the Stalinist novel, and comprise crucial characteristics of the traditional Socialist Realist positive hero. Not unlike Ostrovskii's *Stal'*, Okudzhava's "Prikliucheniia" embodies them both.

What manifestly distinguishes Shamin from his Socialist Realist precursor is the fact of his familial circumstance as the son of purged 'enemies of the people.' The implications of this official disgrace taint every aspect of Shamin's existence, and provide the primary basis for the interpretation of Okudzhava's work both as a parodic sequel, and ironically motivated inversion of Ostrovskii's Socialist Realist classic. Where the conventional Soviet literary paradigm is concerned, Shamin's inherited reputation precludes his status as a traditional positive hero.

More to the point: by branding him as potentially perfidious, and unworthy in the eyes of the State, Shamin's stigma foils his every effort to serve the Purpose from the outset, in spite of his passionate desire to do so. He is permitted to be a 'pioneer,' but excluded from the group's various activities; he is denied membership in the Komsomol "по понятным причинам" ["for understandable reasons"]; his application to study telegraphy at the technical institute is refused, "так как средства связи нельзя доверяать врагу" (81) ["since communication channels cannot be entrusted to an enemy"]. Save for his efforts in the Great Patriotic War, in which he is twice wounded at the age of sixteen, Shamin's stigma precludes the fulfilment of his patriotic ambitions

beyond the realms of his imagination and the neighborhood games of 'Chapaev.' Even here, Shamin's stigma – reinforced (albeit affectionately) by the local bully – precludes his participation in any role but that of "Trotskyite" ("*trotskist,*" [79]) in keeping with the official accusations against his father. Thus, Shamin's life story is not one of hardship recompensed by heroic exploits, like Korchagin's; rather, in keeping with his anti-heroic status, noted above, Shamin's biographical narrative is one of privation, reinforced by frustrated heroic aspirations.

Indeed, Shamin and his biography comprise mirror-images of Korchagin's, as perceived through the warped looking-glass of Stalinism, and inverted through the parodic juxtaposition of both texts. Counter-posed to the Stalinist narrative of action,[44] Shamin's narrative is one of *in*action – by default.

Okudzhava's replacement of 'action' by 'inaction' constitutes inversion, and parody by Hutcheon's definition, by virtue of the irony his text evokes when contrasted with Ostrovskii's work. It is ironic, for instance, that in spite of his devotion to the Cause, Shamin's undesirable status prevents him from actively emulating Pavka Korchagin, in opposition to the very premise of the Stalinist canon. More ironic still is the probability that, had Ostrovskii himself not eventually succumbed to his fatal illness in 1936, but lived to experience the great purge of 1937, Korchagin's story may have taken a tragic turn at that point if, indeed, a sequel could have been written or published at all. Like countless other civil warriors and Party administrators who rose through the ranks under Lenin, Ostrovskii may have suffered the fate of Andrei's parents – incarceration and/or death – also in spite, or perhaps because, of his fervent devotion to the Cause. Against

---

[44] Alexander Genis, "'Perestroika' as a Shift in Literary Paradigm, *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture*, ed. and trans. Slobodanka M. Vladiv- Glover (New York: Berghahn, 1999) 96-97.

the background of Ostrovskii's novel, Okudzhava's work evokes the irony of incongruity, between the realities posited by the respective texts – most significantly, between the future as it had been envisioned by Korchagin and the Bolsheviks under Lenin, and that which was actually realized under Stalin. In this light, Okudzhava's text constitutes an inverse, ironic sequel, of sorts, to Ostrovskii's novel.[45] Rather than entirely subvert the expectations of the Soviet ideal depicted in Ostrovskii, Okudzhava's text portrays its Stalinist mutation, in keeping with Hutcheon's view of parody.

Shamin's family circumstances also distinguish the *nature* of his quest to serve the Purpose, from that of his Socialist Realist precursor. Be it through active duty or, more passively, by writing his autobiography when severe illness and even blindness befalls him, Korchagin is dedicated to the fight for "the workingman's cause."[46] Prior to his parents' arrest, Shamin is no less devoted to the Cause:

> Андрей учился в школе, знал наизусть имена всех выдающихся коммунистов планеты, презирал капиталистов, ненавидел вражеских шпионов, [...] и мечтал погибнуть на баррикаде (75). [Andrei went to school, knew the names of all the prominent communists on the planet by heart, despised capitalists, hated enemy spies, [...] and dreamed of perishing on the barricades.]

In the aftermath of the purges, however, his quest in the name of the collective becomes personalized; in addition to defending the Communist cause, Shamin longs to vindicate his own honor in the eyes of the State.

Shamin's yearning for self-vindication is crucial to Okudzhava's narrative, in that it instigates the plot. Set in Kaluga in 1955, it portrays the attempts by Lobanov, a

---

[45] In 1994 Okudzhava published, and was awarded the Russian Booker Prize for, *Uprazdnennyi teatr* – a memoir, which constitutes, in fact, the 'prequel' (written after the fact) to his "Prikliucheniia." The later book represents a family chronicle of sorts, portraying the events leading up to the arrest in 1937 of the narrator's parents. See Bulat Okudzhava, *Uprazdnennyi teatr: Semeinaia khronika* (Moscow: Rusanova, 1995). Sergei Burin reviews the novel, as it appeared in the journal *Znamia* (1993), in "Stranitsa uchebnika zhizni," *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 11-12 (1994): 78-80.

[46] Nikolai Ostrovskii, *How the Steel was Tempered: A Novel in Two Parts*, vol. 1, trans. R. Prokofieva (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967) 114.

Chekist, to recruit an adult Shamin as an informant in training, ostensibly for imminent, undercover dispatch to an American Baptist colony. In the plot Okudzhava executes a parodic play, much like Pelevin's in *Chapaev i Pustota*, on the Stalinist hero's rite of passage from spontaneity to consciousness with the help of his mentor(s).

Mentorship, as discussed in Chapter II of this thesis, is a cornerstone of the Socialist Realist plot. In *Stal,'* Korchagin's numerous mentors include Zhukhrai (a Bolshevik, whom he hides from local, White authorities during the Civil War), Kramer (a Party member, who befriends him in the years following the war), and Rita (a senior Komsomol member).[47] By the end of the narrative, Korchagin has himself become a mentor to others, including his wife. With the help of his mentors Korchagin comes to know the "true state of affairs"[48] in the fight for, and defense of, the Soviet state.

Shamin, meanwhile, arrives at a different kind of political awareness through his relations with Lobanov, Anna (a neighbor and former Stalinist internee), and his mother, following her release from a labor camp in 1955. He is enlightened not to the essence of the Soviet ideal but, rather, to the fact of his own seduction and betrayal by the (post)-Stalinist State.[49] Lobanov first attracts the hero through expressions of sympathy, righteous apologies for his parents' abuse in the past, and promises of future compensation (75), including an official mission:

> Мы хотим чтобы не на словах, а на деле вы увидели, что времена изменились, и что ваша родина снова доверяет вам [...] (75). [We want you to see in fact, and not in word, that times have changed and that your motherland now trusts you again ...].

---

[47] The list of Korchagin's mentors provided above is not exhaustive, and intended to provide a brief example, for a point of comparison and contrast with Shamin's untraditional mentors. For a more detailed analysis of mentorship in Ostrovskii, and the Socialist Realist narrative in general, see Clark, "Socialist Realism *With* Shores" 27-50.

[48] Genis, "'Perestroika' as a Shift in Literary Paradigm" 88.

[49] In *Uprazdnennyi teatr* -- the prequel to his "Prikliucheniia" – Okudzhava depicts the seduction and betrayal of his parents by the Soviet regime.

Moved to tears, and elated finally to be of 'official' service and freed of his stigma, Shamin eagerly carries out two minor sleuthing assignments – set up in advance by Lobanov, of course, as part of his ploy.[50]

Anna and Shamin's mother, however, are the two mentors who affect Shamin's inner transformation from naiveté to an awareness opposed to that portrayed by the Stalinist literary norm. First, Anna suggests that Shamin will be asked to inform on those close to him, in place of the American Baptists abroad; thereby she plants a seed of doubt in his mind. Shortly thereafter, in the enervated figure of his mother, Shamin realizes the full extent of the chasm between the realities of his past, and the Stalinist ideal in which he had so fervently believed and sought solace throughout his youth. Essentially, he succumbs, as an adult, to the complex emotions and truths he had managed to suppress in his youth. He imagines the extent of her abuse at the hands of men like Lobanov, who were not punished, but rewarded for their villainies, with the securities of home and family life that had been denied Shamin and his parents by virtue of their very innocence. Shamin's mother is silent about her camp years, but her haggard countenance speaks volumes. When, upon his return to Kaluga, Lobanov slyly questions him about Anna, he concludes his juvenile flirtation with espionage:

> Поиграли в шпионов [...] и хватит (99). [We've had our game of 'spies' [...] and that's enough].

Throughout his impoverished and frustrating boyhood and adolescence, what had sustained Shamin, even more than the fervent belief in his parents' innocence, was his blind faith in the infallibility of the Stalinist State. Even when the fantasy that his

---

[50] Ironically, Lobanov fits the traditional mentor paradigm, in that he represents the State, and even attempts to recruit Shamin to the rank of informant *for* the State. However, his deception of Shamin is immoral, from the perspectives of the 1955 plot depicted in Okudzhava's work, and of glasnost' – the period which saw its publication.

parents' arrest, as well as the imposition from above of his subsequent stigma, had all been part of an elaborate undercover operation is shattered by the news of both parents' incarceration, the young Shamin assures himself that an honest and rectifiable error has been made:

> [...] Андрей и на этот раз не пал духом. Он смог убедить себя, что именно с его родителями произошла ошибка [...]. Потому что, если бы они и вправду занимались диверсиями и шпионажем, то их расстреляли бы, а если живы, то их вопрос выясняется и скоро выяснится (81). [Andrei didn't lose heart this time either. He was able to convince himself that a mistake had been made in the particular case of his parents ... . Because if they really had been engaged in sabotage and espionage, they would've been shot to death, and if they were alive, it meant that their matter was being looked into and would soon be cleared up].

To sum up thus far: the plot of "Prikliucheniia" portrays its positive hero's political, emotional, and moral coming of age; Shamin's relations with Lobanov, Anna, and his mother effect his maturation. By manipulating the motif of the positive hero's rite of passage through the depiction of unconventional mentors, and by inverting the nature of the consciousness at which the hero arrives, Okudzhava practices a type of "socialist realism in reverse."[51] That is, he employs Socialist Realist constructs to contrary ends, though neither to promote the Soviet utopian myth, nor to undermine it outright. Through the guidance of mentors, however unorthodox in the official Soviet sense, Shamin is made privy to the 'true state of affairs' indeed, including the criminality of Stalinism, and the fact of his own seduction and betrayal, firstly, by the Stalinist State and, secondly, by Lobanov – a remnant of the Stalinist *apparat* and representative of the ostensibly more humane post-Stalinist State. Thus, Okudzhava inverts the didactic premise of Ostrovskii's novel as an exemplar of the Stalinist literary canon. His parody of

---

[51] N. N. Shneidman, *Russian Literature 1988-1994: The End of an Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 55. Shneidman speaks of "socialist realism in reverse" not in relation to Okudzhava's text in particular; rather, he refers to the practice of manipulating motifs common to works of Socialist Realist fiction as a general tendency in (post-)perestroika fiction.

'masterplot' by 'counterplot'[52] challenges the notion of blind faith in authority – in this case the Stalinist State – as a means to achieving the Soviet ideal.

This conclusion notwithstanding, the question remains as to whether or not Okudzhava, in fact, undermines Soviet idealism itself? One could argue, on the contrary, that Okudzhava's parody merely underscores its distortion by Stalinism – again, through irony. A juxtaposition of two similar narrative sequences in the works of Ostrovskii and Okudzhava corroborates this possibility. After helping a Bolshevik escape the custody of an enemy soldier during the Civil War, Pavka Korchagin is arrested and jailed, as a revolutionary. Later, upon his own and his brother's safe return from the hostilities, their mother is elated: "Once again the light of happiness shone in the eyes of this woman who had suffered so much. [...] Now the Korchagin family was reunited. Both brothers had escaped death, and after harrowing ordeals and trials they had met again."[53]

In Okudzhava's story, set some fifteen years later, in 1937, after pleading with the Central Committee for the release of her husband, falsely accused of treason, Shamin's mother, a devoted Party member herself, is arrested and imprisoned as a counter-revolutionary. Shamin's family also suffers harrowing ordeals and trials – his father does not escape death, while his mother, after eighteen years of camp life, returns "потухшая и выжатая" (96) ["lifeless and wrung out"]. This narrative juxtaposition exemplifies "repetition with a critical difference"[54] signaled by irony– the very basis for Hutcheon's paradigm of parody. It evokes the irony of incongruity between the realities represented

---

[52] Gary Saul Morson employs the terms 'masterplot' and 'counterplot' to refer to the literary genres of 'utopia' and 'anti-utopia,' respectively, in *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's* Diary of a Writer *and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 121-124.

[53] Nikolay Ostrovsky, *How the Steel was Tempered: A Novel in Two Parts*, 2 vols., trans. R. Prokofieva (Moscow: Progress, 1967) 250-251, Part II. Hereafter, English citations from this text will refer to this edition. Volumes I and II will be indicated as Part I or Part II, respectively.

[54] Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 20.

by the texts in question by betraying the discrepancy between Korchagin's Soviet 'ideal,' and Shamin's Stalinist 'real.' Thus, by means of parody, with irony as its primary rhetorical mechanism, Okudzhava inverts a premise of Ostrovskii's *Stal'* without actually subverting the work as an entirely negative model. Okudzhava does not disparage the Purpose as presented by Ostrovskii; he condemns only the Stalinist means to its attainment.

In a sense, Okudzhava's inversion appears more to exonerate, rather than destroy, its target, or hypotext. Shamin does come to the embarrassing awareness of his own gullibility, past and present, to the point of self-betrayal both as a naive child and an almost equally naive young adult. Nevertheless, the attitude of the narrator toward the hero is not one of scorn, or contempt; rather, he sympathizes with Shamin's naiveté. How could he have fallen for Lobanov's ploy and, following his parents' arrest, for the myth of the infallible Stalinist State? Simply, "потому что человек всегда хочет верить в лучшее" (88) ["because one always wants to believe in the best"].

One could feasibly extend this line of reasoning to Ostrovskii's novel. Why does Korchagin fight for the cause he believed would bring "liberty, equality, and fraternity," (34, Part I), and for which he and others killed "in order to hasten the day when men would kill one another no longer" (207, Part I)? Again, perhaps, "because one wants to believe in the best." The possibility exists that by justifying Shamin's naiveté, Okudzhava's narrator – a mature manifestation of the immature, younger hero – also implicitly acknowledges the idealism of his Socialist Realist precursor. Thus, Okudzhava's text pays a bittersweet tribute, of sorts, to Ostrovskii's novel, and to what

had once been envisioned as a noble cause, but had subsequently run amuck[55] – again, in keeping with Hutcheon's view of parody. From this perspective, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Okudzhava's story reveals what might be interpreted as a nostalgic attitude – not for the past, per se, as represented in the narrative constituted by Shamin's flashbacks. Rather, the attitude of nostalgia is directed toward the Korchagin-like innocence and determination that both comprises and is necessitated by blind faith, and was once possessed by Shamin.

In "Prikliucheniia," nostalgia is suggested obliquely; indeed, it seems absurd to posit that Shamin's post-Stalinist present – which sees his mother released, soon to be rehabilitated, and her status as Party member reinstated, not to mention Shamin's own success as a local journalist – could be deficient, when compared with the hardships of his past. What is also unspoken, stated indirectly, or must be inferred from knowledge of an extra-textual context, is that this 'good' time of the post-Stalinist present bore immense disillusionment for many. The positive elements of partial de-Stalinization, as a result of Khrushchev's Thaw, were counterbalanced by the painful effects of demystification, and/or demythologization.

In the poetic oeuvre of sots-artist Dmitrii Prigov, meanwhile, irony and nostalgia appear to be slightly reconfigured – leaning away from the borderline sarcasm of early sots-art, in favor of the so-called "new sincerity" (*"novaia iskrennost'"*) in some post-Soviet literature, as described by Svetlana Boym.[56] Boym notes, for instance, that Prigov

---

[55] Okudzhava reiterates this point in *Uprazdnennyi teatr.*

[56] Svetlana Boym, "From the Russian Soul to Post-Communist Nostalgia," *Representations* 49 (1995): 150-151. For an in-depth analysis, and a significantly more critical view, of Prigov's oeuvre and of the sots-art movement as a whole, see Evgeny Dobrenko, "Socialist Realism, a Postscriptum: Dmitrii Prigov and the Aesthetic Limits of Sots-Art," Balina, Condee and Dobrenko 77-106. For a brief description of Prigov's "new sincerity" see Mikhail Aizenberg, "Vmesto predisloviia," *Lichnoe delo* (Moscow: Soiuzteatr, 1991) 11. For a more detailed analysis of the "new sentimentalism" and the "new

articulates nostalgia for the lost sense of "imagined community" shared – until glasnost' – by an underground readership and a heroically dissident intelligentsia.[57] She is quick to add, though, that Prigov's "imperial nostalgia" has not forfeited its ironic hue; rather, his nostalgic posture allows him to indulge in, and thereby delay, "the apocalyptic predicament that haunts many of his fellow [sots-] artists"[58] – namely, their own redundancy *as* sots-artists or, more plainly yet, as parodists deprived of a target. Thus, Prigov's is an irony that cuts both ways, as required by Hutcheon's definition of reverential parody. Having exposed the ironic discrepancies between Soviet ideology, and Soviet reality, his position as subversive poet has become redundant.[59]

By all accounts, the fallout of the crisis and definitive (if not altogether unexpected) break with State Communism in post-Soviet Russia provides especially fertile ground for the (collective) nurturing of nostalgic sentiment from a somewhat different perspective, and to a slightly different degree – by comparison, that is, with the sense of ('still Soviet') continuity during glasnost,' despite the period's shifting paradigm. In *Chapaev i Pustota*, psychiatrist Timur Timurovich broaches this very subject during his first session with Pet'ia:

> В жизни человека, страны, культуры и так далее постоянно происходят метаморфозы. Иногда они растянуты во времени и незаметны, иногда принимают очень резкие формы – как сейчас (47). [The life of a man, a country, a culture and so on, is a series of constant metamorphoses. Sometimes they extend over a period of time and so are imperceptible, sometimes they assume acute forms, as in the present case (34)].

---

sincerity," see Mikhail Epstein, "Conclusion: On the Place of Postmodern in Postmodernity," and "Charms of Entropy and the New Sentimentality: The Myth of Venedikt Erofeev," in Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover 456-468, and 423-455, respectively.

[57] Boym 151.

[58] ibid.

[59] Viacheslav Kuritsyn observes, for example, that since the death of Socialist Realism, sots-art has forfeited its most important function: to disparage Soviet culture. See Viacheslav Kuritsyn, *Russkii literaturnyi post-modernizm* (Moscow: OGI, 2000) 94.

In at least one sense since 1991, Russia has been abruptly transformed. While some, explains Timur Timurovich further, readily embrace change and accept the new, others – intent on fanning the dying embers of the old – reject it (ibid). It follows, then, that an exaggerated sense of nostalgia is a natural corollary to, or by-product of, decisively transitional or threshold states; that is, uncertainty in the present or immediate future generates longing for the familiarity, if not the comfort, of the past.

Citing Groys and Andreeva[60] on the origins of the "phenomenon of Soviet nostalgia as a whole" in the late Soviet era, Freidin suggests that its extension into post-Soviet times constitutes a continuous purging of the "Soviet complex." Freidin has in mind the process whereby "individuals and groups shaped by Soviet experience come to terms with and assimilate the break with their Soviet past and the ever-revised revisions of their collective and personal Soviet histories."[61] Though the point refers specifically to the poetic oeuvre of Timur Kibirov,[62] it can be applied equally well to Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*. According to psychiatrist Timur Timurovich, Pet'ia's condition in the 1990s plotline hinges on his subconscious refusal to undergo this very process and accept change – that is, contemporary post-Soviet reality. The twenty-six-year-old Pet'ia's refusal to "accept the new," the doctor maintains, exemplifies the attitude of his generation which, having been "programmed for life in one socio-cultural paradigm has found itself living in a quite different one" (36).[63] Thus, Pet'ia is 'normal' insofar as he

---

[60] In particular, Freidin notes Andreeva's *Sots-Art* (cited above) and Boris Groys, "Moskovskii romanticheskii kontseptualizm," *A-Ia* 1 (1979): 3-11; as well as Groys' "Sots-art," *Iskusstvo* 4 (1990): 30-34.

[61] Freidin 127.

[62] In particular, Freidin devotes his article to an analysis of Kibirov's *Santimenty: Vosem' knig*, (Belgorod: Risk, 1994).

[63] As though to echo the words of Timur Timurovich, Freidin sees in Kibirov's *Santimenty* a form of sentimental farewell to an extinct civilization, not yet fossilized, from one who was "born to it, [but] doomed to inhabit a new cultural universe" (Freidin 137).

conforms to the mind-set and suffers under the paradigm-shift imposed upon his generation.

His rejection of the post-Soviet present – a symptom of the process of assimilation proposed by Freidin, above, and a prerequisite, of sorts for the nostalgic experience – is easily discerned in the 1990s plotline, where he continually distances himself from the incursion of contemporary reality into the closed world of the psychiatric hospital. These include the group therapy room's built-in radio system, the music being broadcast, and the provocative names of the bands performing the pieces (such as The Swollen Ovaries [*Vospalenie pridatkov*] – a group of lesbian musicians, two of whom have been infected with a sexually transmitted disease [79]). Pet'ia's alienation from 1990s reality continues even after his release from the hospital. Upon his return to the Musical Snuffbox Café in the last chapter, he fails to recognize the bouncer's cell-phone for what it is; rather, he describes it as a "strange-looking telephone receiver with the wire broken off to leave a stump" (328). Having seen the bouncer speak into the apparatus and, to Pet'ia's mind, hold it incorrectly, "with the broken-off wire sticking upwards," Pet'ia believes the man to be merely pretending to use the object as a telephone, and admits to being moved by his "touchingly childlike ability to become totally immersed in a fantasy world" (328). Similarly, inside the club he fails to recognize either 'Absolut' as a brand of vodka, or 'Ecstasy' (*Ekstaz*) as the name of the popular illicit drug (393). Ironically, from the perspective of the early 1990s, Pet'ia's failure to recognize the realia of post-Soviet Russia (modern technology, Western products, home-grown Russian 'alternative' rock music) would probably not have distinguished him greatly from any rural Russian on a first visit to the capital. Pet'ia, in

other words, resembles in this respect the touching (and in its own way nostalgic) 'country bumpkins in the big city' scenario most closely associated with village prose writer Vasilii Shukshin (1929-74).[64] Within the parameters of this discussion, though, failure to accept the new, or the rejection of the present comprises a necessary pre-condition, at the very least, for a nostalgic attitude toward the past.

Indeed, the themes of nostalgia and retrospection are established in *Chapaev i Pustota* from the outset; they are expressed in the 1990s timeline by various protagonists. In relation to his diagnosis of Pet'ia's condition, for instance, Timur Timurovich points out the orientation of the Chinese world-view toward a golden age in a distant past, compared to which "all that is new is evil" (34). He notes a similar tendency in the oeuvre of Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) wherein, the psychiatrist maintains, childhood is sublimated as a "lost paradise," culminating in the author's depiction (in *Lolita* [1955]) of a grown man's passion for an adolescent girl (ibid.). In the same exchange, Pet'ia extends the argument: citing the (linguistic) fact that "[i]n English, [...] we are the *descendants* of the past" (and not "*ascendants*"), he insists that the degeneration of culture is a global phenomenon, inscribed into language itself (ibid.).

The entire eighth chapter, meanwhile, – devoted to Serdiuk's hallucination – treats the theme of nostalgia as the somewhat exaggerated and slightly skewed (if not tongue-in-cheek) insistence by Kawabata, a Japanese businessman and Serdiuk's would-be employer, on ancient Japanese customs and rituals, such as *giri* (obligation to behave

---

[64] In keeping both with the theme of nostalgia in this chapter and the related motif of estrangement from the new or modern, one is also reminded of such works of 'village-prose' as Valentin Rasputin's *Farewell to Matyora* (*Proshchanie s Materoi* [1976]) in which the elderly inhabitants of an island – evacuated and flooded for a hydro-electric dam – are relocated to newly built flats with modern conveniences, such as running water, etc. In American popular culture, meanwhile, the 1960s television series entitled "The Beverly Hillbillies" capitalized on the ignorance of the Clampett family with regard to modern amenities (doorbells, swimming pool or 'cee-ment pond', electric stove).

honorably and in accordance with one's class and one's self [186]) and *on* (sense of filial or societal responsibility [ibid.]). The most notable of these is the mandatory act of ritual suicide for losing face – "*seppuku*" (190) – that Serdiuk insists upon having committed, prior to his arrival at the psychiatric hospital. On a different level, Serdiuk's personal sense of nostalgia for the past is awakened by a bottle of 'Livadiia' port wine; its label evokes memories of his carefree student days, which included a certain innocence and sense of hopefulness for the future – now lost to experience (154). Serdiuk's nostalgic sentiments are in keeping with those expressions of nostalgia (toward, say, a Belomor cigarette package) in Kibirov, as discussed by Freidin.

The bulk of the novel's nostalgic expression, however, appears in the timeline of the Civil War, for the simple reason that Pet'ia's inability to come to terms with and assimilate the break with his Soviet past (as per Freidin on Kibirov, noted above) has taken on pathological proportions. It has displaced his entire nostalgic experience from the period marking the demise of the Soviet Union, almost to that of its very inception, thereby erasing the entire Soviet period. Pet'ia's expressions of nostalgia for (pre)-revolutionary Russia are in keeping with the time warp within which he believes he exists: like the post-Soviet 1990s, the time of the Civil War is a threshold period, one of tumultuous transition, and Pet'ia yearns – now overtly, now more obliquely – for the relative stability of the pre-revolutionary past.

Throughout the 1919 time frame, Pet'ia's decidedly anti-Soviet position is clear. Though not an overt expression of nostalgia for the pre-revolutionary past, Pet'ia's openly sarcastic anti-revolutionary stance comprises an explicit rejection of the 'new reality' (of nascent Soviet rule), as part of the nostalgic experience as a whole. The following

quotation sums up Pet'ia's attitude toward the revolution, its leaders, and the ideology behind it:

> Почему, думал я, почему любой социальный катаклизм в этом мире ведет к тому, что наверх всплывает это темное быдло и заставляет всех остальных жить по своим подлым и законспирированным законам? (333). [Why, I asked myself, why does any social cataclysm in this world always result in the most ignorant scum rising to the top and forcing everyone else to live in accordance with its own base and conspiratorially defined laws? (278).]

Pet'ia carries out what constitutes a poignant, two-pronged attack against the new authorities: he executes an act of character assassination on the personnel of the revolution and, in keeping with the overall scheme in the novel to exploit similarities, if not erase distinctions between the two time frames, undercuts their ideological claim to the uniqueness of the October Revolution.

Though less obviously anti-Soviet than that of Pet'ia, Chapaev's position is emphatically un-Soviet. Rather than side with the Reds (or the Whites, for that matter), this Chapaev expresses a distinctly Tolstoyan (and Buddhist) position of non-resistance to evil, in keeping with which he advises Pet'ia to live by the rules of whichever 'reality' he chooses (324). Though the troops hang on his every word at the Iaroslavskaia train station, Pelevin's Chapaev neither advocates Communist victory in the Civil War, nor employs official Soviet rhetoric to inspire his men. He *is* concerned with relating to the troops on a level they can understand, but remains detached from his own discourse as leader of the brigade, in the belief that "[o]ne has simply to reflect the expectations of the crowd" (76), when addressing the masses. In their respective comments, above, Pet'ia and Chapaev undermine two basic tenets of Socialist Realism: both protagonists obliterate the notion of *ideinost'* (mandatory ideological content), while Chapaev, moreover, takes *narodnost'* (the accessibility of discourse to the masses) to the extreme.

Pet'ia's rejection of revolutionary change is also manifest in the Civil War plotline in the form of overt expressions of nostalgia as a yearning for the pre-revolutionary past. These, in turn, are tempered by irony, as per the requirements of the nostalgic process according to Hutcheon. When traveling to the frontlines with Chapaev and Anna, for instance, Pet'ia finds himself in a luxurious railway carriage, uncharacteristic of Civil War travel by most fictional accounts.[65] Because he suffered, however briefly, the perils and austerity of being a fugitive, and posing as a Chekist in the fledgling Soviet state, Pet'ia's return to safety and comfort, however temporary, causes him to yearn for the recent, imperial Russian past:

> Какой недостижимо-прекрасной показалась мне в этот миг прежняя петербургская жизнь! (100). [How beautiful and unattainable the old life of St Petersburg seemed at that moment (78)].

The irony evoked by this nostalgic exclamation lies in the fact that throughout the remainder, and bulk, of the novel Pet'ia is highly critical of the very past for which he so dramatically yearns. For the most part his criticism is directed at the St. Petersburg artistic and literary circles, which he attacks as pretentious. Pondering Chapaev's words on public speaking, he recalls the affectations of those involved in the salon life of his past, in the capital:

> Будучи вынужен по роду своих занятий встречаться со множеством тяжелых идиотов из литературных кругов, я развил в себе способность участвовать в их беседах, не особо вдумываясь в то, о чем идет речь, но свободно жонглируя нелепыми словами вроде „реализма", и „теургии" или даже „теософического кокса" (98). [Since I was obliged by virtue of my activities to meet large numbers of chronic imbeciles from literary circles, I had deliberately cultivated the ability to participate in their discussions without paying particular attention to what was being spoken about, simply by juggling with such absurd words as 'realism' and 'theurgy, or even 'theosophical value' (76-77)].

---

[65] The luxurious train carriage in which Pet'ia travels with Chapaev and Anna starkly contradicts the images of revolutionary asceticism depicted in other Civil War narratives, such as Vsevolod Ivanov's "Bronepoezd 14-69" ["Armored Train 14-69," (1922)] and "Vozvrashchenie Buddy" ["The Buddha's Return," (1923)], as well as Isaak Babel"s *Konarmiia* [*Red Cavalry*, (1926)] and, from a later period, Boris Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago* [Doctor Zhivago (1957)].

More ironic is the fact that key figures in those very circles encouraged the revolution – not the least of whom was Blok, who is alluded to numerous times, both obliquely and directly, throughout the 1919 narrative. Greatest, most bitter and fatally double-edged, though, is the irony that many of those same figures perished either at the hands of the new regime they welcomed more or less enthusiastically (Pil'niak, Babel'), or by their own hand because of it (Maiakovskii, Esenin). Far from mutually exclusive, irony and nostalgia are shown to co-exist in Pet'ia's utterance, and function in a close working relationship, in support of those views on the concepts posited by Hutcheon and Boym, above.

Later in the narrative, Pet'ia contemplates the transformation by the Reds of a requisitioned luxury carriage into a makeshift gunning-vehicle (*tachanka*);[66] the very sight of it triggers another nostalgic outpouring, again, for the pre-revolutionary past:

> Что-то невыразимо ностальгическое было в этой роскошной вещи, в этом осколке навсегда канувшего в небытие мира, обитатели которого наивно надеялись переехать в будущее на таких вот транспортных средствах. Вышло так, что поход в будущее удался только самим трантспортным средствам, и то ценой превращения в подобие гуннских боевых колесниц. Именно такие ассоциации рождали три соединенных штангой пулемета „ Люис", укрепленные в задней части ландо (240). [There was something quite unbearably nostalgic in this object of luxury, this fragment of a world which had disappeared for ever [*sic*] into oblivion; its inhabitants had naively supposed that they would be riding into the future in vehicles just like this one. In the event, it was only the vehicles which had survived their jaunt into the future, and only then at the cost of transformation into parodies of Hunnish war chariots – such were the associations triggered by the sight of the three Lewis machine-guns tied together by a metal beam which had been installed in the rear section of the landau (197-98)].

---

[66] The *tachanka* is discussed by Isaak Babel;' he devotes a sketch to its treatment, where the narrator, Liutov, associates the vehicle with "massacre [and] blood." Liutov discusses several types of carts, or carriages, distinguishing between the "brichka" – used to transport machine-guns – and the *tachanka*, that could be stowed away in a peasant's hut. Most ironically incongruous is the *tachanka* of the Volga region colonized by Germans – with a bottom reinforced by iron bands, springs ensuring a more comfortable ride, and covered with painted garlands of pink flowers. See Isaac Babel, "Discourse on the "Tachanka," *The Collected Stories*, ed. and trans. Walter Morison (Meridian: New York, 1974) 83-86. In Pelevin's novel, musing on the meaning of *tachanka*, Pet'ia comes up with "touch Anka" as a pun on the word (240).

The irony intrinsic to Pet'ia's nostalgically oriented contemplations, above, is complex. More than overtly express nostalgia for an object of luxury and its attendant belief system from the perspective of an un- and militantly anti-luxurious time, Pet'ia undercuts the ideological import of the makeshift *tachanka* by aligning it with bourgeois luxury. In so doing he expresses one of the great ironies of the Communist Revolution, in retrospect: that the enthusiastic rejection, if not annihilation, by the Bolsheviks of any symbols of bourgeois comfort, would lead eventually, and perhaps inevitably, to the privileges enjoyed by Party officials from the thirties through to perestroika and beyond. Moreover, Pet'ia exacerbates the already painful implications of the landau's transformation to a state of vulgar primitiveness at the hands of the Red troops; that is, he associates the Revolution and the Civil War not with progress or the advancement of a cause, but with violent regression to a distant and most uncivilized past.[67] Thirdly, he suggests a comparison between what was heralded as the liberation of Russia by the Communists, and the occupation of medieval Rus' by the Mongols; in a word, he equates the Reds with an alien invader – ostensibly *for* the people, but by no means *of* the people. These ironies are poignant, and in keeping with the anti-Soviet views expressed by Pet'ia throughout the 1919 plotline as a whole.

Directed as they are toward the revolution and Civil War, however, the ironies are of tangential value to the argument at hand: that is, the evocation and/or role of irony in the summoning up, and articulation, of postmodern nostalgia. In this case, Pet'ia most overtly endows an object of the pre-revolutionary past with a nostalgic, though

---

[67] The return to an uncivilized state brings to mind, again, the anticipation and advocacy by Pil'niak, Zamiatin, Blok and the literary Scythians of a resurgent primitivism both as cause and effect of the revolution. This same uncivilized state is aptly represented in numerous works, among them two stories by Zamiatin – "Peshchera" ("The Cave," [1922]), and "Mamai" (1921).

indefinable, aura; the object, in its turn, is virtually inseparable from its attendant belief system, as held by the privileged classes of an Imperial Russia. The irony here derives from the naiveté of these classes, as Pet'ia suggests, with regard to the future; once again, the implications of this irony are complex. In its simplest and most obvious form, the irony suggests the shortsightedness of an aristocratic class that either did not foresee, or refused to accept, the fact and the impending consequences, of revolution.[68] Secondly, it derives from the fact of the elimination of the aristocracy as a class in the wake of the revolution. More symbolically, the vulgar deformation of the landau is, in effect, a metaphor for that of the privileged class, after the fact – its unceremonious transformation beyond recognition into a non-class of 'have-nots' by an unsympathetic new regime, and a newly empowered, but largely unrefined, proletariat.[69] Double-edged as they are, these ironies temper Pet'ia's expressions of nostalgia for the pre-revolutionary past – again, as implied by Phillips, and stated explicitly by Hutcheon, in her work on the nostalgic experience. Nostalgia re-creates the past as we (choose to) remember it in the present; irony helps distinguish between memory and experience. The examples of ironized nostalgia noted thus far constitute overt textual markers, which are intended to be construed as such; they are intrinsic to, or can be easily inferred from, Pelevin's narrative text independently of its status as a parody. Plainly said, they do not depend on parody

---

[68] The attitude of the privileged classes toward earlier social reform and/or the revolution, as well as their predicament after the fact, forms the crux of such classic works of (Soviet) Russian fiction as Pil'niak's *Golyi god* [*The Naked Year* (1922)] and *Krasnoe derevo* [*Mahogany* (1929)], Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago* (1957), and Bitov's *Pushkinskii dom* [*Pushkin House* (1978)] to name only a few. Thus, in addition to its role in signifying the epoch for which Pet'ia ostensibly is nostalgic, the landau comprises an intertextual link to these works, and Babel"s *Konarmiia* (*Red Cavalry* [1926], which includes "Discourse on the 'Tachanka'") as a source for the image of the *tachanka*.

[69] One need only recall the confrontation between Professor Preobrazhenskii and the newly empowered Housing Committee in Bulgakov's *Sobach'e serdtse* (*The Heart of a Dog* [written 1925], or the attitude toward former owners of expropriated apartments for communal housing, as in P'ietsukh's "Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia" (The New Moscow Philosophy [1989]) and Okudzhava's *Uprazdnennyi teatr* (The Emptied Theater [1994]).

either for their articulation by the text, or perception by the reader. Indeed, their very obviousness in the text hints toward a close relationship in Pelevin's novel between nostalgia, irony, and satire – that socially, and extra-textually oriented counterpart of parody, which, in the above discussion is obviously directed at a fledgling Soviet Russia.

It cannot be denied, however, that the thrust of nostalgic sentiment in *Chapaev i Pustota* is bound up in Pelevin's parodic plays. The very fact, act, and manner of his recollection of the Civil War plotline betrays an expression of nostalgia on the part of the (implied) author from the outset. Save for the considerable temporal displacement involved, Pet'ia's memories of the Civil War – as recounted *in*, and as the stuff *of* a substantial part of the novel – can be said to constitute an almost classic example of the nostalgic process whereby, to quote Phillips once again, "[e]vents are fashioned into a kind of imaginary product in which memory, distortion, forgetting, and reorganization all play a role."[70]

For instance, Pet'ia recalls a Civil War that is virtually free of violence or bloodshed, save for three occasions: his own murder of Von Ernen in the novel's first chapter; the shootout he initiates at the Musical Snuffbox in the third chapter; and the scene of conflagration perpetrated by Furmanov and the Reds in the penultimate chapter. This motivates Chapaev's escape with Pet'ia to the armored car, prior to Anna's expeditious, though bloodless, annihilation of the universe by means of 'the clay machine-gun,' or 'Buddha's little finger.' Indeed, there is mention of only one battle in the Civil War plot, at Lozovaia Junction – the location of the hospital in the 1990s plot, and purportedly the scene of Pet'ia's heroics. Pet'ia has sketched scenes of the battle, is told of it by Anna and Chapaev, and believes he bears a head-wound from the battle, but has

[70] Phillips 66.

no recollection of it. Also worth mentioning in regard to the representation in the 1919 plotline of a mostly peaceable Civil War is Pet'ia's altercation, mere moments after awakening from his post-Lozovaia coma, with an opium-injecting White soldier in a tavern; somewhat of a *deus ex machina*, a gun-wielding Kotovskii appears in the doorway, deflecting the tension, and halting any potential bloodletting, with his menacing looks (157).

Indeed, the bulk of the 1919 narrative comprises Pet'ia's metaphysical education. Through extensive dialogues with Chapaev, Baron Iungern, and Ignat – a Don Cossack performing the final stage in the rite of passage to his own Inner Mongolia – Pet'ia comes to understand the interplay of life, death, and the 'void.' Through his acquaintance with Anna, moreover, Pet'ia comes to contemplate the ideal of beauty, and experience the pain and pleasure of romantic love. Meanwhile, his exchanges in 1919 with Kotovskii – an ostensible rival in love – provide him in the 1990s with a scapegoat for the psychotic state of post-Soviet Russian affairs – of which his confinement to the psychiatric hospital is a significant part. That is, from what Pet'ia has learned of the nominal distinction between dream and reality, and from a somewhat distorted view of the supposition that one creates one's *own* reality, Pet'ia believes himself to be trapped in Kotovskii's skewed and absurd version of life, as he comes to understand it from his limited experience of the 'New Russian' world at large in the 1990s. In keeping with Phillips' view of nostalgia, Pet'ia's recollection of the Civil War period is an imaginary product, indeed; of the four constitutive elements of nostalgia noted by Phillips, the most prominent in this case is that of distortion. Pet'ia can have no memories of the Civil War deriving from personal

past experience; what he remembers of it would have derived from what he may have read or heard in the past. Pet'ia's 'memories' comprise a form of revisionism.

Important to the discussion at hand is the fact that Pet'ia's 'recollection' of the past is idealized, both in comparison to the 'present' depicted in the 1990s plotline, and to the actual Civil War. The fact of Pelevin's (mis-)representation of the Civil War – the greatest moment of early Soviet history – as a time of love, metaphysical contemplation, and petty altercations with the enemy is part and parcel of the author's parody of 'serious' Civil War fiction by Pil'niak, Babel,' and Vsevolod Ivanov, as well as Furmanov's account.

Moreover, Pelevin's very inclusion of Furmanov in the plot constitutes a form of parodic tribute not only to Chapaev's official mentor as portrayed in the Vasil'ievs' film, but also to Furmanov himself. To be sure, Furmanov's portrayal in Pelevin is less than flattering: in opposition to that of virtually every other protagonist in the novel, his character is utterly humorless. Cast in the role of Party straight-man, he is suspicious of Chapaev, and Pet'ia dislikes him immediately upon their meeting at Iaroslavskaia Station, prior to their division's departure for the front. Furthermore, Furmanov is endowed with a stutter, introducing himself to Pet'ia as "F-Fu [...] F-Furmanov" (95); this, in effect, portrays him in an especially comical, if not derisive, manner, precisely *because* of his otherwise humorless character. Furmanov's stutter also undercuts the historical Furmanov's ability to speak for Chapaev, and to wrest the authority of the word away from the first truly spontaneous folk legends about the Civil War hero.[71] In effect, Furmanov's stutter – a spontaneous action – in Pelevin sets him a rung beneath Chapaev

[71] "Klychkov's historiography," writes Vroon, "in contrast to Chapaev's [legacy of oral legends], relies on the written or printed text for its ultimate authority and endurance." See Vroon, 233.

in contrast to their officially represented mentor-disciple relationship. In addition, Furmanov's knowledge of, if not open participation in, the bacchanalia staged by the Reds (345), motivating Kotovskii's departure for Paris in the nick of time, defames his character and his post within the parameters of the 1919 narrative, as well as his reputation beyond them. Indeed, having discerned Chapaev's un-Soviet and thus potentially harmful anti-ideological position, Furmanov leads the brigade that sets fire to the commander's headquarters in an attempt to smoke him and Pet'ia out. Removed in Pelevin from his status of mentor to Chapaev in the officially sanctioned versions of the Chapaev myth, Furmanov threatens – if only momentarily – to become the legendary commander's ruination. All in all, it would seem that Furmanov's portrayal in the novel is unsympathetic, at best. The negative attributes he is assigned serve to enhance his role in Pelevin as mean-spirited foil to Chapaev and Pet'ia.

In the final analysis, however, the fictional Furmanov's shortcomings simply obfuscate a less pronounced sense of affection in the narrative for the commissar. Furmanov's stutter disappears, for instance, when he addresses the troops, in fulfillment of his official duties (97). Even in destroying Chapaev's headquarters, Furmanov acts – as a good Bolshevik should – in accordance with his political affiliation (Bolshevik), ideological position, and even above and beyond his obligations, as political commissar. In other words, Furmanov fulfills his wartime duty (to rout treachery among the ranks). However misguided it may be, there is something to be said for honest commitment, which approaches the ironized re-vindication of idealism in Okudzhava's "Prikliucheniia."

In acknowledging, however nominally, the duty-mindedness of the historical Furmanov, Pelevin also pays tribute – both sincere and ironic – to the very times in which both the commissar, and Chapaev, existed. This observation is affirmed by Pet'ia's conclusion, following a shootout he instigates in 1990s Moscow, that "[...] в мое время люди вряд ли были добрее, но нравы определенно были мягче" (397) ["... in my time people were hardly any kinder, but manners were definitely milder"].[72] Precisely *which* time Pet'ia refers to in this comment – pre-revolutionary, or that of the Civil War – is ambiguous. Indeed, the distinction is irrelevant, except for purposes of measuring the degree of irony that might be evoked by this oblique expression of nostalgia. Least ironic would be the inference that Russia of the Silver Age, or at the end of the twentieth century, is 'milder,' more civilized than a country torn apart by Civil War. Most ironic would be the suggestion of 'mild manners' in a conflict which, whether in fictional or memoir form, from Babel,' Babine, Zamiatin, and Furmanov himself, through to Pasternak, is represented as a most uncivilized time, by all accounts chaotic and brutal.

Ultimately, Pet'ia escapes what he believes to be Kotovskii's version of 1990s reality, and retreats to his own Inner Mongolia, en-route to which he is reunited with Chapaev, in his *bronevik* (armored vehicle), and Anna, in absentia, who has nevertheless asked Chapaev to relay her greetings to Pet'ia, sent him a yellow rose, and asked him to forward a book of his poems. Within the context of Chapaev's teachings (or, more precisely Baron Iungern's) in Pelevin's novel, Inner Mongolia is the 'no-place' of nirvana, where ends the perpetual cycle of death and (re-)birth. In short, it represents the attainment of what Pet'ia refers to in the title of a poem as the 'Eternal Non-Return'

---

[72] Translation mine. Bromfield's translation, as follows, is less literal: "I thought that in my time people were hardly any kinder, perhaps, but the times themselves were certainly *less cruel*" (334, emphasis added).

(*Vechnoe nevosvrashchenie* [395]). He recites the poem at the Musical Snuffbox in the 1990s, just before he initiates a second shoot-out, from which he escapes to Chapaev's waiting vehicle.

The very premise of the irretrievability of the past, noted above, provides the basis for Pelevin's parody of ironized, post-Soviet nostalgia. Ultimately, Pet'ia *does* return to the past, if only in his mind. Furthermore, Pet'ia's version of the Civil War times is a play by Pelevin on the more general notion of the idealized past summoned up by nostalgia. Finally, part of the irony and parody of nostalgia in Pelevin's novel hinges on Pet'ia's conviction that his version of Chapaev and those times is not idealized, but genuine, or as genuine as any other time.

The very fact that Pet'ia is nostalgic for the pre-Revolutionary past – in either plotline, 1919 or 1991 – constitutes an ironic inversion of the traditional Soviet striving toward the Radiant Future of Communism. Like Pet'ia's anti-Soviet sentiments, noted above, and the Buddhist (or, at least, non-materialist) philosophical views expressed throughout the novel, his position of nostalgia contributes to the overall lack, and indeed parody, of *ideinost'* in *Chapaev i Pustota*. Moreover, the displacement of his nostalgia to the times of the Civil War (or pre-revolutionary Russia) parodies the nostalgia theme in (post-)Soviet Russian literary discourse, as it is discussed by critics such as Freidin and Ivanova, in relation to poet Kibirov and prose writer Iskander, respectively. Save for the hallucination of fellow patient Serdiuk, Pelevin's references to the Soviet period are minimal, and oblique. Soviet times, however, are conspicuous by their very absence from Pelevin's novel, except in these minimized instances; their exclusion from the nostalgic process, as personified by Pet'ia speaks volumes. By exposing the layers of

time between the yearning present (1990s) and the yearned for past (1919), Pelevin highlights the gap between them, rather than close it, as nostalgia proper aims to do.

The many layers of nostalgia and the varied degrees of irony evoked in its treatment suggest that the primary purpose of Pelevin's parody in *Chapaev i Pustota* is not to undermine the Stalinist canon. Indeed, having already exposed various aspects of the Soviet myth in preceding works (most notably, *Omon Ra* [1992]; *Yellow Arrow* 1993]), Pelevin appears in this novel to express anti-Soviet criticism mechanically, as though he were paying lip-service to a requirement of post-Soviet fiction in general, and sots-art in particular. His attitude toward the Soviet literary canon is not devoid of the necessary elements of cynicism and condescension, but it is markedly less antagonistic in its treatment of that body of work and its mindset than that of many of his precursors and contemporaries in the currents of sots-art and cruel prose (*zhestokaia proza*) alike.

By the same token, not all works of (post-)glasnost' Russian fiction are as overtly parodic as Pelevin's novel (whose very title betrays its predisposition toward parody of the Chapaev myth). Nor is their treatment of nostalgia uniform, even within such categories as cruel, or dark prose. Nevertheless, as is indeed the case with Tokareva's "Kheppi end," discussed earlier in this chapter, most lend themselves easily to analysis as generic parodies of the Soviet literary canon, if only by virtue of their exclusion from their narratives of any measure of 'proper' *ideinost,' partiinost,'* and *narodnost,'* the three building blocks of Socialist Realism. Most of these works, moreover, evoke irony by portraying the discrepancy between the Soviet real and the Soviet ideal; in this sense, they accommodate Hutcheon's paradigm of parody. Nostalgia figures to one degree or another in many of these works, overtly or implicitly.

Petrushevskaia's "Svoi krug" ("Our Crowd") comprises a retrospective glance of the first-person narrator at the proverbial 'good old days' (and their gradual deterioration over the years) ranging roughly from her years as a university student to the very recent past, marked by divorce, as well as the narrator's presumption of grave illness and her imminent death. The narrator's youth recalls a time of innocence, when revelry did not signify alcoholism, celebration was not inevitably marred by scandal, love was still untainted by infidelities and sexual pathology, and goals were yet to be realized:

> [... T]огда мы все жили каким-то походами, кострами, пили сухое вино, очень иронизовали надо всем и не касались сферы пола, так как были слишком молоды и не знали, что нас ждет впереди; из сферы пола весь народ волновало только то, что у меня был белый купальник, сквозь который все просвечало, и народ потешался надо мной, как мог [...].[73] [In those days our whole lives revolved around walking holidays and camp fires, we drank dry wine and scoffed at everything and didn't touch on anything to do with sex, because we were still too young and didn't know what awaited us in the future; the only thing from the sexual arena that bothered the company at all was that I had a white bathing suit which turned out to be completely see-through, and everyone did their best to make fun of me [...]].[74]

Compared to the narrator's current state of affairs, which finds her jaded and defiantly cynical (at the height of the Brezhnev era of stagnation), the moments of the past to which she refers (presumably during Khrushchev's Thaw) could only be considered more hopeful, if not 'better;' thus, they fulfill the basic criterion for nostalgia. Of greater consequence to the present discussion, however, may be the narrator's overt refusal to grant this better past any value, or connection to, her present in the late Soviet era:

> Однако это было давно и неправда, кончились те дни, [...] кончились все дни понимания, а наступило черт знает что [...] (47). [At any rate, all that was long ago and not true, those days are over, [...] all the days of mutual understanding are over, and the devil knows what has replaced them (translation mine)].

---

[73] Liudmila Petrushevskaia, "Svoi krug," *Liudmila Stefanova Petrushevskaia: Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 1, ed. Inna Borisova (Kharkov: Folio, 1996) 57.

[74] Liudmila Petrushevskaia, "Our Crowd," *Immortal Love*, trans. Sally Laird (London: Virago Press, 1995) 332. Unless otherwise indicated, English citations will refer to this edition.

Outwardly, with this assertion Petrushevskaia's narrator denounces, and compartmentalizes the past, packing it away – not for safekeeping, future contemplation and re-collection, though, but rather to facilitate its severance. Indeed, at the end of her narrative she definitively cuts all ties with her crowd – as symbols of her past – if not her memories, as a result of the scandalous scene of bloody child abuse she stages in front of them, on their last Easter get-together. The scandal prompts her ex-husband to take custody of their son, leaving her free to prepare for death. Moreover, her representation of the event, and her friends' reaction to it, marks the end of her retrospective narration; rather than continue to ponder the past, its closing lines speculate on, and display nostalgia for, the future: certain of her son's forgiveness, she imagines him visiting her grave at the traditional Easter picnic at the cemetery, with her crowd. Regarded as a whole, however, the narrative is an implicit tribute to the narrator's personal past, and despite her efforts to assert the opposite, she betrays her nostalgic attitude toward it. Ironically, though, her nostalgia, covert though its intention may be, is for a collective past, of sorts, though not a traditional Soviet collective. Rather, she looks back to a personal past shared by the group. Similarly, the nostalgia she exhibits for the future is for the same, personal crowd, after her death.

By contrast, Kaledin's "Smirennoe kladbishche" appears – on the surface, at least – to lack any expression of nostalgic sentiment whatsoever, especially for the personal past of its central protagonist, Vorobei. The hero's wretched existence as an adult, in 1976, is merely an extension of an equally wretched childhood, marked by the premature death of his mother, and prolonged physical and emotional cruelty at the hands of his father and stepmother. Indirectly, the very setting for the narrative – a cemetery – should

provide a general premise for the expression in the narrative of nostalgia as commemoration, or remembrance. Except for the ritual burial rites performed by a Caucasian family at the grave of a deceased relative, however, this cemetery reveals only abuses of the past. The graves of the Decembrists are neglected, human remains disturbed, and burial plots of the long-ago deceased resold to the unsuspecting, recently bereaved. Even when alluded to in the guise of a decorated veteran of the great Patriotic War (now an alcoholic gravedigger), or the former abode of Herzen (now a museum), the past represented in this narrative by Kaledin constitutes a collective, depersonalized, historical past – a past of which the protagonists involved have little knowledge, if any, and toward which they have equally little inclination to adopt a nostalgic attitude. Herein, of course, lies the irony that invites the novella's analysis as a parody according to Hutcheon: the Great Patriotic War (WWII) and the uprising of 1825, once enshrined in official Soviet historiography as the heroic defense of, and first steps towards the Revolution, are now matters of lazy indifference.

As is the case in "Svoi krug," Kaledin's novella neither looks forward, nor back in the manner deemed appropriate by Soviet ideology; that is, it suggests neither energetic anticipation of the Radiant Future, nor reverent commemoration of a great heroic past. Rather, against a backdrop of a depersonalized historical past, "Smirennoe kladbishche" portrays a personally oriented existence in the present, which focuses on only the most immediate concerns of its protagonists on a day-to-day basis.

Prosaic, daily existence in late-glasnost' Russia also provides the premise for Viacheslav P'ietsukh's "Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia" ("The New Moscow Philosophy"

[1989]).[75] However, the works differ significantly in the type of past they evoke: while Kaledin's story refers to an impersonal, (Soviet) Russian historical past, collective memories of which have been laid by the wayside of late-Soviet survival, P'ietsukh's novella refers to the Russian literary past. Expressly self-referential, the novella appears, on the one hand, to serve as the author's vehicle for a meta-literary polemic with the nineteenth-century philosophical novel, whereby he challenges the authority of the Russian realist tradition and, by extension, any aesthetic canon, including Socialist Realism, which aspires to a seamless and absolute representation of 'reality.' In terms of plot, the work is a loose parody of Dostoevskii's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment* [1864]):[76] it, too, concerns the 'murder' of an old woman, and the admission of guilt on the part of the student responsible for the events leading up to the victim's demise.

This time, though, the scene of the crime is a communal apartment, and the suspects – each co-tenant who stands to gain from the additional square metreage to be acquired in the event of Aleksandra Pumpianskaia's death. Daughter of the apartment's original owner before the Revolution, Pumpianskaia had resided there since her birth, absentmindedly making her nightly rounds, checking for lights and unlocked doors (173), as if she owned the place, until the night of her disappearance. Besides the basic plot, various other parallels between P'ietsukh's text and Dostoevskii's include the presence among the characters of a scandal-mongering Luzhin, a pathetic and inebriated

---

[75] Viacheslav P'ietsukh, "Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia," *Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia: khronika i rasskazy* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 165-286.

[76] Similarly, though with a shift of emphasis due to his selection of terminology, Deming Brown sees in "Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia" a "modern-day travesty of Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment*," in *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature: Prose Fiction 1975-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 165. For a more skeptical view of the extent of P'ietsukh's parody of Dostoevskii which, ironically, in its skepticism underscores the very status of P'ietsukh's parody, especially in Hutcheon's terms as ironic distance, see L. Polikovskaia, "Tragediia noveishego obraztsa," *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 3 (1990): 51-53.

Marmeladov-type (Fonderviakin), as well as on-going philosophical discussions between Belotsvetov (idealistic pharmacist) and Chinarikov (porter, veteran of the Soviet-Afghani conflict, and witness to evil acts for evil's sake). In addition, an intrusive author cites well-known passages from the hypotext, maintaining parodic parameters. Moreover, the work is rich in threshold motifs and scandal scenes which, in the tradition of Soviet literature, have shifted from the salon to the communal kitchen.

Unlike Dostoevskii's novel, wherein the murderer is the main protagonist and primary focalizer, P'ietsukh's novella retains some element of suspense as to *whodunit*. More significantly, philosophical positions are confused and diluted, revolving around, and resting on, the shabbiness of the late-Soviet human condition. The teenage Mitia confesses to having frightened Pumpianskaia out of the apartment and onto a street bench, where she then freezes to death, neglected and even unnoticed by passersby. Thus, there is both an affinity and ironic discrepancy (preconditions of parody) between the two texts on the question of contemporary morality.

The effect of P'ietsukh's parody is satiric, criticizing petty egotism and the degeneration of human values despite decades of official rhetoric to the contrary, on the one hand, and the promises of glasnost' on the other. In and of itself, however, the parody harks back to Dostoevskii and, on some level, to the strength of Raskol'nikov's ideological convictions, distorted though they might have been: Aliona the pawnbroker was killed for an ideal, while Pumpianskaia perished for the sake of a practical joke.[77]

On a broader meta-literary level, P'ietsukh pays nostalgic tribute with his parody to the Russian realist tradition as a symbiosis of literature and life. His narrator criticizes

---

[77] Polikovskaia makes a similar point in "Tragediia" (51), though she states that Pumpianskaia is murdered for her square metreage.

the inability of Russians to distinguish clearly between reality, and its literary representation. Nonetheless, the work concedes – again, not without irony[78] – the eternal value of such canonical works as Dostoevskii's, as a repository for deliberations on the nature of humankind, and models for moral behavior, if not for unshakeable moral truths. As such, this canon serves as a neutral but timeless point of reference. P'ietsukh's novella constitutes reverential parody after Hutcheon's model, by illustrating the difference, and critical distance between itself and its target.

Like *Chapaev i Pustota*, "Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia" combines parody and irony with tribute and nostalgia. What is more, the nostalgic attitude revealed in both texts is obviously displaced from the recent past – allowing for personal experience – to one more distant; both depict periods which predate the entire Soviet experience, and both summon up the notion of threshold, either as a specific period in Pelevin (the Civil War) or, entirely in keeping with the overtly meta-fictional status of P'ietsukh's novella, the threshold of Bakhtinian chronotope, as an integral, if not defining, feature of the Dostoevskian text.

On the surface, Vladimir Sorokin's novel *Roman* [*Roman* (1994)] seems to partake both in the expression of (ironized) nostalgia, and its displacement – again, to a more distant time period, predating the Revolution. Seemingly timeless, the novel's idyllic rural setting, its characters, exchanges, and minor events bear traces of the entire nineteenth-century Russian literary heritage, from Karamzin, through Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevskii and Tolstoi, to Chekhov. Throughout the course of the novel various protagonists discuss those questions typical to the realist tradition, including faith,

---

[78] George Gibian refers to P'ietsukh's novella as a "tongue-in-cheek story, humorous and comic in parts, but also puzzling, because we do not know whether to take certain passages seriously or ironically[...]," in "The Quest for Russian National Identity in Soviet Culture Today," Thompson 9.

science, free will, the peasantry, progress, morality, and the Russian character. Allusions are made to such realist classics as *Voina i mir* (*War and Peace* [1865]) and *Ottsy i deti* (*Fathers and Sons* [1862]). The plotline is simple: the main protagonist, Roman, has forsaken his legal career in the city, to pursue his dream of becoming a landscape painter in the village where he was born and raised by his aunt and uncle. Roman pursues the wholesome life, greeting peasants and enjoying nature, until he confronts and is mauled by a wolf while picking mushrooms in the woods. Bleeding and unconscious, Roman is spotted by the forest warden's daughter, Tat'iana, who nurses him back to health and, after some terse resistance from her father, becomes his wife in a simple, rural ceremony. As in a realist novel, the plot spans some four hundred pages.

In contrast to the Russian realist novel, though, the philosophical discussions in Sorokin are superficial, and anti-climactic. Empty stylistic clichés and, thus, parodies of their weighty, realist counterparts they, like the plot, serve nevertheless both to attract the inexperienced reader of Sorokin, and entertain those veteran readers of the author who, as Boris Groys suggests, patiently await in each work "the moment when *it* will start, that is to say when the deceptive narrative idyll changes into the description of something horrible."[79] Accordingly, in *Roman*, the little bell and the axe the newlyweds receive as gifts become weapons of mass murder on the very night of their wedding: ringing the bell, Tat'iana lures the unsuspecting guests into the study one by one, where Roman deals

[79] Boris Groys, "The Russian Novel as a Serial Murder or The Poetics of Bureaucracy," *Subjectivity*, Avant Garde Critical Studies 12, eds. Willem van Reijen and Willem G. Weststeijn (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000) 236, (author's emphasis).

them quick, fatal blows to the head with the axe. Through his hero's purposeful deployment of the axe, Sorokin parodies, and pays ironic tribute to Dostoevskii.[80]

However, Sorokin's parodic stance is less than reverential: where Raskol'nikov kills only twice, Roman goes on to murder every living villager, including his bride, mechanically decapitating, castrating, chopping, chewing, and regurgitating their flesh in an orgiastic frenzy, which ends with his own death.[81] Like Mitia's 'murder' of Pumpianskaia in P'ietsukh, Sorokin's exploitation of the proverbial axe motif strikes a final parodic blow to the nineteenth-century philosophical novel; it both parodies the attitude of nostalgia for the simple, good life that lured Roman home in the novel, and satirizes the tendency toward nostalgia for the so-called "village-dacha culture" in the late- and post-Soviet quest for "authentic [Russian] roots, values and orientation."[82]

To conclude on the theme of nostalgia as presented in the above comparison texts: Petrushevskaia's narrator is (covertly) nostalgic for the past with 'her crowd,' while she openly anticipates the future, following her death, when her son Aliosha, according to Easter tradition, will visit her grave together with the same 'crowd.' Though this narrator looks to the past and to the future, she does so not according to the rules of the Soviet mind-set; the collective past and future comprising her ruminations are for the personal, if not private, collective of 'her crowd.' Kaledin, meanwhile, who has been grouped together with Petrushevskaia under the rubric of cruel prose and his glasnost' status (as

---

[80] Indeed, Karlheinz Kasper anchors both the bell (*kolokol'chik*) and the axe (*topor*) to the Russian literary meta-text at large, tracing both objects, as mythologemes, back to the fairy tale. Appropriately, Kasper includes both Dostoevskii's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* and Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota* in an extensive list of Russian works employing the axe as a motif. See Karlheinz Kasper, "Das Glöckchen und die Axt in Sorokins *Roman*," Burkhart 110-12.

[81] In a different, but parallel context, David Gillespie concludes that Sorokin's "is the aesthetic of revulsion, both artistic and moral. See David Gillespie, "Sex and Sorokin: Erotica or Pornography?," Burkhart 162.

[82] Groys, "Serial Murder" 235.

opposed to the post-Soviet Pelevin) portrays in his narrative a past devoid of nostalgic sentiment. Rather, he portrays a depersonalized (historical) past, represented by the graves of strangers and forgotten revolutionaries (Decembrists) on the one hand, and memories of an abusive adolescence, on the other, on the part of Vorobei. Neither the articulation of nostalgia, nor its absence, in Petrushevskaia and Kaledin, respectively, hinges entirely on parody. Nonetheless, their parodic position toward the canonical Soviet narrative enhances their respective attitudes toward the past, and future, with a distinct sense of irony. It would be difficult to align either text with Hutcheon's version of parody; in view of their clearly dystopian nature, they might be better suited to Morson's model.

In P'ietsukh, meanwhile, nostalgia is displaced from the recent Soviet past to the nineteenth century by the work's implied author and/or narrator. His meta-literary digressions criticize the (Soviet) Russian confluence of reality and its literary representation, whereby he jabs overtly at the failed efforts of Socialist Realism to combine the two domains. Ultimately, though, both he (through citing passages from Dostoevskii) and protagonists Chinarikov and Belotsvetov hold up the nineteenth-century as a model of morality to emulate. In a manner similar to the juxtaposition by Okudzhava of his "Prikliucheniia" with Ostrovskii's Socialist Realist classic, the contrast and comparison of P'ietsukh with Dostoevskii reveals an attitude of ironic tribute, faintly but unmistakably tinged with nostalgia, though it is a nostalgia that eludes personal experience of the yearned for times. P'ietsukh's parody is reverential toward its hypotext, and clearly adheres to Hutcheon's vision.

Displaced nostalgia links P'ietsukh's text to Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota*, whose Pet'ia also yearns for a time in the past he would have only experienced vicariously, through books, if one accepts the view that his 'real' reality is in the 1990s. The difference between the genuine nostalgic attitudes that are expressed in P'ietsukh and Pelevin, however, is that Pet'ia believes his personal past to comprise Silver Age Russia, and the Civil War. In other words, although Pet'ia is informed of his condition – a split-psyche due to his rejection of post-Soviet reality – Pet'ia's nostalgia for that distant past is rooted in the belief that he is *of* those times.

In Sorokin's *Roman*, the protagonist experiences nostalgia for the rural mode of life (seemingly *out* of time) he once left behind for the sake of his career. Presumably, however, Sorokin displaces the nostalgia he evokes on the meta-literary level, to the nineteenth century, as in P'ietsukh. However, Sorokin sets up the nostalgic scenario – on both narrative and meta-narrative levels – only to destroy it through parody, in the true spirit of the mode of sots-art bearing his distinct signature. Sorokin utterly (de)-aestheticizes and de-mythologizes both the nineteenth-century literary tradition and the late-Soviet tendency toward nostalgia by reducing them both, figuratively, to pulp.

Like Sorokin, Pelevin both parodies and satirizes the theme of nostalgia, as it appears within and beyond the parameters of the (post-)Soviet literary text, respectively. However, he differs from Sorokin both in his approach, and outcome. Natal'ia Ivanova, who groups Pelevin with Kibirov, suggests that what emerges from *Chapaev i Pustota* following "the satirical drama" is an "elegy: a song about the past without the ridicule."[83]

---

[83] Ivanova, "The Nostalgic Present" 63.

Conclusion

This thesis has illustrated that as a post-Soviet literary narrative, *Chapaev i Pustota* both conforms to and transcends the various themes, motifs, and perspectives articulated in the background works considered here as representatives of Russian (post)-glasnost' fiction.

On the first count: in keeping with the forcible extra-literary emphasis on 'remembering' the historical past – of revising the revisionism of Soviet history – the parallel motif of personal memory and/or amnesia emerges as a pivotal theme in literary texts of the period. Petrushevskaia's Anna Adrianovna in *The Time, Night* attempts to make sense of her pitiful circumstances in the present through forays into what appear to be an equally pitiful past of rejection, betrayal, and exploitation. In *Before and During*, Sharov's middle-aged narrator hero, having suffered a serious concussion after a fall, is subject to prolonged memory lapses, often lasting months, of which he has no recollection whatsoever. The motif of memory-loss is ironically reinforced in Sharov when the protagonist, intent on investigating his family history, must turn for information to an elderly aunt by marriage – who herself suffers from dementia-induced memory-loss. Yet another protagonist, in Makanin's "The Loss," is obsessed with his 'genetic memory' and looks for comfort, as well as a sense of direction in his Ural roots, by recalling a local legend. As they are in the narratives mentioned here by Pelevin's (post)-glasnost' precursors, the motifs of identity and memory(-loss) are crucial to *Chapaev i Pustota*, forming the very crux of its contemporary storyline. In the 1990s plot, Pet'ia has

blocked out his memory of the entire Soviet period – as a reaction, his doctor proposes, against the forced paradigm shift from Soviet to post-Soviet reality. One might also speculate, however, that Pet'ia's amnesia is at least partially linked to a 'memory overload,' of sorts, on the transpersonal level, again, in keeping with the often monumental revelations that marked the glasnost' period. Like the heroes of Sharov and Makanin, Pelevin's Pet'ia is incarcerated; what is more, all three men, together with Kaledin's Vorobei in "A Humble Cemetery," suffer physical traumas to the head, as though the motif comprised a literary manifestation of the extra-literary trauma of the revelatory threshold.

However, *Chapaev i Pustota* also transcends the parameters of (post-)glasnost' fiction. Its unique status within this tradition-in-the-making is underwritten by its parodic attitude toward it, as well as an arguably unique approach to parody itself. Each of the three models of parody examined here, those developed by Morson, Hutcheon and the Russian Formalists, proves relevant to and yet somehow inadequate in the analysis of this most eclectic and elusive work. First, Pelevin signals to his readers that parody, not satire, is the key to the truly innovative nature of his work, by eschewing the representation of gruesome realities in either of his two time-frames. His Civil War is virtually bloodless, and his 1990s – shabby, to be sure, but devoid of images of homelessness, extreme poverty or violence. True, the New Russian 'entrepreneur' does make his appearance in the later plot, complete with armed bodyguards and Mercedes 500s whose trunks are full of semi-automatic assault weapons. Yet no bodily harm is done, no families are torn apart, no altered state (lunatic, narcotic or alcoholic) has any appreciable effect on either plotline or on any of the largely depersonalized protagonists.

The "cruel prose" that captured the attention of early glasnost' readers achieved its satiric impact – its critical tone of implicit but consistent outrages at the abuses depicted – simply by listing those same abuses. Only indirectly does the *chernukha* (dark prose) of Petrushevskaia and Kaledin involve parody: their blunt, naturalistic descents into the depths of the late-Soviet quagmire exploit the dystopian reality of a post-utopia and thus give the parodic lie to the utopian mega-text of Socialist Realism. Pelevin, it seems, takes the process one step further. By glossing over the unsightly realities his readers had come to expect in Russian prose of the 1990s, he virtually announces the coming eclipse of that movement. *Chapaev i Pustota* thus reveals itself as a text on the threshold of stylistic change.

Furthermore, the idea of generic change in *Chapaev i Pustota* is manifest through the novel's parody, in its capacity as a work of sots-art, not only of Socialist Realism but also of sots-art itself, in the work's effort to transcend the more rigidly antagonistic, but steadily waning, literary models of the post-Soviet threshold. In Chapter II of this thesis, Pelevin's novel was shown to accommodate, to varying degrees, the three models of parody presented: Gary Saul Morson's anti-generic paradigm; the less aggressive, ironically motivated and, ultimately, the more conservative model provided by Linda Hutcheon; and the predominantly mechanical framework of the Russian Formalists, particularly as proffered by Iurii Tynianov, whose non-linear and not entirely subversive direction is conducive to promoting generic evolution through renewal. Not surprisingly, the three models of parody dovetail, because all parody involves 'double-voicing' – the hypertext, or text of parody, includes within itself (or simply evokes) the hypotext, or the original target text, be it through the reflection of motifs, themes, plot elements, generic

properties, constructs or, in the case of a Socialist Realist target, an ideological perspective as well. Through parody these can be laid bare by repetition, imitation, citation of passages, or less obviously by the juxtaposition of the two texts, depending on the mechanics of the model in question. What distinguishes each model of parody is the unique relationship to the target text it proposes and exhibits, be it one of subversion (Morson), restorative reconstruction (Formalists) or irony (Hutcheon). The comparison texts by Prigov and Tolstaia, for instance, were shown to best accommodate the paradigms of parody proposed by Morson, and Hutcheon, respectively. The works of both writers were considered as anti-generic parodies of Socialist Realism and its ideological perspective. However, they are parodic to different ends. Prigov's "Description of Objects," a sots-art version of a Soviet catalogue, is intended to subvert the empty rhetorical style and approach of its target by imitating, indeed repeating, that very style and approach. Thereby, it becomes a mirror-image of its target, equally absurd, and devoid of meaning. Morson's model best accommodates Prigov's parody: though the parody is executed mechanically, it lacks the Formalist requirement of renewal. On the other hand, Tolstaia's texts were shown to function as parodies by displaying the ironic discrepancy between Soviet expectations and their fulfillment.

Chapaev i Pustota meanwhile, was shown to best exemplify Formalist parody, through its manipulation of the three constructs at the core of the Socialist Realist literary tradition: the positive hero, the mentor/disciple relationship, and the hero's development along the trajectory from a state of spontaneity to one of ideological consciousness. In Chapter II, the constructs were traced through four versions of the so-called Chapaev myth: Furmanov's Socialist Realist novel, the Vasil'ievs' Stalinist film, the Soviet folk

tradition, and the unofficial Chapaev anecdotes. Of these four versions, only the anecdotes proved to display a parodic relationship to their precursor(s) with regard to the three constructs. Though Chapaev's progression to consummate consciousness does not play a significant role in the *noviny* or tales devoted to the heroic commander, the anecdotes utterly subvert the very idea. Instead, they specifically emphasize Chapaev's spontaneous nature, celebrating and exaggerating the various manifestations of spontaneity (as ignorance, drunkenness, and lack of personal hygiene) in order to reclaim Chapaev as a popular hero, of the equally spontaneous popular and, in the Soviet period strictly oral, genre of the anti-Soviet anecdote.

With his own parody of the Socialist Realist constructs noted above, Pelevin addresses all four versions of the Chapaev myth, borrowing and manipulating, in the manner of his precursors, to his own ends. Like the unofficial anecdotes, Pelevin emphasizes the spontaneous elements of Chapaev's character, such as his tendency to outbursts of temper, bouts of drunkenness, and the crass habit of munching on raw onions with his moonshine. More importantly, Pelevin adds a metaphysical, mystical element to Chapaev's already spontaneous character. In so doing, he transcends the anecdotes' depiction of Chapaev by elevating him considerably, from the gutter; moreover, he both conforms to and deviates from the official versions of the Chapaev myth. That is, Pelevin's Chapaev has arrived at consummate consciousness indeed, though in direct opposition to the type demanded by Socialist Realism. As a mentor to Pet'ia and Anna, Pelevin's Chapaev preaches that consciousness determines being, and not the reverse, that the very notion of determining anything is, in fact, moot.

Perhaps more significantly, Pelevin's Chapaev emphasizes the present, not as the door to eternity, as Pet'ia speculates, but as eternity itself – again, in direct opposition to the tenets of Socialist Realism, where the present is emptied out of any intrinsic value, in favor of the Radiant Future of Communist utopia. This particular fact of Pelevin's parody also distinguishes him further from his glasnost' precursors. Although they, too, emphasize the present, they endow it with a negative value as a consolation prize, granted to those who survived the Soviet period at all. In Pelevin, all time is illusory, be it past, present, or future. A cynical conclusion on the one hand, Pelevin's message, on the other, exemplifies the maxim that, indeed, 'there is no time like the present' in which, as Lipovetskii and McCausland suggest, to create whatever reality (or illusion) one desires. Unlike many of his literary precursors, then, Pelevin does not simply subvert the basic constructs of Socialist Realism. Though he shows them as defunct, or redundant, even in the preceding Soviet context, he succeeds in recycling them, and re-presenting them in a form and manner befitting the post-Soviet ideological vacuum. Simply stated, Pelevin creates a new (positive) hero for the times. In so doing, *Chapaev i Pustota* again transcends the subversive nature of the sots-art text, exemplified by Prigov, in a direction toward post-sots-art.

Also pivotal to the consideration of *Chapaev i Pustota* as a work of post-sots-art fiction is Pelevin's treatment of the theme of nostalgia – perhaps the most paradoxical, and therefore significant, symptom of the post-Soviet threshold period. More than a simple backward glance, nostalgia involves a yearning for a less than ideal past, which is idealized, nonetheless, by a complex process combining the nostalgic subject's dissatisfaction with the present, and a skewed memory, highlighting only moments of

comfort, security, and ostensible happiness. Chapter III examined the general attitude toward the past, and the expression of nostalgia, in particular, in a number of comparison texts. Not surprisingly, the attitudes represented proved to be various. Petrushevskaia's narrator expresses nostalgia for the past covertly; she denounces those better times of the past as 'untrue,' and attempts to compartmentalize the past, in order to facilitate its severance from the misery of her present, and her imminent death. Meanwhile, her expression of nostalgia for the future Easter picnics her son will hold at her grave with 'her crowd' is overt. By contrast, Kaledin's text is devoid of any nostalgic sentiment whatsoever; the past it presents is for the most part depersonalized and decrepit, like the unattended gravesites at the 'humble cemetery' the work portrays.

Nostalgia is overlain with tones of irony in Okudzhava's "Adventures of a Secret Baptist." There, what was shown to be a loose, indirect parody of Ostrovskii's Socialist Realist classic reveals a triad in (post-)glasnost' literature: parody, irony, and nostalgia work each to reinforce and yet simultaneously to undermine the other. Through the implied juxtaposition of his own text with Ostrovskii's, or those in the spirit of Ostrovskii's exemplar text, Okudzhava counterposes the official Socialist Realist narrative of action with the unofficial Stalinist variant of inaction, by default. Okudzhava's parody of Ostrovskii, as representative of the Socialist Realist canon, resembles Pelevin's parody of the so-called Chapaev myths: both involve the manipulation of the hero's transformation from a state of spontaneity to one of consciousness in opposition to the Stalinist tradition. As a young adult, Okudzhava's Shamin becomes aware of his own seduction and betrayal at the hands of the (post)-Stalinist state in the figure of Lobanov, who attempts to recruit the hero into the ranks of

KGB informants. Okudzhava's narrative challenges the notion of blind faith in authority (the much touted *partiinost'* of Socialist Realism) as a means of achieving the Soviet ideal. However, it does not go so far as to condemn Soviet idealism, per se. Rather, the juxtaposition in Okudzhava of official plot by a counterplot centered on the stigmatized son of former enemies of the people, merely underscores the distortion of such idealism under Stalin. Here Hutcheon's parody, which posits irony as its primary rhetorical mechanism, proves most applicable. Okudzhava inverts the official premise of Ostrovskii's classic, without subverting the work as an entirely negative model. Rather, an attitude of nostalgia is revealed – not for the Stalinist past per se, but for the Korchagin-like innocence that Shamin once possessed as child *of* that past. Okudzhava's work does not constitute reverential parody. In keeping with the pragmatic range of Hutcheon's parodic paradigm, however, it does betray a form of tribute to its target.

Pelevin expresses nostalgia in his novel both overtly and implicitly; he both parodies nostalgia as a prominent theme in (post-)glasnost' literature, and satirizes the tendency to nostalgic sentiments in post-Soviet society at large. Pet'ia's exclamations of nostalgia in 1919 for pre-revolutionary Russia are ironized, to be sure, but serve only as overt, textual markers of nostalgia. They show his discontent with the 'present' state of conflict, are critical of the Civil War, and by extension of the early days of Communist rule. More striking and to point, are those expressions of nostalgia in Pelevin which, again, in keeping with Hutcheon's concept of parody, reveal an irony that cuts both ways, such as the tragic fates of the many who welcomed the Revolution only to find, like Okudzhava's Shamin, that they had been seduced and betrayed by its promises.

Most of Pelevin's nostalgic expression, however, is inextricably bound up in his parodic plays – on the very notion of nostalgia, its mechanics, and even its politics. Pelevin's nostalgia is unlike that articulated by Kibirov, or even Prigov (as he is discussed by Boym) for the Soviet past. Both sots-artists, more or less directly, exhibit nostalgia for their Soviet past, either as the only past they had (Freidin), or in a classic case of irony that cuts both ways, as the now defunct target of their parody *as* sots-artists (Boym). Pelevin's Pet'ia is nostalgic for the Silver Age – a past of which the author has no personal experience, but which his protagonist has idealized, and to which the latter does return. Indeed, one could even speculate that Pet'ia's nostalgia extends forward a few years, to the days of the fledgling Soviet regime as a dream, before its conversion to a nightmare. This particular attitude is evident from Pelevin's treatment of Furmanov, presented by him as a mean-spirited Party man with a stammer, not to be trusted. Yet, in the final analysis, the fictional Furmanov's shortcomings veil a muted affection for the man, his beliefs, and sense of duty to uphold them. This attitude of genuine nostalgia, as tribute for that distant, early Soviet past, comprises another of Pelevin's innovations, indicating passage beyond straight sots-art and the post-Soviet threshold.

This thesis, has in no way exhausted the examination of *Chapaev i Pustota* as a work of parody. Indeed, Chapters II and III have predominantly emphasized the regenerative nature of Pelevin's parody of the various versions of the Chapaev myth, and its nod of tribute to Furmanov as the creator of the canonical version of the myth – that factographic tale of the unruly Chapaev's conversion from spontaneity to consciousness, cut short by his untimely death in battle.

It might be worthwhile, however, to consider the work more fully according to the antagonistic model of parody provided by Gary Saul Morson. Morson's model demands that the hypotext evoke another text/utterance, to which it is in some way antithetical, and over which the reader must be certain the parody possesses 'semantic authority.' *Chapaev i Pustota* easily meets the first two criteria.

The problem arises in considering the extent to which Pelevin's novel can meet Morson's third criterion, if at all. On the one hand, *Chapaev i Pustota* overtly claims higher semantic authority from the outset: in the novel's very foreword, one Urgan Dzhambon Tulku VII dismisses Furmanov's Chapaev as a forgery and a fake (*podlog, poddelka* [9]), and as the source of the various 'false' depictions of the 'real' Chapaev's life and death over the years. The Tulku launches a two-pronged attack against Furmanov, both denying his authorship of the work and disputing the veracity of the events comprising its narrative. By contrast, Pelevin's own novel – presented in the foreword as a found manuscript dating to 1925 and presumably comprising the "truth about Chapaev" (ibid.) – has, the Tulku claims, been concealed by authorities for seventy years. By discrediting its target text as a fake, *Chapaev i Pustota* overtly vies for semantic authority both over Furmanov's *Chapaev* in and of itself, and as an exemplar of Socialist Realism.

On the other hand, *some* readers may wonder whether a novel like Pelevin's – immersed as it is in the worlds of dreams, altered psychic states, and the fantastic – could possibly dispute the semantic authority of a canonical realist(ic) text like Furmanov's. The canonization of Furmanov's text works against him; it invites attacks, and attempts at its subversion, especially in light of decades of Soviet revisionism and the distortion of the Soviet past in officially sanctioned works. Keeping these factors in mind, the

semantic authority of Furmanov's *Chapaev*, *as* an exemplar of Socialist Realism even before the fact, can only be suspect.

Proving that Pelevin's narrative is 'true' – that is, that the events of his narratives did indeed transpire in the twentieth century as we know it – would likely be an exercise in futility. By the same token, its fictional status is easily ascertained by various means, including its consideration against the most basic premises of fictionality theories.

However, it is also possible to examine the fictionality of Furmanov's *Chapaev*, thereby leveling the playing field somewhat between a 'factographic' work, and one of pure fantasy. Indeed, in the introduction to Abram Terts' *Spokoinoi nochi!* (*Goodnight!* [1984]), Richard Lourie writes that "[a] few drops of fiction in a work of history or biography is [*sic*] enough to taint the mixture and render it suspect."[1]

The analysis envisioned in this conclusion is worthy of consideration as at least one avenue of further research, perhaps not in terms of parody per se, but rather in terms of related issues, such as the distinction of fiction from historical discourse as discussed, for example by such theorists of fictionality as Dorrit Cohn, and Michael Riffaterre; the question of 'fictional truth' informing the field of literary semantics pursued by David Davies and Trevor Eaton and, more specifically, the related fields of 'possible' and 'fictional worlds' theory, as represented by Lubomir Doležel, Ruth Ronen, Thomas Pavel, and Uri Margolin to name only a few.

Following the threshold concept that has been shown throughout this study to operate on the thematic, generic, inter- and extra-literary levels, it might be said that the question of truth – fictional, or cultural/mythic, and meta-literary – finds Pelevin once

---

[1] Richard Lourie, introduction, *Goodnight!*, by Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), trans. Richard Lourie (New York: Viking, 1989) ix.

again balanced on the brink. If his prose continues to straddle the question that has arguably dominated Russian culture over the past three centuries – what is literature? – then it is in the nuanced workings of parody in *Chapaev i Pustota* that Russian prose of the twenty-first century will perhaps discover new directions.

Selected Bibliography

Aizenberg, Mikhail. "Vmesto predisloviia." *Lichnoe delo*. Ed. Lev Rubinshtein. Moscow: Soiuzteatr, 1991. 5-18.

Aksenov, Vasilii. "Korabel' mira 'Vasilii Chapaev.'" *Znamia* 1(1995): 11-20.

Aleshkovsky, Yuz. *The Hand Or, The Confession of an Executioner*. Trans. Susan Brownsberger. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989.

Almond, Mark. "1989 Without Gorbachev: What if Communism had not Collapsed?" Ferguson 392-415.

Andreev, Iu. A. *Revoliutsiia i literatura: otobrazhenie Oktiabria i grazhdanskoi voiny v russkoi sovetskoi literature i stanovlenie sotsialisticheskogo realizma (20 – 30-e gody)*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1969.

Andreyev, Catherine, and Ivan Savický. *Russia Abroad: Prague and the Russian Diaspora, 1918-1938*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2004.

Arkhangel'skii, Aleksandr. "Obstoiatel'stva mesta i vremeni: Pustota. I Chapaev." *Druzhba narodov: Nezavisimyi literaturno-khudozhestvennyi i obshchestvenno-politicheskii zhurnal*. 5 (1997): 190-193.

Astakhova, A., and B. Bazanov, eds. "Bylina o Chapaeve." *Fol'klor sovetskoi Karelii*. Petrozavodsk: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo karelo-finskoi SSR, 1947. 27-32.

Astakhova, A. M., I. P. Dmitrakov and A. N. Lozanova, eds. *Ocherki russkogo narodnopoeticheskogo tvorchestva sovetskoi epokhi*. Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1952.

Babel, Isaac. "Discourse on the *Tachanka*." *Isaac Babel: The Collected Short Stories*. Ed. and trans. Walter Morison. Meridian: New York, 1974. 83-86.

Babel,' Isaak. *Sochineniia*, Vol. 2. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. "Epic and Novel." Holquist 3-40.

---. "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel." Holquist 84-258.

---. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Theory and History of Literature 8. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984.

--. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov*. Ed. Pam Morris. London: E. Arnold, 1994.

---. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bal, Mieke. *On Story-Telling: Essays in Narratology.* Ed. David Jobling. Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1991.

Balina, Marina, Nancy Condee, and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds. *Endquote: Sots-Art Literature and Soviet Grand Style.* Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2000.

Balina, Marina. "Playing Absolute Time." Balina, Condee and Dobrenko 58-74.

Barthes, Roland. "Myth Today." *Mythologies.* Trans. Annette Lavers. London: J. Cape, 1972. 109-159.

Basinskii, Pavel. "Iz zhizni otechestvennykh kaktusov." *Literaturnaia gazeta* 22 (1996): 4.

---. "Pisatel' nashego vremeni: tri portreta." *Neva* 2 (2002): 188-203.

Begak, B, N. Kravtsov, and A. Morozov, comps. *Russkaia literaturnaia parodiia.* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1980.

Belknap, Robert, ed. *Russianness: Studies on a Nation's Identity, in Memory of Rufus Matheson.* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990.

Bender, John, and David E. Wellbery, eds. *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991.

Berezhnoi, A. Chapaev *Dm. Furmanova.* Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965.

Berry, Ellen E., and Anesa Miller-Pogacar, eds. *Re-Entering the Sign: Articulating New Russian Culture.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

Bielefeldt, Carl. "A Discussion of Seated Zen." Lopez 197-206.

Binova, Galina. "Sots-art kak preodolenie utopicheski-ideinoi traditsii: Prozaicheskii variant: V. Sorokin, V. Erofeev, Z. Gareev." *Sbornik Praci Filosoficke Fakulty Brnenske University: D: Rada Literarnevedna Series Scientiae Litterarum.* 43.41 (1994): 107-114.

Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages.* New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of Forking Paths." *Collected Fictions.* Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin Books, 1999. 119-128.

Borisova, Inna, ed. *Liudmila Stefanova Petrushevskaia: Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh.* Vol. 1. Kharkov: Folio, 1996.

Boym, Svetlana. "From the Russian Soul to Post-Communist Nostalgia." *Representations* 49 (1995): 133-166.

Brintlinger, Angela. "The Hero in the Madhouse: The Post-Soviet Novel Confronts the Soviet Past." *Slavic Review* 63.1 (2004): 43-65.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Brown, Deming. "On the Relationship between the Literature of the Third Emigration and Soviet Literature on the Eve of Glasnost.'" Belknap 29-37.

Brown, Deming. *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature: Prose Fiction 1975-1991.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

Bulgakov, Mikhail. *The Master and Margarita.* Trans. Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Connor. New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

Burin, Sergei. "Stranitsa uchebnika zhizni." *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 11/12 (1994): 78-80.

Burkhart, Dagmar, ed. *Poetik der Metadiskursivität: Zum postmodernen Prosa-, Film-, und Dramenwerk von Vladimir Sorokin.* Die Welt der Slaven 6. Munich: Otto Sagner, 1999.

Bykov, Dmitrii. "Pobeg v Mongoliiu." *Literaturnaia gazeta* 22 (1996): 4.

Castaneda, Carlos. *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge.* 1969. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Chapple, Richard. "Happy Never After: The Work of Viktoriia Tokareva and *Glasnost'.*" *Fruits of Her Plume: Essays on Contemporary Russian Women's Culture.* Ed. Helena Goscilo. Armonk: Sharpe, 1993. 185-204.

Chase, Malcolm, and Christopher Shaw. "The Dimensions of Nostalgia." Shaw and Chase 1-17.

---. "A Note on Viktoriia Tokareva and Anton Chekhov." *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 6.1 (1992): 155-124.

Clark, Katerina. Afterword. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual.* 3rd ed. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000. 265-285.

---. "Borders, Crossing, and Cross-dressing: Russian Intellectuals in 'the Post-Perestroika Period'." *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 22 (1994): 59-71.

---. "Political History and Literary Chronotope: Some Case Studies." *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies*. Ed. Gary Saul Morson. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1986. 230-246.

---. "Socialist Realism *with* Shores: The Conventions for the Positive Hero." *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Lahusen and Dobrenko 27-50.

---. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

---. "Utopian Anthropology as a Context for Stalinist Literature." *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1977. 180-198.

Clowes, Edith. "Ideology and Utopia in Recent Soviet Literature." *The Russian Review* 51.3 (1992): 378-395.

---. *Russian Experimental Fiction: Resisting Ideology After Utopia*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

Cockburn, David. *Other Times: Philosophical Perspectives on Past, Present and Future*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Cohn, Dorrit. *The Distinction of Fiction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999.

Condee, Nancy. "Sots-Art, Conceptualism, and Russian Postmodernism: An Introduction." Balina, Condee, and Dobrenko vii-xx.

Condee, Nancy and Boris Padunov. "Pair-a-Dice Lost: The Socialist Gamble, Market Determinism, and Compulsory Postmodernism." *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 22 (1994): 72-94.

Condee, Nancy and Vladimir Padunov. "Perestroika Suicide: Not by *Bred* Alone." Freidin 91- 122.

Coupe, Laurence. *Myth*. The New Critical Idiom. London: Routledge, 1997.

Crofts, Stephen. "Ideology and Form: Soviet Socialist Realism and *Chapayev*." *Essays in Poetics* 2.16 (1977): 43-59.

Currie, Gregory. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Dalton-Brown, Sally. "Ludic Nonchalance or Ludicrous Despair? Viktor Pelevin and Russian Postmodernist Prose." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 75.2 (1997): 216-33.

---. *Voices from the Void: The Genres of Liudmila Petrushevskaia.* Studies in Slavic Literature, Culture and Society 7. New York: Berghahn Books, 2000.

Daniels, E. B. "Nostalgia: Experiencing the Elusive." Ihde and Silverman 76-90.

Desiatov, Viacheslav. "Arnol'd Shvartsenegger – poslednii geroi russkoi literatury." *Ekfrasis v russkoi literature: Trudy lozannskogo simpoziuma.* Ed. L. Geller. Moscow: MIK, 2002. 190-198.

Dobrenko, Evgenii. "Sotsrealizm v poiskakh 'istoricheskogo proshlogo.'" *Voprosy literatury: zhurnal kritiki i literaturovedeniia* 1 (1997): 26-57.

Dobrenko, Evgeny. "Socialist Realism, a Postscriptum." Balina, Condee and Dobrenko 77-106.

---. "Soviet Comedy Film: Or the Carnival of Authority." Trans. Jesse M. Savage. *Discourse: Journal for the Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 17.3 (1995): 49-57.

---. *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet literature.* Trans. Jesse M. Savage. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

Domanovskii, L. V., comp. "*Sredi peskov sypuchikh*". *Russkii sovetskii fol'klor: Antologiia.* Leningrad: Nauka, 1967. 23.

Doty, William J. *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals.* 2nd ed. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000.

Dovlatov, Sergei. "Inostranka." *Dve povesti.* Moscow: Slovo, 1991. 98-176.

Duffin Graham, Sheelagh. *New Directions in Soviet Literature: Selected Papers from the fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Du Quenoy, Paul. "Warlordism *à la russe*: Baron von Ungern-Sternberg's Anti-Bolshevik Crusade, 1917-21." *Revolutionary Russia* 16.2 (2003): 1-27.

Ehre, Milton. "Zamjatin's Aesthetics." *Slavic and East European Journal* 19 (1975): 288-296.

Eisenstein, S. M. *Selected Works.* Ed. and trans. Richard Taylor. Vol. 3. London: BFI, 1988.

Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return.* Trans. Willard B. Trask. New York: Harper & Row, 1959.

Epstein, Mikhail. "Charms of Entropy and the New Sentimentality: The Myth of Venedikt Erofeev." Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover 423-455.

---. "Conclusion: On the Place of Postmodern in Postmodernity." Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover 456-468.

Epstein, Mikhail N. *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture.* Critical Perspectives on Modern Culture. Trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

Epstein, Mikhail N., Alexander A. Genis, and Slobodanka M. Vladiv-Glover. *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture.* Ed. and trans. Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover. New York: Berghahn Books, 1999.

Erlich, Victor. *Russian Formalism: History – Doctrine.* 2nd Ed. Slavistic Printings and Reprintings 4. The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965.

Ferguson, Niall, ed. *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals.* London: Picador, 1997.

Filippov, Leonid. "Flying with the Hermit: Variations on a Given Theme." *Russian Studies in Literature* 36.3 (2000): 80-96.

Freidin, Gregory, ed. *Russian Culture in Transition: Selected Papers of the Working Group for the Study of Contemporary Russian Culture, 1990-1991.* Stanford Slavic Studies 7. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.

Freidin, Gregory. "Transfiguration of Kitsch – Timur Kibirov's *Sentiments*: A Farewell Elegy for Soviet Civilization." Balina, Condee and Dobrenko 123-145.

Furmanov, Dmitri. *Chapayev.* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1941.

Furmanov, Dm. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh.* Vol. 1. Eds. A. G. Dement'ev, E. I. Naumov, and L. I. Timofeev. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1960.

---. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh.* Vol. 4. Eds. A. G. Dement'ev, E. I. Naumov, and L. I. Timofeev. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1961.

Geldern, James von, and Richard Stites, eds. "Chapaev." *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. 280-283.

Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Genis, Aleksandr. "Beseda desiataia: pole chudes. Viktor Pelevin." *Zvezda: Ezhemesiachnyi literaturno-khudozhestvennyi i obshchestvenno-politicheskii nezavisimyi zhurnal.* 12 (1997): 230-33.

---. "Borders and Metamorphoses: Viktor Pelevin in the Context of Post-Soviet Literature." Trans. Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover. *Twentieth-Century Russian Literature.* Eds. Karen L. Ryan and Barry P. Scherr. London: MacMillan Press, 2000. 294-306.

---. "Viktor Pelevin: Granitsy i metamorfozy." *Znamia: Literaturno-khudozhestvennyi i obshchestvenno-politicheskii zhurnal* 12 (1995): 210-14.

Genis, Alexander. "*Perestroika* as a Shift in Literary Paradigm." Epstein, Genis, and Vladiv-Glover 87-102.

Gibian, George. "The Quest for Russian National Identity in Soviet Culture Today." *The Search for Self-Definition in Russian Literature.* Ed. Ewa M. Thompson. Houston: Rice UP, 1991. 1-20.

Gillespie, David. "Vladimir Sorokin and *The Norm*." *Reconstructing the Canon: Russian Writing in the 1980s.* Studies in Russian and European Literature 3. Ed. Arnold McMillin. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers: 2000. 299-309.

---. "Sex and Sorokin: Erotica or Pornography?." Burkhart 161-166.

Givens, John R. "Reflections, Crooked Mirrors, Magic Theaters: Tat'iana Tolstaia's 'Peters'." *Fruits of her Plume: Essays on Contemporary Women's Culture.* Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993. 251-269.

Gor'kii, A. M., and L. Z. Mekhlis, eds. "Zhiv Chapaev!." *Tvorchestvo narodov SSSR.* N. P.: Pravda, 1937. 262-265.

Goscilo, Helena. "Body Talk in Current Fiction: Speaking Parts and (W)holes." Freidin 145-177.

---. *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood During and After Glasnost.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

---. Introduction: A Nation in Search of its Authors. *Glasnost:' An Anthology of Russian Literature Under Gorbachev.* Eds. Helena Goscilo and Byron Lindsey. Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1990. xv-xlv.

Graham, Seth. "Chapai shagaet po planete: From Stalinist Film Fakelore to Post-Stalinist Jokelore." 4 April 2001 <http://www.pitt.edu/~mmbst35/chapai.html>.

Grossman, Joan Delaney. "Briusov's Defense of Poetry and the Crisis of Symbolism," *Issues in Russian Literature Before 1917: Selected Papers of the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, ed. J. Douglas Clayton (Columbus: Slavica, 1989) 198-201.

---. *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Groys, Boris. "Moskovskii romanticheskii kontseptualizm." *A-Ia* 1 (1979): 3-11.

---. "Sots-art," *Iskusstvo* 4 (1990): 30-34.

---. "The Russian Novel as a Serial Murder, or The Poetics of Bureaucracy." *Subjectivity*. Avant Garde Critical Studies 12. Ed. Willem van Reijen and Willem G. Weststeijn. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000. 235- 254.

---. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond.* Trans. Charles Rougle. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.

Günther, Hans. "Socialist Realism and Utopianism." Kolesnikoff and Smyrniw 29-41.

Haslam, Jonathan. "Stalin's War or Peace?: What if the Cold War had been Avoided?" Ferguson 348-367.

Heller, Ilse. "Zur Entwicklung der sowjetischen Geschichtswissenschaft in den Jahren 1917-1928: Über das Wirken der Istpart," *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 24.5 (1982): 700-709.

Heller, Mikhail, and Aleksandr M. Nekrich. *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present*. Trans. Phyllis B. Carlos. New York: Summit Books, 1986.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction.* New York: Routledge, 1996.

---. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms.* New York: Methuen, 1985.

---. "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern." *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory*. Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, "Literature as Cultural Memory," August 16-22, 1997. Eds. Raymond Vervliet and Annemarie Estor. Textxet: Studies in Comparative Literature 30. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000. 189-207.

---. "Modern Parody and Bakhtin." *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges.* Eds. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989. 87-103.

---. *The Politics of Postmodernism.* 2nd Ed. London: Routledge, 2002.

Hyers, Conrad. *Zen and the Comic Spirit.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973.

Ihde, Don, and Hugh J. Silverman, eds. *Descriptions.* Selected Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy 11. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

Il'bitenko, K. "Legendarnyi nachdiv: k 85-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia V. I. Chapaeva." *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 2 (1972): 121-123.

Isbakh, Aleksandr. *Na literaturnykh barrikadakh.* Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel,' 1964.

Ivanova, Natal'ia "Afterward: Post-Soviet Literature in Search of a New Identity." Trans. Laura Givens. *Russian Studies in Literature* 34.1 (1998): 58-79.

---. "Grind the *Peacack* into *Burkers.*" *Russian Studies in Literature* 39.4 (2003): 72-77.

---. "The Nostalgic Present: Retrospectives on the (Post-) Soviet TV Screen." *Russian Studies in Literature* 36.2 (2000): 59-60.

Jung, C. G. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious.* 2nd Ed. Vol. 9; Part 1. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Bollingen Series 20. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969.

Kachur, John. "The Peasant Chapaev: Spontaneity is Ignorance, Consciousness is Bliss." 4 April 2001 <http://www.pitt.edu~mmbst35/JK.Chapai.html>.

Kadishev, A. "Legendarnyi geroi grazhdanskoi voiny: k 80-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia V. I. Chapaeva." *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 2 (1967): 124-128.

Kalashnikova, Vera. "Nostal'giia: Povest'," *Zvezda* 9 (1998): 33-104.

Kaledin, Sergei. "Smirennoe kladbishche." *Novyi mir* 5 (1987): 39-81.

---. "The Humble Cemetery." *The Humble Cemetery with Gleb Bogdyshev Goes Moonlighting.* Trans. Catriona Kelly. London: Collins Harvill, 1990. 13-94.

Kanevskaia, Marina. "Istoriia i mif v postmodernistskom russkom romane." *Izvestiia AN. Seriia literatury i iazyka* 59.2 (2000): 37-47.

Karriker, Alexandra Heidi. "Claustrophobic Interiors and Splintered Selves: Petrushevskaia's Prose in Context." *Philological Papers* 41 (1995): 124-131.

Kaspe, Irina. "Krivoe antizerkalo: 'Sovetskii' i 'postsovetskii' anekdot: problemy zhanrovoi transformatsii." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 43 (2000) 327-334.

Kasper, Karlheinz. "Das Glöckchen und die Axt in Sorokin's *Roman*." Burkhart 103-114.

Katz, Michael. "Vera Pavlovna's Dreams in Chernyshevskii's *What is to be Done?*." *Issues in Russian Literature before 1917: Selected Papers of the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*. Ed. J. Douglas Clayton. Columbus: Slavica, 1989. 150-161.

Khlebnikov, N. M., P. S. Evlampiev, and Ia. A. Volodikhin. *Legendarnaia Chapaevskaia*. Moscow: Znanie, 1970.

Kibirov, Timur. *Kogda byl Lenin malen'kim: Stikhi 1984-1985*. Ed. N. P. Bochkareva. Sankt Peterburg: Ivan Limbakh, 1995.

---. *Santimenty: Vosem' knig*. Belgorod: Risk, 1994.

Kolesnikoff, Nina, and Walter Smyrniw, eds. *Socialist Realism Revisited: Selected Papers from the McMaster Conference*. Hamilton: McMaster University, 1994.

Kornev, Sergei. "Stolknovenie pustot: mozhet li postmodernizm byt' russkim i klassicheskim? Ob odnoi avantiure Viktora Pelevina." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 28 (1997): 244-259.

Kukushkin, Vladimir. "Mudrost' Sorokina." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 56 (2002): 249-252.

Kuprianova, Nina. "Abreast of his Time: For the 90th Anniversary of Dmitri Furmanov's Birth." *Soviet Literature* 10.403 (1981): 127-130.

Kupriianovskii, P. *Gor'kii, Furmanov, Serafimovich, A. Tolstoi: literaturno-kraevedcheskie ocherki*. N.P.: Ivanovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1960.

Kuritsyn, Viacheslav. "Postmodernism: The New Primitive Culture." Berry and Miller-Pogacar 48-61.

---. *Russkii literaturnyi post-modernizm*. Moscow: OGI, 2000.

Kustanovich, Konstantin. "The Naturalistic Tendency in Contemporary Soviet Fiction: Thematics, Poetics, Functions." Duffin Graham 75-88.

Lachmann, Renate. *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism.* Trans. Roy Sellars and Anthony Wall. Theory and History of Literature 87. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Lahusen, Thomas, and Evgenii Dobrenko, eds. *Socialist Realism Without Shores.* Durham: Duke UP, 1997.

Laqueur, Walter. *Soviet Realities: Culture and Politics from Stalin to Gorbachev.* New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990.

Latynina, Alla. "'There's Your Spiritual Renaissance for You:' On Tatyana Tolstaya's *The Slynx.*" *Russian Studies in Literature* 39.4 (2003): 66-71.

Layton, Susan. "Zamjatin and Literary Modernism," *Slavic and East European Journal* 17.3 (1973): 279-87.

Lebedewa, Katja. "Gespräch mit Bulat Okudshawa." *Sinn und Form: Beitrage zur Literatur* 42.1 (1990): 35-40.

Leyda, Jay. *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film: A Study of the Development of Russian Cinema, from 1896 to the Present.* London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973.

Lilly, Ian K. "Carnivalizing the Canon: The Grotesque and the Subversive in Contemporary Russian Women's Prose (Petrushevskaia, Sadur, Tolstaia, Narbikova)." Lilly and Mondry, 35-58.

Lilly, Ian K. and Henrietta Mondry, eds. *Russian Literature in Transition.* Nottingham: Astra Press, 1999.

Lipovetsky, Mark. "Literature on the Margins: Russian Fiction in the Nineties." Trans. Karen McDowell and Helena Goscilo. *Contemporary Literature* 24.1 (2000): 139-64.

---. "Vladimir Sorokin's 'Theater of Cruelty'." Balina, Condee and Dobrenko 167-192.

---. *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos.* Ed. Eliot Borenstein. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe: 1999.

Lopez, Donald S. Jr., ed.. *Buddhism in Practice.* Princeton Readings in Religions. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.

Lourie, Richard. Introduction. *Goodnight.!* By Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky). Trans. Richard Lourie. New York: Viking, 1989. vii-xiv.

Lowenthal, David. "Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn't." Shaw and Chase 18-32.

---. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.

Lovell, Stephen, and Catriona Kelly. "Culture and Crisis: The Intelligentsia and Literature after 1953." *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*. Eds. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 56-87.

Makanin, Vladimir. "The Loss." *The Loss: A Novella and Two Short Stories*. Trans. Byron Lindsey. Writings from an Unbound Europe. Evanston: Northwestern UP: 1998. 3-86.

Marsh, Rosalind. "Reassessing the Past: Images of Stalin and Stalinism in Contemporary Russian Literature. Duffin Graham 89-105.

Martínez-Bonati, Félix. "On Fictional Discourse." Mihailescu and Hamarneh 65-75.

Mathewson, Rufus W. Jr.. *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1999.

McCausland, Gerald. "Viktor Pelevin and the End of Sots-Art." Balina, Condee, and Dobrenko 225-237.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Mihailescu, Calin-Andrei, and Walid Hamarneh, eds. *Fiction Updated: Theories of Fictionality, Narratology, and Poetics*. Toronto: U of T Press, 1996.

Miller, Frank J. *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1990.

Miller, Larissa. *Dim and Distant Days*. Glas New Russian Writing 25. Trans. Kathleen Cook and Natalie Roy. Moscow: Glas, 2000.

Mil'shtein, Il'ia. "Viacheslav P'etsukh." *Literaturnoe obozrenie: Zhurnal khudozhestvennoi literatury, kritiki i bibliografii* 2 (1989): 69-70.

Mondry, Henrietta. "The Russian Literary Press, 1993-98: Critics Reach Reconciliation with their Audience." Lilly and Mondry, 105-126.

Morson, Gary Saul. *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994.

---. "Parody, History, and Metaparody." *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*. Eds. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989. 63 – 86.

---. "Socialist Realism and Literary Theory." *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 121-33.

---. *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevskii's* Diary of a Writer *and the Traditions of Literary Utopia.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Morson, Gary Saul and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990.

Mozur, Joseph. "Viktor Pelevin: Post-Sovism, Buddhism, and Pulp Fiction." *World Literature Today* 76.2 (2002): 58-67.

Muratov, L. "Uroki legendarnogo fil'ma." *Neva* 12 (1984): 169-175.

Nagornaia, Natal'ia. "Istoriia i snovidenie v tvorchestve V. Pelevina." *Literaturnyi al'manakh Likbez.* 12 Dec. 2004 <http://tbs.asu.ru/likbez/Kritika/nagor.htm>.

Nazarevskaia, Nadezhda. "Grafika: oblik epokhi: Illiustratsii sovetskikh khudozhnikov k klassicheskim proizvedeniiam sovetskoi literatury." *Literaturnoe obozrenie: Zhurnal khudozhestevnnoi literatury, kritiki, bibliografii* 8 (1984): 85-89.

Nekrasov, Evgenii. "Viktor Pelevin." *Oktiabr'* 5 (1993): 185-86.

Nekrasov, S. "Geroem stanovitsia liuboi." *Nezavisimaia gazeta* 2 July 1992.

Nemzer, Andrei. "Kak by tipa po zhizni: *Generation II* kak zerkalo otechestvennogo infantilizma." *Viktor Pelevin: Sait tvorchestva.* 12 Dec. 2004 <http://pelevin.nov.ru/stati/o-nemz2/1.html>.

---. "Kak ia upustil kar'eru." *Literaturnoe segodniia. O russkoi proze. 90-e.* Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998. 313-315.

Neverov, A. "Golosa 'tridtsatiletnikh'." *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 12 (1987): 56-59.

Novikov, Vl. "Nobless oblizh: O nashem rechevom povedenii." *Novyi mir* 1 (1998): 139-153.

Okudzhava, Bulat. *Ia nikomu nichego ne naviazyval...* . Ed. A. Petrakov. Avtorskaia pesniia. Moscow: Knizhnyi magazin, 1997.

---. "Prikliucheniia sekretnogo baptista. Povest.'" *Vest:' proza, poeziia, dramaturgiia.* Moscow: Knizhnaia palata, 1989. 73-99.

---. *Uprazdnennyi teatr: semeinaia khronika.* Moscow: Rusanova, 1995.

Ostrovskii, Nikolai. *Kak zakalialas stal:' Roman v dvukh chastiakh.* Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel,' 1947.

Ostrovsky, Nikolay. *How the Steel was Tempered: A Novel in Two Parts.* 2 vols. Trans. R. Prokofieva. Moscow: Progress, 1967.

Ouellet, Pierre. "The Perception of Fictional Worlds." Mihailescu and Hamarneh 76-90.

Panarin, Aleksandr Sergeevich. Afterword. *Revansh istorii: Rossiiskaia strategicheskaia initsiativa v XXI veke.* Ed. O. V. Kir'iazev. Moscow: Logos, 1994. 385-390.

Parker, Jeff. "A Q & A with Viktor Pelevin." *Salt Hill Journal* 7 (1999): 112-15.

Parthé, Kathleen. "Village Prose: Chauvinism, Nationalism, or Nostalgia?" *New Directions in Soviet Literature: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990.* Ed. Sheelagh Duffin Graham. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. 106-121.

Pavel, Thomas G. *Fictional Worlds.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986.

Pavlov, Evgenii. "Judging Emptiness: Reflections on the Post-Soviet Aesthetics and Ethics of Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev i Pustota.*" Lilly and Mondry, 89-104.

Pelevin, Viktor. *A Werewolf Problem in Central Russia and Other Stories.* Trans. Andrew Bromfield. New York: New Directions, 2003.

---. *Buddha's Little Finger.* Trans. Andrew Bromfield. New York: Viking, 2000.

---. *Chapaev i Pustota.* Moscow: Vagrius, 1996.

---. "Deviatyi son Very Pavlovny." *Vstroennyi napominatel'.* Moscow: Vagrius, 2002. 88-115.

---. "Omon Ra." *Znamia* 5 (1992): 1-63.

---. *Omon Ra.* Trans. Andrew Bromfield. London: Harbord, 1994.

---. *The Blue Lantern and Other Stories.* Trans. Andrew Bromfield. London: Harbord Publishing, 1997.

---. *The Clay Machine-Gun.* Trans. Andrew Bromfield. London: Faber and Faber, 1999.

---. "The Myth of the Field Commander." *Autodafe* 2 (2001): 7 pp. 22 October 2002 <http: //www.autodafe.org/autodafe/autodafe_02/art_03.htm>.

---. "Vera Pavlovna's Ninth Dream." *A Werewolf Problem in Central Russia.* New York: New Directions, 2003. 36-58.

Petrushevskaia, Liudmila. "Our Crowd." *Immortal Love.* Trans. Sally Laird. London: Virago Press, 1995. 312 -348.

---. *The Time, Night.* Trans. Sally Laird. London: Virago Press, 1994.

---. "Svoi krug." Borisova 45-67.

---. "Vremia-noch'." Borisova 311-396.

Phillips, James. "Distance, Absence, and Nostalgia." Ihde and Silverman 64-75.

P'ietsukh,Viacheslav. "Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia." *Novaia moskovskaia filosofiia: Khronika i rasskazy.* Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989. 165-286.

Platt, Kevin M. *History in a Grotesque Key: Russian Literature and the Idea of Revolution.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

Podrabinek, Alexander. *Punitive Medicine.* Trans. Alexander Lehrman. Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1980.

Polikovskaia, L. "Tragediia noveishego obraztsa." *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 3 (1990): 51-53.

Porter, Robert. *Russia's Alternative Prose.* Oxford: Berg, 1994.

Potapov, Vladimir. "Coming Out of the 'Underground'." Trans. Arch Tait. *Soviet Literature* 5 (1990): 157-64.

Prigov, Dmitry. "Description of Objects." *The Penguin Book of New Russian Writing.* Ed. Victor Erofeyev and Andrew Reynolds. London: Penguin Books, 1995. 292-299.

Prigov, Dmitrii Aleksandrovich. "Opisanie predmetov." *Sovetskie teksty.* St. Petersburg: Ivan Limbakh, 1997. 89-104.

Proffer, Carl R., Elleanda Proffer, Ronald Meyer, and Mary Ann Szporluk, eds. *Russian Literature of the Twenties: An Anthology.* Dana Point: Ardis, 1987.

Pronina, E. "Fraktal'naia logika Viktora Pelevina." *Voprosy literatury* 4 (2003): 5-30.

Radov, Egor. *Zmeesos.* Moscow: Gileia, 1992.

Rich, Elizabeth, and Laura Weeks. "Viacheslav Pietsukh." Trans. Laura Weeks. *South Central Review* 12.3-4 (1995): 135-47.

Riffaterre, Michael. *Fictional Truth.* Parallax Re-visions of Culture and Society. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.

Roll, Serafima, ed. *Contextualizing Transition: Interviews with Contemporary Russian Writers and Critics.* Middlebury Studies in Russian Language and Literature 16. Trans. Serafima Roll. New York: Peter Lang, 1998.

Ronen, Ruth. *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory.* Literature, Culture, Theory 7. New York: Cambridge UP, 1994.

Rose, Margaret A. *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

---. *Parody//Meta-Fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction.* London: Croom Helm, 1979.

Rubinshtein, Lev, comp. *Lichnoe delo.* Moscow: Soiuzteatr, 1991.

Ryan, Karen L. and Barry P. Scherr, eds. *Twentieth-Century Russian Literature: Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies.* London: MacMillan Press, 2000.

Ryan-Hayes, Karen L. Introduction. *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. 1-10.

Saunders, George. *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline: Stories and a Novella.* New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.

Sergeev, Slava. "Chapaev i prostota: Roman v dvukh chastiakh s itogom i epilogom." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 28 (1997): 260-268.

Sharov, Vladimir. *Do i vo vremia.* Moscow: L'Age d'Homme – Nash dom, 1995.

Shcheglova, Evgeniia. "Everything's Back to Front Nowadays: Post-Perestroika Prose." *Russian Studies in Literature: A Journal of Translations.* 38.1 (2002): 59-84.

Shaw, Christopher, and Malcolm Chase, eds. *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia.* Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989.

Shklovsky, Viktor. *Theory of Prose.* Trans. Benjamin Sher. Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990.

Shneidman, N. N. *Russian Literature 1988-1994: The End of an Era.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

---. *Russian Literature 1995-2002: On the Threshold of the New Millennium.* Toronto: U of T Press, 2004.

Sinyavsky, Andrei. *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History.* Trans. Joanne Turnbull and Nikolai Formozov. New York: Arcade, 1990.

Sokolov, Iu. M., ed. "Chapai." *Krasnoarmeiskii fol'klor.* Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel,' 1938. 106-108.

Solomina, Anna. "Svoboda: Nadtekst vmesto podteksta." *Literaturnoe obozrenie: Zhurnal khudozhestvennoi literatury, kritik i bibliografii* 3 (1998): 92-93.

Sorokin, Vladimir. *Roman.* Moscow: Obscuri Viri, 1994.

---. *The Queue.* Trans. Sally Laird. London: Readers International, 1988.

Stambaugh, Joan. *The Real is not the Rational.* SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies. Albany: SUNY Press, 1986.

Stepanian, Karen. "Realizm kak spasenie ot snov." *Znamia* 11 (1996): 194-200.

Stites, Richard. *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900.* Cambridge Soviet Paperbacks 7. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Strayer, Robert. *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse.?* Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1998.

Striedter, Jurij. *Literary Structure, Evolution, and Value: Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism Reconsidered.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

Swift, Mark. "'Evolution' in the Works of Viacheslav P'ietsukh." Lilly and Mondry 59-87.

Taylor, Richard and Ian Christie, eds. *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents.* Trans. Richard Taylor. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988.

Terts, Abram. "Anekdot v anekdote." *Odna ili dve russkikh literatur?.* Ed. Georges Niva. Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1981. 167-179.

Timchenko, Marina. "Transition: The State of Contemporary Artistic Culture." Berry and Miller-Pogacar 129-143.

Tokareva, Viktoriia. "Kheppi end." *Kheppi end: Povesti i rasskazy.* Moscow: SP "Kvadrat," 1995. 89-144.

Tolstaia, Tatiana. *Na zolotom kryl'tse sideli: Rasskazy.* Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1987.

Tolstaya, Tatyana. *On the Golden Porch.* Trans. Antonina Bouis. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. 100-115.

---. "Fire and Dust." Bouis 100-115.

---. "Peters." Bouis 180-198.

---. *Pushkin's Children: Writings on Russia and Russians.* Trans. Jamey Gambrell. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.

---. "The Moon Came Out." *Sleepwalker in a Fog.* Trans. Jamey Gambrell. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992. 53-66.

---. *The Slynx.* Trans. Jamey Gambrell. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.

Tolz, Vera. *Russia.* London: Arnold, 2001.

Tomashevskii, Boris. "Thematics." *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays.* Regents Critics Series. Trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965. 62-95.

Tynianov, Iu. N. "O parodii," *Poetika – Istoriia literatury – Kino.* Ed. I. G. Drevlianskaia. Moscow: Nauka, 1977. 284-318.

Tynjanov, Jurij. "On Literary Evolution." *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views.* Eds. Matejka, Ladislav and Krystyna Pomorska. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971. 66-78.

Tynyanov, Yury. "Dostoevsky and Gogol: Towards a Theory of Parody. Part One: Stylization and Parody. *Dostoevsky and Gogol: Texts and Criticism.* Eds. Priscilla Meyer and Stephen Rudy. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979. 101-117.

Uliashov, Pavel. "Authors and Positions." Trans. David Gillespie. *Soviet Literature* 1 (1990): 107-11.

Verchenko, Yuri. "Perestroika Should be a Constructive Process." *Perestroika and Development of Culture: Literature, Theatre and Cinema.* Comp. Yevgeni Dugin. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1989. 3-10.

Vladiv-Glover, Slobodanka. "Vladimir Sorokin's Post-Avant-Garde Prose and Kant's Analytic of the Sublime." Burkhart 21-35.

Voinovich, Vladimir. *Zhizn' i neobychainye prikliucheniia soldata Ivana Chonkina: Roman-anekdot v piati chastiakh.* Paris: YMCA-Press, 1976.

Vonnegut, Kurt Jr. *Slaughterhouse-Five of The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1994.

Vroon, Ronald. "Dmitrii Furmanov's *Chapaev* and the Aesthetics of the Russian Avant-Garde." *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment.* Eds. John E. Bowlt, and Olga Matich. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. 219-234.

Voznesensky, Andrei. "Nostalgia for the Present." *Nostalgia for the Present.* Trans. Vera Dunham and H. W. Tjalsma. Eds. Vera Dunham and Max Hayward. Garden City: Doubleday, 1978.

Watson, Burton. Introduction. *The Lotus Sutra.* Trans. Burton Watson. New York: Columbia UP, 1993. ix-xxii.

Watson, Ian. *Chekhov's Journey.* London: Victor Gollancz, 1983.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction.* London: Methuen, 1984.

Wieczynski, Joseph L. *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russia and Soviet History.* Vol. 6. Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1978.

White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.

Woll, Josephine. "The Minotaur in the Maze: Remarks on Lyudmila Petrushevskaya." *World Literature Today* 67.1 (1993): 125-130.

Wood, David. "From Another Past." Ihde and Silverman 57-63.

Zakurenko, Aleksandr. "Iskomaia pustota." *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 3 (1998): 93-96.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. "Scythians?," *A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin.* Ed. and trans. Mirra Ginsburg. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970. 21-33.

Zerubavel, Yael. "The Historic, the Legendary, and the Incredible: Invented Tradition and Collective Memory in Israel. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity.* Ed. John R. Gillis. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. 105-123.

Zhokhov, M. A. "Legendarnyi narodnyi geroi: k 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia V. I. Chapaeva." *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 2 (1987): 79-82.

Ziolkowski, Margaret. *Literary Exorcisms of Stalinism: Russian Writers and the Soviet Past.* Columbia: Camden House, 1998.