The Concepts of the Underground in Russian Literary and (Counter)Cultural Discourse: From Dostoevsky to Punk Rock

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CONTENTS

Abstract

In this dissertation, I argue that Dostoevsky's notion of the underground, which originates in his novella *Notes from Underground,* informs the literary representations of various undergrounds – the political, the literary, and the rock underground – in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The primary texts studied are Dostoevsky's writings of 1864-1880, Leonid Andreyev's short stories, the poetry and essays of Viktor Krivulin, Vladimir Makanin's novel *Underground*, or *A Hero of Our Time* (1994), and the texts of Siberian punk rock (Egor Letov, Konstantin Riabinov). My theoretical framework includes Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of discourse in Dostoyevsky; the key concepts of philosophy of existentialism (absurd, angst, metaphysical rebellion); the analysis of holy foolishness and buffoonery in cultural studies (Sergei Ivanov, Tatiana Goricheva, Mikhail Bakhtin); the psychological and sociological theory of *ressentiment*; and the approaches to space in literary semiotics and phenomenology (Yuri Lotman; Gaston Bachelard). The examination of the underground in various discourses from Dostoevsky to punk rock reveals uniform patterns, which allows me to formulate a general definition of the underground as a discursive model. The underground is 1. a philosophical attitude that questions the existing human condition and suggests rebellion against an imperfect universe; 2. a psychological pattern based on *ressentiment* that manifests itself as, or transforms into, provocation, aggression, buffoonery, and anguish; and 3. a literalized metaphor: the symbolic subterranean space imbued with the mythological connotations of the underworld and associated with both chaos/death/decay and resurrection/salvation/revelation. The persistence of this three-fold model of the underground throughout various discourses developed by the opposition to the mainstream suggests its applicability for further studies of this phenomenon.

Résumé :

Dans cette thèse, nous soutenons que la conception du « souterrain » de Dostoïevski, qui tire son origine du roman *Notes d'un souterrain*, met en lumière les représentations littéraires de divers undergrounds – l'underground politique, l'underground littéraire et l'underground du rock – au XX^{e} et XXI^{e} siècles. Les principaux textes étudiés sont ceux de Dostoïevski, écrits entre 1864 et 1880, les nouvelles de Leonid Andreïev, les poèmes et les essais de Viktor Krivulin, le roman *Underground ou un héros de notre temps* (1998) de Vladimir Makanine, ainsi que les textes issus du punk sibérien (Egor Letov, Constantin Ryabinov). Notre approche méthodologique est basée sur l'analyse du discours de Dostoïevski qu'a menée Mikhail Bakhtine, sur les concepts clés de la philosophie de l'existentialisme (l'absurde, l'angoisse, la rébellion métaphysique), sur la vision de la bouffonnerie et des *iourodivy* dans les études culturelles (Sergei Ivanov, Tatiana Goricheva, Mikhail Bakhtine), sur la théorie psychologique et sociologique du ressentiment, ainsi que sur les études de l'espace dans la sémiotique littéraire et la phénoménologie (Youri Lotman, Gaston Bachelard). L'examen de l'underground dans divers discours – de Dostoïevski au punk rock – révèle des modèles uniformes, ce qui nous permet de formuler une définition générale de l'underground comme modèle discursif. L'underground est 1. une attitude philosophique qui remet en question la condition humaine existante et suggère une rébellion contre l'univers imparfait; 2. un modèle psychologique fondé sur un ressentiment qui se manifeste, voire se transforme, en provocation, agression, bouffonnerie et angoisse; et 3. une métaphore littéralisée – l'espace souterrain symbolique imprégné des connotations mythologiques du monde souterrain et associé à la fois au chaos/mort/décadence et à la résurrection/relèvement/révélation. La persistance de ce modèle triple de l'underground à travers divers discours sur l'opposition au courant dominant suggère son applicabilité pour d'autres études de ce phénomène.

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TECHNICAL NOTES

I transliterate Russian names, titles, and quotes using a simplified version of the US Library of Congress transliteration system, except for the traditional spelling of a few names (Dostoevsky, Andreyev, Elena, and so on). The names of Dostoevsky heroes are spelled in accordance with the English texts (translations and scholarly sources) in which they appear.

The sources of translations of primary texts are specified in each chapter. Except for the professional translations of Mikhail Bakhtin's, Yuri Lotman's, Lev Shestov's, and Vladimir Solovyov's works, all the translations from Russian critical and scholarly sources are mine.

I use the following abbreviations in in-text citations:

PSS – Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*

BK – Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

PDP – Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*

To Olesya

Introduction

Pushkin! *Tainuiu svobodu*
Peli my vosled tebe!

Aleksandr Blok, "*Pushkinskomu Domu*."[1]

The underground man is the principal figure in the Russian world.
I spoke about him more than any other writer did.[2]

Fyodor Dostoevsky.

In his critically acclaimed novel *Chapaev i Pustota* (1996),[3] Viktor Pelevin includes a remarkable episode in which the protagonist-narrator Pëtr Pustota discusses the concept of the "secret freedom of the Russian intellectual" with the revolutionary Kotovskii. Pëtr tells Kotovskii about a meeting of the famous symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok with social democrats from England, where Blok "spent the whole evening telling them about this secret freedom which, as he said, we all laud, following Pushkin" (290).[4] After Blok leaves, the Englishmen begin to ask everyone what exactly secret freedom means. Nobody can answer this question except for one Romanian who draws a parallel between "secret freedom" and the way Romanian peasants used to defend themselves from nomads in the Middle Ages:

> the peasants constructed immense dugouts, entire underground houses, into which they drove their livestock […]. They themselves hid in these places as well, and since the dugouts were quite excellently camouflaged, the nomads could never find a thing. Naturally, when they were underground, the peasants were very quiet, but just occasionally, when they were quite overcome by joy at their own cunning at deceiving

[1] "Pushkin, we are all your followers in praising the *secret freedom*." A. Blok, "To the Pushkin House" ("Pushkinskomu Domu" 96; emphasis in original; my trans.).
[2] *PSS* 16: 407. Hereafter, all translations of this source are mine.
[3] The English translation of the novel has been published under two different titles: *Buddha's Litte Finger* and *The Clay Machine-gun.* I quote the latter.
[4] Pelevin's narrator refers to Blok's famous speech "*O naznachenii poeta*" ("On the Poet's Mission") and his poem "*Pushkinskomu domu*" ("To the Pushkin House"; both 1921). The concept of secret freedom originates in Pushkin's 1819 poem "*K N. Ia. Pliuskovoi*" ("To N. Ia. Pliuskova"). Secret freedom here is a "philosophical and aesthetic category," which means the poet's "lack of self-imposed constraints and his internal balance" (Chistova 559).

> everyone, they would cover their mouths with their hands and laugh very, very quietly. There is your secret freedom, […] it is when you are sitting wedged in among a herd of foul smelling goats and sheep and you point up at the roof with your finger and giggle very, very quietly. (290-91)

Pustota concludes that "it was such a very apt description of the situation, that from that evening onwards I ceased to be a member of the Russian intelligentsia. […] Freedom cannot be secret" (291).

Despite the overall ironic context typical for Pelevin's post-modernist discourse, his narrator pinpoints the problem which has always been important for the Russian educated class, the *intelligentsia*, namely, intellectual freedom in a state ruled by strong authoritarian power. Indeed, can there be secret freedom? Comparing secret freedom with sitting in an underground bunker, Pelevin apparently refers to another concept whose significance in Russian culture is hard to overestimate – the underground, which may be rendered in the Russian language by two synonymic words: the original Russian *podpol'e* (literally, space under the floorboards) and *andegraund*, adopted from English. In late-Soviet times, *andegraund* was synonymous with the (counter)culture[5] of unofficial poets, artists, philosophers, and musicians, whose existence sought to prove the possibility of "secret freedom" from the bounds of censorship and state ideological control. In his speech "*O naznachenii poeta*," Blok defined "secret freedom" as "creative will," i.e. freedom of artistic expression (166-67). Not surprisingly, then the representatives of

[5] When referring to unofficial literature and art, the terms underground and counterculture are often used synonymously. However, it is important to keep in mind that the concept of counterculture – a culture whose values stand in opposition to the mainstream culture of the majority – by very nature of the term implies a binary as a condition of its existence. In other words, a counterculture can only assert itself in opposition to the mainstream, which makes problematic its identity as a separate culture. Since in this study I will show that unofficial writers and rock musicians were particularly concerned with keeping their cultural identity intact regardless of political and cultural changes of the mainstream, I put the prefix counter- in parentheses. This spelling means that the phenomenon in question can be regarded from both points of view: as an opposition to the mainstream, and as a culture by itself. Remarkable in this respect is the term "second culture" which was a popular self-denomination of late Soviet unofficial poets, philosophers, and artists (see Chapter 5). Vladimir Makanin's distinction between the "superficial" underground whose existence depends on politics, and the "genuine," permanent underground also reflects this difference (see Chapter 6).

Leningrad literary underground (Viktor Krivulin, Oleg Okhapkin, Elena Shvarts, and others) called themselves "the generation of secret freedom."

Before that, however, the underground had a different meaning: *podpol'e* was primarily associated with the Russian political underground of the late nineteenth – early twentieth century, i.e. the radical revolutionary movements, such as the Narodniks, the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Anarchists, and the Bolsheviks. In the early twentieth century, this notion of the underground made its way into the literary discourse in the writings of Sergei Stepniak-Kravchinskii, Mikhail Ropshin (Boris Savinkov), Maxim Gorky, Aleksandr Serafimovich, Leonid Andreyev, and others. It is quite likely, therefore, that the unofficial writers, artists, and musicians of late Soviet period preferred the English word underground (*andegraund*) precisely to avoid associations with the political *podpol'shchiki*. And although *podpol'e* was, nevertheless, present in the discourse of unofficial literature, it referred not to the political underground but to the philosophical and psychological meanings of *podpol'e* associated primarily with Dostoevsky. The role of Dostoevsky for the self-consciousness of the late-Soviet (counter)culture becomes especially obvious in the texts of the Siberian punk rock movement whose leader Egor Letov emphasized Dostoevsky's influence on his worldview. But even in early twentieth-century literature, and, in particular, in Leonid Andreyev, the depiction of the political *podpol'e* also reveals "traces" of Dostoevsky's underground.

Indeed, the underground as a complex, manifold metaphor originates in Dostoevsky's novella *Notes from Underground* (1864).[6] According to Vasilii Rozanov, Dostoevsky's "concept

[6] Remarkable in this respect is the fact that Dostoevsky, in turn, might have received the initial impulse for developing the metaphor of the underground from Pushkin. In *Notes from Underground*, the protagonist compares himself with a mouse sitting under the floorboards (*v podpol'e*). Alfred Bem has noted that a similar comparison is found in the words of Albert from Pushkin's little tragedy *The Covetous Knight* (1836): *"...puskai ottsa zastaviat / Menia derzhat' kak syna, ne kak mysh', / Rozhdënnuiu v podpol'e*" ("…let them make my father treat me like his son, not like a mouse born in the underground"). See Bem 224.

of the 'underground' became a 'rapid-fire one,' just like Turgenev's 'superfluous man'" (491). In fact, in Pelevin's passage quoted above one finds references to Dostoevsky's hero, the underground man: social democrats and England are associated with his ideological opponents,[7] while hiding in the "foul-smelling underground" clearly reminds one of the underground man's existential habitat (*PSS* 5: 104). Even Pelevin's ironic comment on the oxymoronic nature of secret freedom goes back to Dostoevsky who shows how the underground man's freedom, which he "lauds" in words, in reality turns out to be his "subterranean depravity" in which he indulges "secretly, at night" (ibid. 128).

This dissertation proceeds from the thesis that Dostoevsky is the founder of a distinct tradition of representing the underground and "underground consciousness" in Russian literary and (counter)cultural discourse. I argue that Dostoevsky's notion of the underground, which originates in *Notes from Underground* and is further developed in his subsequent works, informs the literary representations of various undergrounds – the political underground, the literary underground, and the rock underground – in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Redefining the underground as a complex phenomenon that brings together (proto-)existentialist philosophy, the psychology of holy foolishness and *ressentiment*, and spatial symbolism, this dissertation provides a new outlook on Dostoevsky's role in the discursive construction of the underground in Russian literature and, especially, (counter)culture.

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In the enormous amount of scholarship written to date on Dostoevsky's *Notes*, we can distinguish three major approaches to defining the underground: 1. the analysis of philosophical ideas embodied by the underground man; 2. the examination of the psychology of Dostoevsky's

[7]As Richard Peace notes, "the ideas against which the *underground man* takes up arms are for the most part English in origin" (81).

hero; and 3. the study of the underground as a discursive formation, a problem closely associated with the genre of *Notes*. In my analysis of the underground, I take into account all these approaches.

The underground as philosophy has been thoroughly examined in the context of the underground man's (and Dostoevsky's) polemics with the philosophical conceptions of utilitarianism, socialist utopia, and rational egoism. Thus, Joseph Frank suggests that *Notes from Underground "*was conceived and executed as one magnificent satirical parody" ("Nihilism" 52). According to Frank, the underground man assumes the main postulates of determinism and rational egoism as formulated in Chernyshevsky's works to show that they justify both amorality and inertia. For example, Dostoevsky's hero parodies "Chernyshevsky's assertion, in *The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy*, that no such capacity as free will exists or can exists, since whatever actions man attributes to his own initiatives are really a result of the 'laws of nature'" (*Dostoevsky* 319). James Scanlan, by turn, argues that rather than assuming Chernyshevsky's theory and turning it into absurdity, the underground man, in fact, opposes it with his "genuine," "non-altruist," and "morally repugnant" egoism (62). Thus, the underground in Scanlan stands for "the essence of egoism": "the celebration of unbounded willfulness" (75).

Richard Peace also emphasizes the polemical thrust of the novella. He focuses on the image of the crystal palace, which in the underground man's discourse represents an opposition to the underground, tracing its roots to nineteenth-century English thought (John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Henry Thomas Buckle, Charles Darwin): "The origin of the symbol is a perception of the Crystal Palace in London, mediated through Chernyshevsky's projection of the perfect society in *What is To Be Done?*, and Dostoevsky's own experience of the Great Exhibition recorded in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* " (81). Thus, through the "prism"

of the crystal palace, the nature of the underground as the rejection of science, rationality, and progress reveals its philosophical context.[8]

Related to the analysis of the underground man's anti-rationalist stance is the tendency to trace in his worldview an anticipation of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, a point of view originally expressed by Lev Shestov (*Dostoevskii*) and Maxim Gorky (209). Viktor Dudkin states that "the condition of the world and human being, which Dostoevsky called 'the underground,' is defined in a similar way in both the Russian writer and the German philosopher. [We read] in Dostoevsky: 'The origin of the underground is the destruction of the faith in commonly accepted rules.' […] And in Nietzsche: 'What does nihilism mean? It means that higher values are depreciated'" (56). Dudkin points out that both Nietzsche and the underground man "reject reason as an inadequate instrument of knowledge" (59).

The existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers finds similarities between Nietzsche and Dostoevsky in their interest in revolt, which in Dostoevsky manifests itself "in ideas and figures that transcend all psychology into the existential and metaphysical" (*Philosophical Faith* 294). One such figure is, of course, the underground man. Indeed, *Notes from Underground* has also been read as an "overture" to twentieth-century existentialist philosophy with its focus on the irrational in the human being, on the human being's tragic sense of alienation from the whole of creation, on the consciousness of the absurd, and on the human being's rebellion against his/her role in the universe (Barrett 138-39, Erofeev, Kaufman). Scanlan briefly touches upon an important proto-existentialist aspect of the underground man's philosophy: "He cannot be 'determined' to act by any particular perception, whether of his own interest or anything else. This leads him into meditations on the indeterminate identity of the conscious being – the meditations that twentieth-century existentialist philosophers took as signs that Dostoevsky was

[8] For a comprehensive analysis of the crystal palace in Dostoevsky see Young.

an early champion of their philosophical orientation" (69). Thus, the underground represents a situation in which one realizes a lack of one's own "essence," to use the terminology of French existentialism.

Existentialist motifs are also part of Aleksandr Krinitsyn's definition of the underground in Dostoevsky. He posits that the underground represents "an ontological situation of an extreme alienation from other people." Because it constitutes "one's inner reaction toward the vicious order of the world," the underground reflects "a need for a higher religious existence," which cannot be satisfied. Thus, the underground, in Krinitsyn, is also "a situation of religious consciousness which is not rooted in religion" (24). As "ideological space," the underground stands for "the philosophy of permissiveness and unrestricted individualism" (24).

The underground as psychology has been analyzed either in the context of moral and ethical categories, such as shame, ingratitude, and *ressentiment* (Bernstein, Martinsen, Wyman) or in the light of post-psychoanalytic theories (Girard, Harrison). For example, Deborah Martinsen presents the underground as "shame's paradox. i.e., its capacity to isolate yet relate. Though [the underground man] has isolated himself, he reaches out to his readers. Though he champions free will, he acts unfreely" (157). Thus, Dostoevsky's hero "is emotionally stuck in an underground of his own making. Hell is not other people, but his own construct" (159).

A useful tool for the analysis of the underground psychology has been the notion of *ressentiment* formulated by Nietzsche and developed by Max Scheler. In Nietzsche, the psychological condition of *ressentiment* characterizes "those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge." *Ressentiment* lies at the core of what Nietzsche calls the "slave's revolt in morality" which "says 'no' on principle to everything that is 'outside', 'other', 'non-self ': and *this* 'no' is its creative deed. […] [I]n order

to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, […] its action is basically a reaction" (*On the Genealogy* 20; emphasis in original). Elaborating Nietzsche's ideas, Scheler focuses on the "tension when revenge, hatred, envy, and their effects are coupled with impotence" and maintains that "[u]nder the impact of that tension, these affects assume the form of *ressentiment*" (132-33). Dudkin points out that "the underground man is a perfect illustration for Scheler's analysis of *ressentiment*" (65), while Michael André Bernstein relates the underground man's *ressentiment* to the character's dependence on pre-existing discursive models: "The paradox of the Underground Man's consciousness – the simultaneity of his powerful will and slavish dependence on others – is directly linked to the demoralizing contradiction […] that his whole behavior has already been determined by the models whose unhappy mimic he is" (105). Alina Wyman focuses on Scheler's "endorsement of Christian love as a means of overcoming ressentiment." In her reading, the underground represents "the merciless torment of ressentiment" of those who are exposed to the ideal of Christ and yet lack "the serenity of faith" (121).

René Girard's study of underground psychology in Dostoevsky is also reminiscent of the theory of *ressentiment*, even though Girard avoids this term. In fact, Girard's observations point out possible consequences of the underground *ressentiment*. Thus, he examines the discrepancy between the underground man's "imaginary grandeur and actual baseness" (18), concluding that pride serves as "the primary psychological (and before long metaphysical) motor which governs all the individual and collective manifestations of the underground life" (23). Girard traces how pride causes the duality of Dostoevsky's characters – their split into "a contemptible person and a contemptuous observer of the human scene" (22) – as well as the underground character's dependence on the mighty Other whom he explicitly hates and implicitly idolizes: "The one

offended is condemned to wander endlessly around the offender reproducing the condition of the offense and bringing about the offense once again" (14-15).

In a recent study, Lonny Harrison suggests that "the underground is the force of catalysis, the nexus where unconscious forces of the psyche meet the conscious mind, causing friction that erupts into thoughts, clusters of ideas, specific actions, and patterns of behaviour. These patterns that emerge are the archetypes" (74). According to Harrison, the archetypes of the underground may manifest themselves as "concrete metaphors and symbols" (spiders, insects, water), as well as "deep seated complexes and hidden drives" (carnal passions, aggression, egotism, pride, etc.) (74).

The study of the underground as a discursive form goes back to Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of discourse in the context of his theory of dialogic consciousness and the polyphonic novel. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1964), Bakhtin argues that "the sullying of [his] image in another's eyes as an ultimate desperate effort to free oneself from the power of the other's consciousness […] is the orientation of the Underground Man's entire confession" (232). Bakhtin defined the main patterns of the underground discourse as the "sideward glance [*ogliadka*]" and the "loophole [*lazeika*]" (229, 233). Malcolm Jones further developed Bakhtin's approach, seeing in the underground man's discourse an anticipation of deconstructionist criticism, since in it "the hierarchical ordering of the opposition reason/will (in which reason is the superior and will the inferior term) is subverted in the course of its exposition by its suppressed contradictions and the latter term promoted from supplement to the prior position" (63). Other scholars relate the concept of the underground in Dostoevsky to the specific genre of *Notes*, which represents a peculiar transformation of the confession. Thus, Robert Belknap points out that the underground man's discourse serves as "assertion of [his

disreputable] identity not as justification but as an explanation that precludes repentance" ("Unrepentant Confession" 121). Natalia Zhivolupova sees *Notes* as a prototypical example of the confession of an antihero, which she refers to as a "sub-genre."

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It is remarkable that in his analysis of the underground discourse, Bakhtin not only insightfully formulates its main principles but also outlines its philosophical foundations, as well as psychological patterns that it reflects. He points out that the underground man "polemicizes not only with other people, with other ideologies, but also with the very subject of its thinking – with the world and its order. […] His own thought is developed and structured as *the thought of someone personally insulted by the world order,* personally humiliated by its blind necessity" (*PDP* 236; original emphasis). The underground man's resentment and his rebellion of whose futility he is well aware, make his discourse "pointedly cynical, […] yet also anguished. It strives to play the holy fool" (*PDP* 231). Essentially, Bakhtin defined here the two important components of the underground – its proto-existentialist rebellious philosophy and its psychological kinship with *ressentiment*[9] and holy foolishness (*iurodstvo*).

While references to Bakhtin's discourse analysis has become a common place in Dostoevsky studies, his idea of the close connection between the underground man's "polemics with the world" and *iurodstvo* has not yet been developed. Using Bakhtin's analysis of the underground man's discourse as a starting point, I define the underground as 1. a philosophical attitude to reality, and 2. a related psychological pattern. In Chapter 1, I employ the existentialist concepts of the absurd, the existential leap, and metaphysical rebellion developed in the works of Albert Camus to describe the (proto-)existentialist philosophical outlook of Dostoevsky's

[9] According to Scheler, *ressentiment* refers to a situation "when a person or group feels that the very fact and quality of its *existence* is a matter which calls for revenge" and when "the 'injury' is experienced as a destiny" (121).

underground hero. In Chapter 2, I demonstrate that the underground man's tragic sense of the absurd causes his eccentric behavior: outrage and buffoonery, on the one hand, and hysterics and anguish, on the other. These two extremes of the underground psychology were originally described by the poet and critic Innokentii Annenskii as *vyvert* (eccentricity or perversion) and *nadryv* (anguish; Annenskii 148). I develop Annenskii's idea, rethinking it in the context of 1. the view on holy foolishness in cultural studies (Tatiana Goricheva, Sergei Ivanov, Aleksandr Panchenko, Vladimir Toporov), 2. Bakhtin's conception of the buffoon, and 3. the notion of *ressentiment* (Nietzsche, Scheler).

In my selection of particular Dostoevsky heroes who may be viewed as "descendants" of the underground man, I draw on the established scholarly tradition that treat such figures as Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov (*Crime and Punishment*), Trusotsky and Velchaninov ("The Eternal Husband"), Kirilov and Stavrogin (*Demons*), the ridiculous man ("The Dream of a Ridiculous Man"), the characters of "Bobok," and Ivan Karamazov and Smerdyakov (*The Brothers Karamazov*) as belonging to the underground paradigm.[10] This tradition goes back to Dostoevsky himself who used the concept of the underground with respect to his different heroes – for example, Goliadkin from *The Double*,[11] Trusotsky and Velchaninov from "The Eternal Husband,"[12] and the proposed characters from "Draft Notes and Plans 1867-1870."[13] Since in *Notes* the underground man argues that his worldview and psychology result from his "overly acute consciousness" which distinguishes him from many others ("normal men" in his own words), I maintain that the underground as a characteristic of a person implies a certain type of consciousness – the "underground consciousness." In my analysis of the twentieth- and twenty-

[10] See *PDP* 137-54, Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man* 49-63, Krinitsyn 9, Nazirov 53.
[11] Dostoevsky called Goliadkin his "main underground type" (*PSS* 21: 264).
[12] In "The Eternal Husband," Velchaninov defines both Trusotsky and himself as "depraved, underground, vile people" (*Eternal Husband* 178).
[13] See *PSS* 9: 113, 116, 117, 119.

first-century texts, I consider those subjects of discourse (a literary character or an author as narrator) who demonstrate similarities with Dostoevsky's underground hero in terms of both philosophy and psychology to be bearers of the "underground consciousness." I analyze manifestations of the "underground consciousness" in the images of representatives of various undergrounds (political, literary/artistic, and punk rock) constructed in fictional and non-fictional (interviews, essays, articles) narratives.

In addition to considering the philosophical and psychological aspects of the underground, I explore the underground in both Dostoevsky and subsequent literature and (counter)culture as a literalized metaphor that reveals itself as the subterranean motifs accompanying the underground heroes. Thus, in Chapter 3 I argue that Dostoevsky's use of subterranean imagery demonstrates the ambivalent nature of his underground: the grave-like underground space conceals the possibility for spiritual resurrection.

In Chapter 4, I turn to the notion of the political underground. I suggest that the interplay between Dostoevsky's underground and the underground as a political phenomenon is especially distinct in the works of Leonid Andreyev, such as the short stories "Darkness" and "Judas Iscariot" (both 1907). Andreyev points out the deeper similarities between social and metaphysical revolt: both imply a rejection of God and, ultimately, taking over His role. Thus, he expands on Dostoevsky's thoughts and anticipates the ideas of French existentialism. In particular, Andreyev demonstrates that provocation and duality constitute the archetypal patterns of underground psychology.

In the following chapters I examine the underground as a concept that refers to unofficial literature and art in the late Soviet and post-Soviet period. In Chapter 5, I study the poetry and critical writings of Viktor Krivulin (1944-2001), a major representative of the Leningrad literary

underground. I show that Dostoevsky informs Krivulin's conceptualization of the underground. Krivulin employs multiple motifs that strengthen the association between his underground and that of Dostoevsky, and even refers to his hero as the underground man in two poems. I argue that the Dostoevskian intertext allowed Krivulin to free the concept of the underground from the political overtones it had acquired in Russian culture after Dostoevsky.

In Chapter 6, I explore the representations of the underground by the contemporary Russian writer Vladimir Makanin (1937-). In his novel *Underground, or A Hero of Our Time* (1997), Makanin constructs a paradoxical image of the underground writer who does not write. Contemplating the distinction between the "superficial" and "genuine" underground, Makanin's narrator engages in a dialogue with Dostoevsky both explicitly and implicitly. I show that deliberate associations between Makanin's protagonist and Dostoevsky's heroes (the underground man, Raskolnikov, and Ivan Karamazov) create a background against which the differences between the undergrounds of Dostoevsky and Makanin become especially clear. I suggest that Makanin's hero inherits primarily the negative aspects of Dostoevsky's underground (religious skepticism, moral relativism, egotism, and aggression) which makes the reader question his self-proclaimed belonging to the "genuine" underground culture.

Makanin's hero's ruminations on the nature of the underground and his failure as an exemplary representative of unofficial culture are especially revealing, given the political and cultural turmoil in early 1990s Russia. The re-evaluation of former values in the early post-Soviet context, in particular, concerned the underground (counter)culture, in which rock music played a leading role. What constitutes the genuine underground in a situation when everything is, seemingly, permitted became the burning question in the 1990s discourse on rock. In Chapter 7, I examine the little studied texts of Siberian punk (1985-2000s) – a rock movement that has

gained the reputation of the most authentic Russian underground. I argue that to prove that being underground does not depend on the political regime, the Siberian rock poet Egor Letov (1964-2008) constructs in his texts an image of the genuine punk rocker, employing the discursive mechanisms (the "loophole"), philosophical ideas (existentialist rebellion), and psychological patterns (*vyvert*, *nadryv*, *iurodstvo*) associated with Dostoevsky's underground heroes.

The Dostoevskian tradition defined the literary and cultural constructions of the underground from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century. The persistence of Dostoevsky's model of the underground not only confirms the everlasting value of his insights on the human being's existential condition, but also shows that Dostoevsky found a formula that has allowed subsequent writers and musicians to both create and deconstruct the myths of the political opposition, spiritual exclusivity, and cultural freedom, including freedom from Dostoevsky's own unparalleled authority.

PART I

DOSTOEVSKY

Chapter 1

Philosophy of the Underground: the Absurd and Rebellion

Introduction: Dostoevsky and Existentialism

Mikhail Bakhtin called the main protagonist of *Notes from Underground*, the underground man, "the first hero-ideologist in Dostoevsky's work" (*PDP* 59). Indeed, Part I of *Notes* may be considered as the underground man's attempt at outlining his philosophy, albeit in a seemingly unorganized manner. On the one hand, this philosophy has traditionally been associated with Dostoevsky's polemics against the utilitarianism of social-democrats and specifically against the conception of rational self-interest (or "rational egoism") developed in Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What is to Be Done?* [14] At the same time, it has become a common place to see Dostoevsky, in general, and *Notes*, in particular, as an anticipation of the philosophy of existentialism.[15]

The contradiction and irrationality of the human being, "the destructive and even criminal possibilities of reason" (Barrett 121), human beings' "feeling of homelessness and alienation" from God, nature, and themselves (ibid. 31) were the favorite themes of Dostoevsky. These are the central topics for the existentialist philosophers and writers – Søren Kirkegaard, Lev Shestov, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and others. In the introduction to his anthology on existentialism, Walter Kaufman writes: "Part One of *Notes from Underground* is the best overture for existentialism ever written" (14). The way in which the themes of the "laws of

[14]The polemical context of *Notes* has been thoroughly examined in several studies, including J. Frank, *Nihilism*, J. Frank, *Dostoevsky*, Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man*, Peace, Scanlan.
[15] See Barrett, Erofeev, Kaufman, Kirk, Latynina, Nuttall.

nature," freedom, meaning of life, and irrationality are addressed in *Notes* reveals an especially strong connection between the novel and French "atheist" existentialism, whose representatives Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre devoted a great deal of their writings to the problem of the absurd.

I do not intend to contribute to the over-studied topic of Dostoevsky's influence on existentialism. But because the philosophical terminology for the depiction of the absurd and metaphysical rebellion was developed by French existentialists, and primarily by Albert Camus, in this chapter I refer to his *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) and *The Rebel* (1951) to show that, in the philosophical sense, the underground in Dostoevsky represents the state of consciousness that uncovers the absurdity of human existence and suggests rebellion against such a universe. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that in the second half of the twentieth century – beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become almost impossible for the erudite reader to perceive Dostoevsky and his rebellious heroes – the underground man, Raskolnikov, Svidrigailov, Kirilov, Ivan Karamazov and others – without drawing parallels between his writings and the existentialist thought. Thus, there appeared "existentialist" interpretations of Dostoevsky. For example, for A. D. Nuttall "[t]he story of *Crime and Punishment* […] becomes the story not of a man's descent into hell and rebirth into glory, but of a failure. Raskolnikov tried to be free, but was sucked back into the mire of ethics." In such a reading, the true "existentialist" (anti)hero of the novel becomes Svidrigailov: "We note […] that in Svidrigailov's case the truth is borne, and in Raskolnikov's it is not. Svidrigailov kills himself but at least he is the author of his action" (Nuttall 65-66). Therefore, the fact that Dostoevsky has been perceived as a forerunner of existentialism should be necessarily taken into account when

addressing his legacy in the literature and (counter)culture of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

From the underground man's point of view, the whole of creation appears to be absurd: he sees that the "laws of nature" are unjust and offensive, and the human being is condemned to rebel against them forever and futilely, causing destruction and chaos. Kaufman warns the reader not to attribute to Dostoevsky the opinions of his "most interesting" characters: "we must not ascribe to him, who after all believed in God, the outlook and ideas of his underground man" (14). This is true; however, at the same time, it is well known that the problem of *the absurd versus faith* always tormented Dostoevsky's soul. In a letter to Fonvizina he wrote: "I'm a child of the age, a child of doubt and unbelief, and even, I'm certain, till the day they close the lid of my coffin" (*Selected Letters* 68). We know from one of Dostoevsky's letters about his original plan to "deduce" from the underground man's ruminations "the need for faith and Christ" which was distorted by the censors: "The swinish censors let pass those places where I ridiculed everything and blasphemed *for show,* but where I deduce from all this the need for faith and Christ—this is forbidden."[16] The question why Dostoevsky never reinserted the cut portion of the original manuscript in later editions remains open. Providing his explanation of this riddle, Tzvetan Todorov argues that the Christian ideal in the novella is embodied in the figure of Liza. Therefore, "[t]he book would have had two endings instead of one, and Dostoevsky's point would have lost much of its force had it been placed in the narrator's mouth rather than in Lisa's action" (91). Without renouncing Todorov's valuable observations, it should be noted that Dostoevsky might have also realized that a religious statement when put in the underground man's mouth would sound artificial and weak, contradicting all that the narrator had said before.

[16] Dostoevsky's letter to his brother Mikhail on March 26, 1864. Qtd. in Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man* 27.

As James Scanlan points out, Dostoevsky "could not insinuate such [developed Christian] convictions in his [the underground man's] own voice without jarring authorial intrusions into the Underground Man's first-person narrative" (76).

There could be no doubt that Dostoevsky always viewed "the acceptance of Christ as the only path out of the 'underground'" (Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man 27*). It is true, that we can clearly see how this idea is expressed in *Notes from Underground* through the interaction between the underground man and Liza. But it is the underground man's non-acceptance of it that is reflected in the conception of the human being in French existentialism, and Camus and Sartre found much more in common with the philosophical views of Dostoevsky's "underground" characters than with Dostoevsky himself.

"**Overly Acute Consciousness" and the "Laws of Nature"**

In *Notes*, the consciousness of the underground man is referred to as "overly acute consciousness." According to the protagonist, such a state of consciousness puts him in opposition to the "normal man," "a genuine, normal person, just as tender mother nature wished to see him when she lovingly gave birth to him on earth" (8).[17] Being conscious, according to the underground man, is a disease, and the "normal man" has four times less consciousness. He supposes that, contrary to the "normal man", the "man of overly acute consciousness" "emerged not from the bosom of nature, but from a laboratory test tube" (8). In other words, just like sickness, the "man of overly acute consciousness" is regarded as a deviation from the norm, as something unnatural. The most direct manifestation of the unnaturalness of a human's consciousness becomes its ability to come out against nature itself. The underground man admits that, on the one hand, it is impossible to "break that wall," i.e., to change the "laws of

[17] For all quotes from *Notes from Underground* the number(s) in parentheses indicate the page number(s) in Dostoevsky, *Notes*, except for those cases when I refer to the original Russian and translate the quote(s) myself.

nature" that are described by natural science and mathematics, while on the other, being conscious, in fact, means not to accept the "laws of nature" and their consequences. According to Camus, man discovers the absurdity of existence when he starts to realize that nature represents something foreign and even hostile to him (*Myth* 20).

The hostility of the "laws of nature" is illustrated by the underground man through the notion of pain, and as a particular example, toothache. This motif[18] forms an association with the motif of sickness as a consequence of being conscious, thus emphasizing the absurdity of human existence. The motif of pain from the very beginning is used by the underground man as a synonym of spiritual suffering for being aware of "all the impossibilities and stone walls" and yet not being able to reconcile with them: "it's all a mess – you can't tell who's who or what's what [*neizvestno chto i neizvestno kto* – "no one knows what or who"]; but in spite of all these uncertainties and sleights of hand, it hurts you just the same, and the more you don't know, the more it hurts!" (10). Toothache, which consciousness finds to be aimless and humiliating, points to the aimlessness and embarrassment of the very "laws of nature";

> the whole system of natural laws about which you really don't give a damn, but as a result of which you're suffering nonetheless, while nature isn't. They express the consciousness that while there's no real enemy to be identified, the pain exists nonetheless; the awareness that […] you're still a complete slave to your teeth; that if someone so wishes, your teeth will stop aching, but if he doesn't so wish, they'll go on aching for three more months. (11)

The "overly acute consciousness" of the underground man attributes to pain a truly existential meaning, since it shows that the "laws of nature" cause the human being to suffer and

[18] My understanding of the literary motif is based on the intertextual approach to motifs and leitmotifs in the works of Boris Gasparov and on the idea of the "invariant motifs" developed by Aleksandr Zholkovsky and Yuri Shcheglov in their "poetics of expressiveness." By motif I, therefore, mean a semantically significant element (a word, an image, a chronotope, etc.) which both reoccurs within one text and provides a link between different texts (see Gasparov, Zholkovsky and Shcheglov, Silant'ev 60-63).

therefore they are unjust. The protagonist argues that for a person with an "excess of consciousness" toothache is not just a physical experience but first and foremost spiritual suffering. That is why the underground man analyzes toothache on the example of the "educated man of the nineteenth century" who moans "not simply because his tooth aches" but because in his pain he feels "bloody insult" (11) coming from some unknown force (from "*neizvestno ch'i nasmeshki*" – "no one knows whose jeers"; *PSS* 5: 106).

The underground man feels himself alienated from the world and everything that is natural in it, as if he has been rejected by "mother nature" as her unloved child; he realizes, though, that this takes place "according to normal and fundamental laws of overly acute consciousness" (7). That means the situation he finds himself in, i.e. his underground, was predetermined and sanctioned by nature itself. Camus describes precisely this situation: "[t]he laws of nature may be operative up to a certain limit, beyond which they turn against themselves to give birth to the absurd" (*Myth* 39). Such a limit becomes consciousness itself with its longing for lucidity and understanding that is never to be achieved, since what it is able to see proves a lack of meaning, from toothache to history in general. One can say anything about world history, claims the underground man, except that it is rational (*PSS* 5: 116). Thus, the "overly acute consciousness" of the underground man is an instrument that allows the human being to realize the absurdity and disharmony of the world.

"Overly Acute Consciousness" and Reason

The underground man opposes consciousness to reason, which, as in the philosophy of utopian thinkers, pretends to find a formula of harmony in accordance with the "laws of nature" and to lead man to well-being: "Don't you see: reason is a fine thing, gentlemen, there's no doubt about it, but it's only reason, and it satisfies only man's rational faculty, […] that is, some

one-twentieth of all my faculties. […] But human nature acts as a whole, with all that it contains, consciously and unconsciously" (20). In the underground man's discourse, the "laws of nature" are compared to a stone wall which the human being is desperately trying to break through in order to overcome the irrationality discovered by the "overly acute consciousness." According to Camus, "the absurd is born […] precisely at the very meeting-point of that efficacious but limited reason with the ever resurgent irrational" (*Myth* 38-39). Interestingly enough, Camus also uses the metaphor of the wall which he might have inherited from Dostoevsky: "All man has is his lucidity and his definite knowledge of the walls surrounding him" (ibid. 31). The wall as a symbol of the universe's absurdity, an "incarnation of cruelty and oppression" (Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man* 93), is an important image in proto-existentialist and existentialist literature, especially in Leonid Andreyev's 1901 short story and Sartre's 1939 short story, both entitled "The Wall."

From the point of view of philosophy of rationalism with which the underground man is arguing, reason, as a foundation of progress, is humanity's only hope in a battle with existing chaos and evil. According to the rationalist logic, in the end, reason should lead to absolute harmony, thus there will be no longer any absurdity: "all possible questions will disappear in a single instant, simply because all possible answers will have been provided. Then the crystal palace will be built" (18). It is well known that heroes who thirst for world harmony while being acutely conscious of the absurdity of the world around them are found among Dostoevsky's major characters: Raskolnikov, Prince Myshkin, and Ivan Karamazov. But the first among them was the underground man. He, too, is dreaming of a "mansion," a "palace" as the metaphor for a much better life – a building at which he would not want to stick his tongue any more (*PSS* 5: 120). He is aware, though, that the only instrument of possibly improving life that the human

being possesses is his own reason: except for his "irrational" dream, the underground man cannot offer any alternative to the crystal palace of utilitarianism. The hero does not negate reason *per se*, however his "overly acute consciousness" allows him to see the limits of reason. The lucidity of the underground man's view allows him to argue that there is one limit beyond which reason is no longer helpful in leading humanity to a better life, to a life without chaos and evil. This limit is the human being's notion of freedom.

Freedom, Evil, and the Underground

For the underground man, the notion of freedom implies being able to do whatever one wishes, and to satisfy all desires. He argues that the *khotenie* (desire) of the human being is what exceeds reason and contradicts it: "reason […] satisfies only man's rational faculty, whereas desire is a manifestation of all life" (20). That means that freedom, logically, leads man to evildoing. The underground man mentions several examples from world history in order to prove that the human being prefers chaos and destruction to harmony: Cleopatra, Atilla, Stepan Razin, the Napoleonic wars, the Civil War in the United States, etc. "Just look around: rivers of blood are being spilled, and in the most cheerful way, as if it were champagne" (17). Man sheds blood because if there is anything that man cannot do, there is no freedom. It is quite significant that the underground man insists on associating "acute consciousness" with culture, education, intelligence; being conscious is first of all a feature of the "cultured man of our century." Obviously, the concept of civilization that the underground man eventually comes to discuss falls under the same umbrella. Civilization, the underground man argues, "merely provides a wider sensation in man […]. And through the development of this variety man may even reach the point where he takes pleasure in spilling blood. Why, it's happened to him already" (17). As if in support of the underground man's words, a rich collection of pieces of evidence of man's

deriving perverse pleasure from "spilling blood" would be offered by another of Dostoevsky's underground heroes, Ivan Karamazov. By providing a variety of heart-breaking descriptions of people torturing children out of sadistic propensity, he posits the absurdity of the world and proclaims his famous statement of revolt: "I absolutely renounce all higher harmony. It is not worth one little tear of even that one tormented child" (*BK* 245).

Doing what contradicts reason and its advantages for man is the only way to actively rebel against the "laws of nature" that threaten man's individuality and "to send all these logarithms to hell": "man always and everywhere, whoever he is, has preferred to act as he wished, and not at all as reason and advantage have dictated" (19); "there is one case […] when a man may intentionally, consciously desire even something harmful to himself, something stupid, even very stupid, namely: in order *to have the right* to desire something even very stupid and not be bound by an obligation to desire only what's smart" (21; original emphasis); finally, against any possible harmony man will "invent destruction and chaos" (*PSS* 5: 117). The human being, according to the laws of "acute consciousness," does evil deeds in order only to prove his or her right to do so. Hence, chaos is born out of human consciousness since the notion of freedom is, of course, the construct of consciousness. Therefore, through the notion of "acute consciousness" chaos and evil are related to the underground.

At the same time, the underground man points out a logical paradox that once again testifies to absurdity. The chaos that the human being creates is the result of the very "laws of nature" that he rebels against in order to prove his freedom. If the "laws of nature," as presented by natural science and mathematics, tell that humans descend from a monkey and that "one drop of your own fat is dearer to you than the lives of one hundred thousand of your fellow creatures" (10), then there can be no moral obligations or virtues. The underground man argues that even

though he is capable of doing "unseemly things," he is an "innocent victim" and "guilty without guilt" simply because he is "cleverer" than everyone around him (7). The circle is complete: man's consciousness reflects the "laws of nature" and justifies evil. As Joseph Frank notes, "Dostoevsky […] attributes to his underground man a belief in *scientific determinism*" ("Nihilism" 54), the doctrine on which Chernyshevsky based his philosophy of rational egoism. Perhaps, the underground man would have not agreed that he believes in it: discussing the "laws of nature," he maintains ironical overtones, and, after all, he is not sure whether he believes his own words. But he does show that human consciousness would not be able to logically refute determinism. Frank argues that the underground man uses the latter "as an excuse for his moral flaccidity" (ibid.). Indeed, taken to its extreme, such determinism leaves the human being with no choice, and, therefore, makes moral categories unnecessary: "we need only to discover these laws of nature, and man will no longer answer for his own actions" (18); "this will finally put an end to all the so-called virtues, obligations, and other […] prejudices" (10). Even though the underground man treats it ironically as an utopist thought, in fact, he admits that his own life in the past confirmed such a hypothesis: "at the precise moment that I was most capable of becoming conscious of the subtleties of everything that was 'beautiful and sublime,' as we used to say at one time, that I didn't become conscious, and instead did such unseemly things that... well, in short, *probably everyone else does* […]. It was as if this were *my most normal condition*" (6; emphasis mine).

Not only did the underground man have a feeling that immorality was his normal state, but by suggesting that "everyone else" does it, he insists on the universal nature of his observation. He concludes, finally, that "all of this was taking place according to normal and fundamental laws of overly acute consciousness and of the inertia which results directly from

these laws; consequently not only couldn't one change, one simply couldn't do anything at all" (7).

The Underground and the Absurdist Irony

In *Crime and Punishment*, a similar statement is made by Svidrigailov, a nihilist who is said to have committed several crimes, including child abuse (which led its victim, a young girl, to suicide), the ill-treatment of his servant, and the murder of his wife. In his conversation with Raskolnikov, Svidrigailov explains his lecherous behavior by referring to the concepts of "scientific determinism" and the "laws of nature": "But you need only suppose that I, too, am a man, *et nihil humanum* … in short, that I, too, am capable of being tempted and of falling in love (which, of course, does not happen on command), and then everything is explained in the most natural way. The whole question here is: am I a monster, or a victim myself? Well, and what if I am a victim?" (*Crime* 281) As Jackson has pointed out, "he appeals to 'nature' as a reason for disposing entirely of moral categories or judgment" (*Philosophical Pro* 24). However, it is important to note that like the underground man, Svidrigailov expresses his views in a somewhat ironical mode, as if he were playing the role of the "notorious" Svidrigailov, while, in fact, by exposing such a "philosophy," the real Svidrigailov looks for something that would be "more just and comforting" (*Crime* 290). In this respect, Svidrigailov becomes a direct descendant of the underground man.

Using Camus's terms, we can say that Svidrigailov finds himself in an "existentialist" situation. Such a situation occurs when "overly acute consciousness" faces "the stone wall," giving birth to the feeling of the absurd, when the human being becomes "a stranger to [him]self and to the world, armed solely with a thought that negates itself as soon as it asserts" (Camus, *Myth* 25). Could there be any solution? Often the "nostalgia for the absolute" that every human

being experiences leads him/her to make an "existential leap" that secures peace of mind, such as, for example, attributing the world's absurdity to one's inability to understand God's higher intentions. According to Camus and Sartre, the "existential leap" suggests escape from the absurdity by means of self-deception.

Svidrigailov realizes the absurdity of existence, which he in a very remarkable way illustrates by sharing his views on "metaphysical" issues with Raskolnikov. Svidrigailov provides a genuinely absurdist discourse discussing the existence of ghosts: "What is it they usually say?.. They say, 'You're sick, and therefore what you imagine is all just nonexistent raving.' But there's no strict logic here. I agree that ghosts come only to sick people; but that only proves that ghosts cannot appear to anyone but sick people, not that they themselves do not exist" (*Crime* 289). On the one hand, Svidrigailov's "theory" of ghosts testifies to his "nostalgia" for transcendence (he uses the concept of "another world"). That he tells Raskolnikov he has been "reasoning it out for a long time" (ibid.) indicates his search for an "existential leap" into some higher realm that would free him from the despair of his meaningless existence. On the other hand, he cannot but admit that access to "another world" is inseparably linked with a certain "biological" state of the body, thus, again referring to the "laws of nature." Svidrigailov himself represents a sort of absurdist figure: showing signs of insanity, he deconstructs himself by addressing the topic of insanity with rational arguments. Like the underground man, who argues that consciousness is sickness yet it elucidates the genuinely human in man, Svidrigailov asserts: "I don't need you to tell me I'm not well, though I don't really know what's wrong with me; I think I'm five times healthier than you are" (ibid.). Svidrigaiov's "metaphysical" meditations may be called the "absurdist irony" – the irony that both reveals absurdity and represents a form of rebellion against it. It is this irony that links Svidrigailov's discourse with

the underground man's; therefore, it is also a feature of the underground. This kind of irony is seen when the character addresses metaphysical questions in a serious way in order to bring them to the point where their absurdity becomes obvious. Such are Svidrigilov's ruminations on eternity: "We keep imagining eternity as an idea that cannot be grasped, something vast, vast! But why must it be vast? Instead of all that, imagine suddenly that there will be one little room there, something like a village bathhouse, covered with soot, with spiders in all the corners, and that's the whole of eternity" (ibid.).

Svidrigailov's discourse on eternity suggests that human beings cannot believe in what they cannot imagine. From Svidrigailov's perspective, the abstract nature of the concept of eternity makes it a void concept, a simulacrum, to use Jean Baudrillard's term. Svidrigailov reveals its absurdity by arguing that a concept invented to give human beings "hope" out of their "nostalgia for the absolute" turns out to be void and can be filled with any denotatum; so why would not it be something as earthy as a bathhouse with spiders? Svidrigailov's materialistic worldview, of course, suggests the non-existence of the afterlife. Yet, his discourse on eternity raises a question akin to the philosophy of the absurd: if there is nothing beyond death, then, just like eternity, *nothingness* is an abstract concept that cannot be embraced by human consciousness. Thus, both *eternity* and *non-existence* serve as loopholes for the human being when addressing the meaning of life: we cannot think about what we are not able to think about. Svidrigailov is trying to return the absurd to human life by posing a question of how would human beings live their life if they knew that the afterlife looks exactly as it appears in Svidrigailov's imagination. Svidrigailov himself could not bear the burden of absurdity of which he was aware. He was looking for a way to make a "leap" through his love for Dunya. Having realized that this was impossible, he committed suicide, thus choosing to escape: "Suicide, like

the leap, is acceptance at its extreme (Camus, *Myth* 54). Svidrigailov chooses to destroy the world of the absurd by destroying himself, sealing the absurdity of his very suicide by calling it a trip to America.

The motif of suicide, this "main philosophical question" in Camus's opinion, quite important in Dostoevsky's works, is not explicitly addressed in *Notes*. However, we can assume that it appears in an implicit form, when the underground man discusses the "stone wall." For a man like him, he argues, the stone wall may serve as an "excuse to turn back from the road" ("*vorotitsia s dorogi*"; *PSS* 5: 103) – "a pretext in which a person like me usually doesn't believe, but one for which he's always extremely grateful" (8). Given the symbolic role that the concept of the road plays in the narrator's discourse, referring to life and its meaning, this phrase may very likely hint at suicide as a form of escape from absurdity, and its disapproval. Compare with Camus: "Consciousness and revolt, these rejections are the contrary of renunciation. Everything that is indomitable and passionate in a human heart quickens them, on the contrary, with its own life. It is essential to die unreconciled and not of one's own free will. Suicide is a repudiation" (*Myth* 55).

In the very beginning of *Notes*, the underground man exclaims: "It's rude to live past forty, it's indecent, immoral! Who lives more than forty years? … I'll tell you who: only fools and rascals… I have a right to say it because I myself will live to sixty. I'll make it to seventy! Even to eighty!" (5). What at first seems to be simply a provocative expression of the hero's spite, gets a deeper philosophical meaning, considering the logic of the "underground consciousness" and absurdist irony. Forty years "in the underground" led the underground man to the conclusion that moral concepts do not apply in a world where everything happens according to the "laws of nature." From his own example, he can tell that any "intelligent,"

"acutely conscious" person must realize this truth by the age of forty. While "fools" in his lexicon refers to "normal people" who are simply unaware and "mistake immediate and secondary causes for primary ones" (13), the "conscious" people are "rascals" because they know that it is impossible to find a primary cause that would serve as a foundation for any moral values. Therefore, like Svidrigailov, they know that they live in a world where bad deeds are justified by nature itself.

The Underground as a Protest against Inertia, Boredom, and Death

The underground man argues that the absurdity of the human condition lies in one's inability to protest against nature. Active non-acceptance of the "laws of nature," that is acting against one's own advantage, leads to destruction. Passive non-acceptance of these laws leads to inertia and boredom. In the underground man's discourse, boredom becomes another manifestation of absurdity: "And all as a result of boredom, gentlemen, sheer boredom; I was overcome by inertia. You see, the direct, legitimate, immediate result of consciousness is inertia, that is, the conscious sitting idly by with one's arms folded" (12). Boredom, in turn, leads to protest, and, in accordance with the logic explained earlier, to chaos: "it was so boring to sit idly by with my arms folded; so I'd get into trouble [*vyverty*]" (12). The motif of boredom accompanies Svidrigailov as well. As in the case of the underground man, boredom is an "immediate" cause of his unseemly behavior – his *vyverty* (perverse acts), to use the underground man's word.

Camus mentions *lassitude*[19] (*Le Mythe* 27), which in our context could be seen as a synonym of both boredom and inertia, as a result of a "mechanical" everyday life. In the underground man's views such a life is equal to the life of the "normal man," or even life in the

[19] Weariness.

"crystal palace" based on the scientific formula of human happiness. However, Camus emphasizes the positive potential of lassitude, since it can awaken a "normal man" from his sleep of mind and turn him into a "man of overly acute consciousness" (*Myth* 19). The underground man comes up with this idea when he elaborates on the metaphor of man as "a builder of roads":

> I agree that man is primarily a creative animal, destined to strive consciously toward a goal and to engage in the art of engineering, that is, externally and incessantly, building new roads for himself wherever they lead. But sometimes he may want to swerve aside precisely because he is compelled to build these roads, and perhaps also because *no matter how stupid the spontaneous man of action may generally be, nevertheless it sometimes occurs to him* that the road, as it turns out, almost always leads to somewhere or other, and that the main thing isn't so much where it goes, but the fact that it does […]. Isn't the reason, perhaps, that he is so fond of destruction and chaos (after all, it is indisputable that he sometimes really loves it, and that it is a fact) that he himself has an instinctive fear of achieving his goal and completing the project under construction? (23-24; emphasis mine)

The road that leads somewhere and that the human being fears to ever finish building becomes a metaphor for human life. The end of it, the "goal," may seem to promise him a discovery of the ultimate meaning of life, which, according to the underground man, can only be formulated as yet another law of nature: the goal "must always be none other than two times two makes four, that is, a formula" (24). But from the "laws of nature" comes destruction and chaos. The philosophy of existentialism points out one fundamental "law of nature" that serves as the ultimate source of evil: death. This existentialist message is encrypted in the underground man's words. Irina Kirk noted that Dostoevsky's hero "agrees with the 'laws of nature' as one agrees with the existence of death" (20). This comparison makes clearer the meaning of the underground man's following statement: "after all, two times two makes four is no longer life, gentlemen, but the beginning of *death*. At least man has always been somewhat afraid of this two

times four, and I'm afraid of it now, too" (24; emphasis mine). Indeed, the most fatal of all the laws of nature, which the human being is always uncomfortable to acknowledge, is the inevitability of death. It explains the underground man's rage at natural science and mathematics on a deeper existential level: they all prove human mortality, and life's absurdity is the immediate consequence.

Death as the "destination" of the "road of life" makes the question of finding life's meaning futile, thus, again, bringing back the awareness of its absurdity: "perhaps, the only goal on earth toward which mankind is striving consists merely in this incessant process of achieving or to put it another way, in life itself" (24).

The Underground against God

The underground man points out the inability of "overly acute consciousness" to make an "existential leap," that is to see the existence of something "more just" beyond the absurdity of the world the he lives in. He argues that it is impossible for a "conscious man" to identify the "primary cause" – the reason for all things that for the religious consciousness would be personified in the figure of God: "I exercise myself in thinking, and consequently, with me every primary cause drags in another, an even more primary one, and so on to infinity. This is precisely the essence of all consciousness and thought. And here again, it must be the laws of nature" (13). The expressions that the underground man uses in his discussion of the sources of pain and vice – "who or what it is, no one knows," "someone," "no one knows whose" (*PSS* 5: 106), "there's no real enemy to be identified," "the object vanishes," "a guilty part can't be identified" (13) – consistently emphasize this idea. He can only provide evidence of the "secondary causes," i.e. the "laws of nature". But the "laws of nature" lead to chaos, including moral chaos. *If God does not exist, everything is permitted*, – this statement, although not found in its exact form in

Dostoevsky's text, is often quoted as a summary of Ivan Karamazov's philosophy in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Sartre suggests that these words could be seen as a starting point of existentialism (294-95). The underground man delivers the same message, although, in his language, it would be more correct to formulate it as follows: man's reason, his only instrument for exploring the world, cannot tell whether or not God exists. The only thing that it can tell is that the laws of nature, and the most terrible of them – death – exist. And because they exist, everything is permitted.

This brings back the vicious circle in which the notion of freedom revolves. If the "laws of nature" exist, human beings are not free and are not responsible for their deeds. But human beings prove to themselves that they are free when they choose to act according to their free will and against their "rationally" understood advantages. This causes destruction. And if human beings can prove to themselves that they are free, they are responsible for the evil they do. The underground man describes his experience of this contradiction. His reason proves to him that he, as an example of a depraved person, is not to blame for anything. Yet at the same time this does not give him peace of mind, and the irrational feeling of responsibility remains: "it follows, for example, as a result of this overly acute consciousness, that one is absolutely right in being a scoundrel, as if this were some consolation to the scoundrel" (7); "you are somehow or other to blame even for that stone wall, even though it's absolutely clear once again that you're in no way to blame" (10). The resulting despair that an "acutely conscious man" feels makes the burden of such a situation almost unbearable for him. At the end of the novella the hero arrives at the conclusion that however much humans like feeling free, they would gladly surrender their freedom in order to get rid of this burden: "Give us, for example, a little more independence; untie the hands of any one of us, broaden our sphere of activity, relax the controls, and… I can

assure you, we'll immediately ask to have the controls reinstated" (91). This is when the "existential leap" often takes place. Human beings realize that they need God as a *master* to take the responsibility for the evil and chaos that they, as *slaves*, have done. But this necessarily requires negation of reason and is impossible for the "overly acute consciousness" which would easily realize the paradox clearly formulated by Camus:

> Knowing whether or not man is free involves knowing whether he can have a master. The absurdity peculiar to this problem comes from the fact that the very notion that makes the problem of freedom possible also takes away all its meaning. For in the presence of God there is less a problem of freedom than a problem of evil. You know the alternative: either we are not free and God the all-powerful is responsible for evil. Or we are free and responsible but God is not all powerful. (*Myth* 55)

The notion of freedom contradicts the idea of God as a master. This philosophical problem in an indirect way was posed by Dostoevsky already in *Notes*. It reached its culmination in *The Brothers Karamazov*, in the philosophical plot of the poem by Ivan Karamazov, often referred to as the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." In this text, the Grand Inquisitor postulates that "[m]an was made a rebel," asking Christ a rhetorical question: "can rebels be happy?" (*BK* 251). As Jackson notes, "[h]appiness and rest for [man's] tormented, suffering soul will only come when man renounces freedom and hands over his burden to those who will voluntarily assume his sufferings. This is a central idea of 'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor.' It is antithetical to the rebellious spirit of the Underground Man, but it is rooted in the despair of *Notes from the Underground*" (*Dostoevsky's Underground Man* 52).

The Underground as a Metaphysical Rebellion against the Whole of Creation

The underground man, in a way, provides his own answer to the Grand Inquisitor's question whether rebels can be happy. He argues that man likes suffering no less than well-being and will never "renounce real suffering, that is destruction and chaos" because suffering is the

"sole cause of consciousness" (25). And it is his consciousness that has proved to him that he lives in an absurd situation of "sin without God" (Camus, *Myth* 42). The only way that one can continue to live in such a world is the existential rebellion of consciousness: rebellion against the human being's fate, against the "laws of nature," and, in the end, against death. As Jackson points out, the underground man "is in a permanent rebellion. This is his tragic status – his metaphysical misery and his metaphysical freedom" (*Dostoevsky's Underground Man 15*). Such a rebellion, according to Camus, is the foundation of "absurd freedom": "The return to consciousness, the escape from everyday sleep represent the first steps of absurd freedom" (*Myth* 58). The "acute consciousness" that the underground man demonstrates plays here the crucial role because it puts the human being in constant confrontation with the absurd: "The absurd is his extreme tension, which he [man] maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day-to-day revolt he gives proof of his only truth, which is defiance" (ibid. 55).

If there is no master, then there is no personified enemy for man; thus the only thing the underground man can protest against is the world itself. This idea was emphasized by Bakhtin: "His discourse about the world is both overtly and covertly polemical; it polemicizes not only with other people, with other ideologies, but also with the very subject of its thinking – *with the world and its order*. […] [T]he hero casts an energetic reproach at *the world order*" (*PDP* 236; emphasis mine). This rebellion is, of course, futile, but, according to Camus, it is what makes man's existence worthy: "That revolt gives life its value. Spread out over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to that life. To a man devoid of blinders, there is no finer sight than that of the intelligence at grips with a reality that transcends it" (*Myth* 54). The underground man cannot accept the absurd of the world he lives in. He claims he does not believe "that [he]

was made this way only in order to reach the conclusion that [his] entire way of being is merely a fraud" (26). By choosing to continue to live in such a world, despite its being "immoral," he affirms the only possible way of rebellion: constant conscious questioning of the world.

As I have shown earlier, although he does not address the problem of God directly, the underground man implies the idea of God in his notion of the "primary cause" which he cannot find. He is only able to observe the "secondary causes" – the "laws of nature," in other words, the world itself that he does not accept because of its absurdity. In this way, he anticipates Ivan Karamazov, the hero who, according to Camus, perfectly illustrates the concept of metaphysical rebellion: denunciation of God "as the father of death and as the supreme outrage" (*Rebel* 24).

It is clear that Ivan's rebellious philosophy originates in the "underground consciousness" of the *Notes's* protagonist. In his critical analysis of the "laws of nature," the underground man foresees Ivan's observation that "[t]here exists no law of nature that man should love mankind […] [E]goism, even to the point of evildoing, should not only be permitted to man but should be acknowledged as the necessary, the most reasonable, and all but the noblest result of his situation" (*BK* 69). Ivan, too, is an "acutely conscious man" who admits that man's "Euclidean mind" does not have the property to contemplate the "primary cause," i.e. address God's existence: "it is not for us to resolve things that are not of this world […]. All such questions are completely unsuitable to a mind created with a concept of only three dimensions" (ibid. 235). Ivan develops and explicates the idea implied in the underground man's contemplations: not being able to understand the Creator's intention or whether the Creator exists at all, the human mind, nevertheless, is able to see the absurdity of the creation – its disharmonious and unjust state. Thus, Ivan proclaims: "It's not God that I do not accept […] it is this world of God's, created by God, that I do not accept" (ibid.). Ivan states that he does not accept God's creation

because of all the evil that takes place in the world. However, Dostoevsky demonstrates that denying God's creation is equal to denying God himself, which makes the rebel realize that "everything is permitted." And "[i]f all is permitted, he can kill his father or at least allow him to be killed. Long reflection on the condition of mankind as people sentenced to death only leads to the justification of crime" (Camus, *Rebel* 58).

Unlike that of Ivan, the underground man's rebellion remains on the level of conscious inertia which he prefers to direct action. For him, inertia with full awareness of the absurd becomes a passive revolt that correlates with the logic of his argumentation. He does not become reconciled with the absurd and chaos, yet he is confident that he would not be able to change anything. Following his observations on the relationship between freedom and evildoing, one may conclude that the protagonist's refusal to act is a philosophically thought out, "existential" choice of the way of life that, in the end, will cause less evil.

Conclusion

The philosophy of the underground formulated by the protagonist of *Notes from Underground* represents an anticipation of the existentialist notions of the absurd and metaphysical rebellion. Dostoevsky portrays the "underground consciousness" as a prism that allows its bearer to realize the absurdity of his existence. This absurdity consists in the irreconcilable conflict between the "laws of nature" and the "acutely conscious" human being; in reason's inability to break through the wall of the irrational; in the tragic paradox of freedom that implies destruction; and, finally, in the "acutely conscious man's" concurrent desire and inability to achieve a "higher" realm – "something better" than both the present reality and the utilitarianist conceptions of its improvement by means of reason. The inability of the "underground consciousness" to determine the "primary cause" of absurdity raises the problem

of God as the creator of the unjust universe addressed by Dostoevsky's subsequent underground heroes. Dostoevsky's underground hero's inability to resolve these metaphysical questions affects his discursive behavior, which manifests itself, in particular, in Svidrigailov's absurdist irony. Absurdist irony represents one form of protest against the human being's existential condition. Other forms of such protest – the psychological patterns of *vyvert* and *nadryv* – are examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Psychology of the Underground: *Vyvert* and *Nadryv*

Introduction

Analyzing the underground man's discourse, Mikhail Bakhtin notes that "in its attitude toward the other person it strives to be deliberately inelegant, to 'spite' him and his tastes in all respects.[…] Thus discourse is pointedly cynical, calculatedly cynical, yet also anguished [*s nadryvom*]. It strives to play the holy fool [*stremitsia k iurodstvu*], for holy-foolishness is indeed a sort of form, a sort of aestheticism – but, as it were, in reverse" (*PDP* 231). The characteristics of the underground man's discourse could be extrapolated to his behavior in general. In a more generalized way this idea was formulated by Bakhtin in regard to "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man": "In the central figure of the Ridiculous Man there are clear traces of the *ambivalent – serio-comical* – image of the 'wise fool' and 'tragic clown' of carnivalized literature. But such ambivalence – to be sure, usually in more muffled form – is characteristic for all of Dostoevsky's heroes" (ibid. 150). In fact, on the example of the underground man, Bakhtin identifies the two characteristic patterns that apply to many of Dostoevsky's characters: holy foolishness (*iurodstvo*)/buffoonery[20] and anguish (*nadryv*). Robert Belknap, too, emphasizes the importance of buffoonery in Dostoevsky, and also juxtaposes it with *nadryv*, although only in *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Structure*). In this chapter, I examine the underground psychology in Dostoevsky. I argue that the behavior of the underground characters is informed by the cultural archetype of the *iurodivyi* (holy fool) interpreted primarily in a secular, i.e. psychological, rather than religious sense. *Iurodstvo* in the underground character manifests itself as *vyvert* (vagary, eccentricity), which is juxtaposed with *nadryv* (anguish) as another extreme of the underground psychology. In

[20] Some scholars treat buffoonery as a phenomenon closely related to holy foolishness. See, for example, Likhachev, et al.

my analysis of the underground psychology, I explore the relationship between holy foolishness, buffoonery, *vyvert* and *nadryv*, and *ressentiment* – another psychological pattern typically applied to the underground man by scholars. I will show that on the philosophical level, the underground psychology is related to the underground hero's existential protest.

Iurodstvo, *Vyvert*, and *Nadryv* in Dostoevsky and Scholarly Discourse

The Russian word *iurodstvo* used by Bakhtin in the above quote is derived from *iurodivyi*; the latter is usually translated as "holy fool" or "half-witted," although neither of the translations reflects the multifacetedness of both the phenomenon and the use of the Russian word. Similarly, the Russian *nadryv* represents an important cultural concept, and its translation is also problematic: *nadryv* combines the meanings of the English "strain," "anguish/angst," and "paroxysm." The linguist Irina Levontina defines *nadryv* as

> an emotional state when the person cannot control his or her feelings […]. Moreover, *nadryv* implies certain masochistic narcissism, as well as a hysterically confessional discourse that annoys others [a remarkable parallel with Bakhtin's characteristic of the underground man's discourse noted above – V.I.] […].
>
> [I]t is from Dostoevsky that this meaning of *nadryv* came into sustainable use in the Russian language.
>
> Dostoevsky's entire world, in general, with the flaunted exaggerated feelings [of his characters] […] is one sheer *nadryv*" (191-94).

Long before Levontina, Belknap, and Bakhtin, the significance of *nadryv* and its opposite – *vyvert* ("twist," "quirk," "eccentricity," "vagary") in the ambivalent, "two-faced" behavior of Dostoevsky's hero had been discussed by the poet and literary critic Innokentii Annenskii. Both *vyvert* and *nadryv,* according to him, result from the mixture of buffoonery and petty tyranny that are often seen in Russian people.

> The mystery of "two faces" […] was Dostoevsky's concern throughout his whole life. It was this mystery that created from his pen the eternal husband, Iliushechka's father, Lebiadkin, and Ippolit Terentiev. […] The *mixture of buffoon and petty tyrant* […] expressed itself in his poetry in two ways: in an active moment it produced *vyvert*; in a passive moment – *nadryv*. […] *Vyvert* is […] the razor in the trembling fingers of Trusotsky who will never kill; such are Nastasya Filipovna's flight from the altar and Kirilov's suicide note. But the apex of this kind is represented by the furious thrust of the same Kirilov, when a moment before his death he sinks his teeth in Pëtr Verkhovensky's little finger.
>
> *Nadryv* in Dostoevsky sometimes represents a reaction to *rebellion*, to *vyvert*, and to *vagary*, while sometimes it appears apart from them.
>
> *Nadryv* is Marmeladov's drunken tears; *nadryv* flickers in the dreary running gait of Goliadkin after he was kicked downstairs, and on the wet face of Snegirëv, when with triumph and fear he is looking back at the results of his unexpected rebellion. And, finally, both the first painful informal you by which Sonia addresses Raskolnikov and the underground man's hysterics with its erotic resolution sound equally like *nadryv*. (148; original emphasis)

Both of Annenskii's words – *vyvert* and *nadryv* – are present in Dostoevsky's characters' own discourse. In *Notes from Underground*, the main protagonist uses the word *vyvert* to refer to his eccentric behavior: "it was so boring to spend my time doing nothing; so I'd show eccentric behavior [*puskalsia na vyverty*]" (*PSS* 5:12). *Nadryv* is especially important in *The Brothers Karamazov,* where this word is used in the titles of Book Four – "*Nadryvy*" – and its chapters: "*Nadryv v gostinoi*" and "*Nadryv v izbe.*"[21] Putting together the observations of Annenskii, Bakhtin, Belknap, and Levontina, I suggest that the concepts of *vyvert* and *nadryv* best describe the patterns that define the psychological make-up of the underground characters.

[21] "*Nadryv* in the living room" and "*Nadryv* in the hut." The contexts in which the word *nadryv* is used in *The Brothers Karamazov* are listed in Levontina 194-96.

The Underground Man as *Iurodivyi*

In Russian religious discourse, *iurodstvo* has traditionally referred to foolishness for Christ's sake (*iurodstvo Khrista radi*). "The essential feature of holy foolishness, as a category of the church," as Harriett Murav points out, "can be stated provisionally as the assumption of madness or folly as an ascetic feat of self-humiliation" (1-2). Some of the holy fools were canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church as saints. The canonic religious image of a *iurodivyi* was of great importance for Dostoevsky, and several of his characters are modeled on this archetype.[22] Analyzing the phenomenon of holy foolishness in Dostoevsky, Murav includes in the category of "holy fools" Sonya Marmeladova (*Crime and Punishment*), Prince Myshkin (*The Idiot*), Maria Lebyadkina and Semen Iakovlevich (*Demons*), and Alyosha Karamazov and Zosima (*The Brothers Karamazov*). It is primarily the religious understanding of *iurodstvo* that interests Murav: "'foolishness for Christ's sake' is a practice animated by its own distinct and very marked Christian ideology" (10). For this reason, she argues with Bakhtin (namely, with the passage on *iurodstvo* cited above), saying that "holy foolishness […] ought not to be reduced to its purely formal dimensions" (10). Consequently, Murav does not allow for associations between the underground man and a *iurodivyi*. "Dostoevsky's hero is not most typically the underground narrator, who thumbs his nose at the Crystal Palace. […] It is instead suggested by the kind of holy-foolish self-fashioning that understands itself to be modeled after a transcendent image" (12). It is difficult to completely agree with Murav, because such major Dostoevsky characters as Raskolnikov, Stavrogin, and Ivan Karamazov could be seen as immediate descendants of the underground man. Thus Tatiana Goricheva points out that the underground man belongs to those Dostoevsky heroes who play holy fools ("Iurodivye"). Moreover, even the

[22] See Goricheva, "Iurodivyie," V. Ivanov, Isupov, Kashurnikov, Onasch.

religious notion of *iurodivyi* is not completely inapplicable with respect to the underground man, if we consider Dostoevsky's initial intention to deduce from the underground man's meditations "the necessity of faith in Christ." Following Bakhtin, in my study of the "underground consciousness" I consider the *iurodivyi* archetype primarily as a formal model which, nevertheless, could reveal the "memory of genre" (Bakhtin), that is, in this case, the genre of life of a holy fool in hagiography.

Indeed, there are several motifs that allow for comparison between the underground man's life and worldview and that of a hagiographic holy fool. First of all, the underground man lives the life of a recluse in his underground which, in accordance with its literal meaning, reminds one of the caves where some of the early Russian saints, including the first Russian *iurodivyi* Isaac, used to live (Vl. Toporov, *Sviatye* 53-54).[23] Secondly, the central episode of Part II of *Notes* depicts the underground man visiting a brothel where he is trying to convince a prostitute, Liza, to give up her fatal path. As Sergei Ivanov has pointed out, "[t]he holy fool deliberately created the lecher's image for himself. To him a visit to a whore-house was but one of his excesses, and not even the most scandalous one" ("Saint" 444). Several lives of holy fools depict a *iurodivyi* who comes to a whorehouse and, pretending to be its regular customer, converts a prostitute to the path of godly life.[24] Finally, the canonic mission of a *iurodivyi* is understood by the church as "a spiritual instruction in a joking and paradoxical way" (S. Ivanov, *Blazhennye pohaby* 12). The ultimate goal of a canonic holy fool is to serve as a mirror that reflects the sins of those around him in an exaggerated manner. This corresponds with the underground man's statement on one of the last pages of his confession: "in my life I've only

[23] For more on associations between the metaphorical and the literal in the notion of the underground, see Chapter 3.
[24] See S. Ivanov, *Blazhennye pohaby* 76-81.

taken to an extreme that which you haven't even dared to take halfway. […] So, in fact, I may even be 'more alive' than you are (91).

In his history of Orthodox *iurodstvo*, Sergei Ivanov views it as a cultural phenomenon that can be approached in a semiotic way. According to him, a *iurodivyi* is "a person who simulates insanity in public, and pretends to be a fool or shocks those around him with his dissoluteness" (*Blazhennye pohaby* 9). Ivanov distinguishes between two culturally different types of *iurodstvo* – the religious and the secular, or psychological: "Extravagancy of all sorts can be called *iurodstvo* only if those witnessing it see […] a special motivation behind it, a reference to another reality. In the context of Orthodox culture such a reality is of a divine nature; in the context of secular culture of the modern period its nature is psychological" (ibid. 10). He notes that manifestations of both types of *iurodstvo* can be found among Dostoevsky's characters: "Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov is a buffoon who plays a holy fool; staff-captain Snegirëv clowns out of humiliation" (ibid.). Thus, it would be safe to suppose that the "deliberately inelegant" (Bakhtin) behavior of the underground character may be viewed as "secular" *iurodstvo*, referring to some psychological reality behind it. The latter is, in fact, the "underground consciousness." Similarly, Goricheva speaks of two types of *iurodivyi* – *sviatoi iurodivyi* (holy fool) and *iurodivyi ponevole* (involuntary *iurodivyi*). However, unlike Ivanov, she approaches both of them from a religious point of view. She attributes the latter form of *iurodstvo* to the underground man and other Dostoevskian underground characters, pointing out that "the holy fool lives in both paradise and hell," while Dostoevsky's underground heroes "live in hell, but, as God's children, they cannot forget about paradise" ("Iurodivye" 69).

Ivanov's description of the *iurodivyi* as a psychological type is completely applicable to the underground man, and it strikingly coincides with Bakhtin's analysis of the underground

man's discourse. According to Bakhtin, the main goal of the underground man's confession is "the destruction of one's own image in another's eyes, the sullying of that image in another's eyes. […] For this reason he makes his discourse about himself deliberately ugly. He wants to kill in himself any desire to appear the hero in others' eyes (and in his own)." However, the underground man always retains the possibility of "altering the ultimate, final meaning" of his own words. "What he fears most of all is that people might think he is repenting before someone, that he is asking someone's forgiveness, that he is reconciling himself to someone else's judgment or evaluation" (*PDP* 231, 233, 229). Ivanov argues that the psychological pattern of a secular *iurodivyi* includes three stages:

> Such a person understands that, seen from the outside, he appears to be miserable, and so he forestalls someone else's contempt by exaggerated self-abasement, thus earning certain advantages in his own eyes. […] [A]t the next twist of this psychological split the person himself already informs others that the self-abasement that he is playing is not sincere, and its goal is to just mask his infinite superiority over them; but at the third twist the same person, probably guessing that the impression he is making is actually not completely baseless, wants to ruin the very process of pronouncing judgments by creating a scandal. (*Blazhennye pohaby* 10-11)

Defining the secular – psychological – version of *iurodstvo*, Ivanov concludes that its self-abasement becomes "a higher form of pride" (ibid. 11). The underground man himself confirms this: "For example I'm terribly proud. I'm as mistrustful and as sensitive as a hunchback or a dwarf. But in truth I've experienced some moments when, if someone had slapped my face, I might even have been grateful for it. I'm being serious. I probably would have been able to derive a peculiar sort of pleasure from it" (7). In the underground man's own discourse pride sometimes seems to function as a synonym of the underground itself: "I hated them all at once and took refuge from everyone in fearful, wounded and excessive pride" (47).

Renée Girard, too, names pride as a crucial component of the underground psychology. According to him, pride is "the primary psychological (and before long metaphysical) motor which governs all the individual and collective manifestations of the underground life" (61).

In Part I of *Notes from the Underground*, the scheme suggested by Sergei Ivanov, precisely the first and the second "twists," reflects the way the underground man communicates with his imagined interlocutors. At first, he demonstrates self-abasement by hoping for "a slap in the face": "As for a slap in the face – why, here the consciousness of being beaten to a pulp would overwhelm you. The main thing is, no matter how I try, it still turns out that I'm always the first to be blamed for everything and, what's even worse, I'm always the innocent victim" (7). But almost immediately he starts to show his "infinite superiority" (S. Ivanov): "Therefore in the first place, I'm guilty inasmuch as I'm smarter than everyone around me. (I've always considered myself cleverer than everyone around me)" (7). And then he revokes his initial "submissive" statements and inverts them: "you'll be hinting to me ever so politely that perhaps during my life I too have received such a slap in the face and therefore I'm speaking as an expert […] Well, rest assured, gentlemen I've never received such a slap, although it's really all the same to me what you think about it. Perhaps, I may even regret the fact that I've given so few slaps during my lifetime" (9).

In Part II he goes through all three stages of this pattern during and after the farewell party for Zverkov. The motif of giving a slap returns here, thus emphasizing the underground man's fantasy about the final – scandalous – stage of playing a *iurodivyi*. The first stage (self-abasement): "'Zverkov! I ask your forgiveness,' I said, harshly and decisively, 'yours too, Ferfichkin, and everyone's, everyone's. I've insulted you all!' 'Aha! So a duel isn't really your sort of thing!' hissed Ferfichkin venomously" (56). The second stage (showing superiority): "His

remark was like a painful stab to my heart. 'No, I'm not afraid of a duel, Ferfichkin! I'm ready to fight with you tomorrow, even after we're reconciled. I even insist upon it, and you can't refuse me. I want to prove that I'm not afraid of a duel. You'll shoot first, and I'll fire into the air'" (56). And, finally, the third stage (imagined scandal): "I *must* give Zverkov a slap in the face! I am obligated to do so. […] So just let them beat me now! […] That's why I've come. At least these blockheads will be forced to grasp the tragedy in all this. As they drag me to the door, I'll tell them that they really aren't even worth the tip of my little finger!" (58)

Provocation and Aggression in the Underground Psychology

From Sergei Ivanov's point of view, *iurodstvo* necessarily involves provocation and aggression. By provocation he means "the deliberate creation of a situation that forces someone to act the way he or she did not intend," while aggression is "activity that explodes the established relationships between people, breaks the *status quo* and is perceived by the object of aggression as unfriendly" (*Blazhennye pohaby* 19). Provocation lies at the core of the underground man's discourse and behavior. In Part I, he provokes his implied reader. As Bakhtin puts it, "[t]he hero who repents and condemns himself actually wants only to provoke praise and acceptance" (*PDP* 233). In Part II, the underground man's provocation functions as the main psychological mechanism, as well as the primary constructive principle of the plot. In his recollection of the past, he describes the following situation:

> passing by some wretched little tavern late at night, I saw through a lighted window some gentlemen fighting with billiard cues; one of them was thrown out of the window. […] I envied the gentleman who'd been tossed out; I envied him so much that I even walked into the tavern and entered the billiard room. "Perhaps," I thought, "I'll get into a fight, and they'll throw me out the window, too." (34)

Provocation becomes the main motive of the underground man's inviting himself to the dinner with his former schoolmates (for example, his provocative toast that begins with his hatred for phrasemongers and ends with wishing Zverkov health).

As for the second psychological component of *iurodstvo*, aggression – it is present mainly in the underground man's fantasies. In his imagination, the underground man practices different forms of aggression directed towards Zverkov and his associates: "he'll be on the sofa with Olympia. […] I'll drag Olympia around by the hair and Zverkov by the ears. No, better grab one ear and lead him around the room like that. […] I'll fasten my teeth on his arm and bite him" (59). However, he never gets a chance to do any of these things in reality. Therefore he transfers his provocative and aggressive impulses onto the most "accessible" object – the prostitute Liza. While his aggression vents itself in a sexual way, the mechanism of provocation starts to work in him when he predicts the tragic fate and early death of Liza, as if he were willing to rescue her from the degrading path she has chosen.

The psychology of the underground man has been analyzed by several literary scholars in the context of the notion of *ressentiment* originally defined by Friedrich Nietzsche and developed by Max Scheler.[25] *Ressentiment* partially explains the unfulfilled nature of the underground man's aggression. According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is the psychology of "those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge" (*On the Genealogy* 20). The underground man feels offended by others and the whole of creation, but his "acute consciousness" cannot justify any active manifestation of revenge due to the lack of a clear "primary cause" for that. This combination of the underground man's resentment and his inability to fight back against his offenders provides the perfect basis for his *ressentiment* that manifests itself as his imaginary aggression. Scheler considers revenge to be "the most suitable

[25]See, for example, Bernstein 87-120, Weisberg 24-41, Wyman.

source for the formation of *ressentiment*" since it is based on the blockage of an immediate response "caused by the reflection that an immediate reaction would lead to defeat, and by a concomitant pronounced feeling of 'inability' and 'impotence.' […] [R]evenge tends to be transformed into *ressentiment* the more it is directed against lasting situations which are felt to be 'injurious' but beyond one's control – in other words, the more the injury is experienced as a destiny" (118; 120-21). Regarding this description Alina Wyman writes: "One can hardly find a more fitting definition of the Underground Man's 'existential injury,' perceived as a global joke at his expense, a painful but inevitable blow dealt by the anonymous forces of the fatalistic universe" (122).

Ressentiment also indicates a suppressed will for power. "The desire for revenge, which is itself caused by a repression, has powerful repressive tendencies" (Scheler 120). Indeed, the purpose of both provocation and aggression in the underground man is to be recognized by the other (i.e., the "normal man of action") and, ultimately, to gain power and control over him or her (and, potentially, even to dethrone the most powerful source of repression – the Creator of the unjust universe)[26]: "On the contrary, *I desperately wanted to prove to all this 'rabble*' that I really wasn't the coward I imagined myself to be. But that's not all: in the strongest paroxysm of cowardly fever I dreamt of gaining the upper hand, of conquering them, of carrying them away, compelling them to love me" (49; emphasis mine); "After all, I couldn't live without exercising power and tyrannizing over another person" (87).

However, in the case of the underground man, aggression may also serve another important function: a reaction to any possibility of being defined and "finalized" by the other. Bakhtin emphasizes the underground man's "destruction of [his] own image in another's eyes, the sullying of that image in another's eyes as an ultimate desperate effort to free [him]self from

[26] See the section on metaphysical rebellion in Chapter 1.

the power of the other's consciousness." It is this intention, Bakhtin argues, that makes the underground man's discourse and behavior reach "the point of cynicism and holy-foolishness [*iurodstvo*]" (*PDP* 232). Goricheva adds that "the *iurodivyi* also destroys any 'stable' conception of himself: he is a freak [*urod*] without a shape [*obraz*], he is 'un-shapely' ['*bez-obrazen*']" ("Iurodivye" 75). Bakhtin's and Goricheva's observations help us understand the psychological reaction of the underground man when he thinks of the possibility of Liza's coming to his place for a visit. He starts to "acquire a shape," seeing himself in all his miserable appearance, as if from Liza's point of view: "'What if she comes?' I thought continually. 'Well, so what? It doesn't matter. Let her come. Hmm. The only unpleasant thing is that she'll see, for instance, how I live. […] Besides, it's revolting that I've sunk so low. The squalor of my apartment. And I dared go to dinner last night wearing such clothes!'" (76) It is no coincidence that during his first encounter with Liza, the underground man for the first time mentions looking in a mirror and finding his appearance "disgusting." Even at this moment, he looks at himself through the other's (i.e. Liza's) eyes. This psychological mechanism was described by Bakhtin in his early philosophical essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," where he postulates the crucial role of the other with his or her "excess of seeing" in finalizing the outward appearance of a person:

> I am not alone when I look at myself in the mirror: I am possessed by someone else's soul. More than that. At times this other soul may gain body to the point where it attains a certain self-sufficiency. Vexation and a certain resentment, with which our dissatisfaction about our own exterior may combine, give body to this other – the possible author of our own exterior. Distrust of him, hatred, a desire to annihilate him become possible. In trying to fight against another's potential, comprehensively formative evaluation, I consolidate it to the point of giving it self-subsistence, almost to the point where it becomes a person localized in being. (33)

Indeed, the anticipation of Liza's coming for a visit prompts the underground man's aggression: "I was so distressed that I sometimes became furious"; "it seemed I'd have crushed that 'damned' Liza if she'd suddenly turned up next to me" (77). But again, in accordance with *ressentiment*, direct aggression remains in the realm of the underground man's imagination.

In addition to the psychological reasons explained in this chapter, the underground man's failure to enact aggression is consistent with his philosophy. Indeed, acting aggressively would actually mean for him to turn into a "man of action," his ideological enemy.[27] Goricheva makes a profound observation that "[o]ne of the reasons why Dostoevsky's hero knows so many truths is because he is impassive, inactive. Any activity, even with a good purpose, makes consciousness rough, muffles it" ("Iurodivye" 75).

Iurodstvo, Theatricality, and Buffoonery

As we could see, the underground man's psychological *iurodstvo* in the form of provocation and aggression demonstrates his complex relationship with the other's consciousness. This is precisely how Bakhtin describes it in regard to the hero's discourse: "extraordinary dependence upon it and at the same time extreme hostility toward it and nonacceptance of its judgments" (*PDP* 230). The very existence of the "underground consciousness" depends on the constant presence of the other – the reader, the listener (Liza), or the spectator (the former schoolmates). This makes theatricality a necessary component of the underground existence. Even the underground man's most hidden and shameful part of life – his depravity – involved a bit of spectacle: "I experienced hysterical fits accompanied by tears and convulsions" (34).

[27] In contemporary Russian literature, the problematic relationship between the underground and aggression is discussed in Vladimir Makanin's novel *Andegraund, ili Geroi nashego vremeni* and is referred to through the concept of *udar* (the blow). See Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

In many ways, the underground man's theatricality can be attributed to the role of literature in his self-consciousness. He evaluates all the situations he finds himself in as "literary" or "non-literary": "The devil knows how I would have given for a genuine, ordinary quarrel, a decent one, a more *literary* one, so to speak" (34; emphasis in original). At times he dreams of himself as a romantic literary hero: "I suddenly became a hero. […] I couldn't conceive of a secondary *role*" (39-40; emphasis mine). In the scene where the underground man preaches to Liza the moral way of life, his ability to merge with the *role* he takes on becomes especially clear: "I was no longer coldly philosophizing. I began to feel what I was saying and grew excited" (64). However Liza, who, just like Sonya Marmeladova, is granted by Dostoevsky the ability to deeply understand and accept the underground character, immediately suspects the "literary" nature of his speech: "You somehow… it sounds just like a book" (69). Of course, her remark prompted another fit of provocation in the underground man.

The very "notes" that the underground man is writing function for him as a stage where he plays his monodrama. Theatricality becomes an inseparable component of Dostoevsky's underground characters' behavior. Viewing the underground man as a performer on stage leads us to the problem of buffoonery and its relation to *iurodstvo* in the psychological portrait of the underground character. As we have seen earlier, both Annenskii and Belknap posit buffoonery as a category that defines many of Dostoevsky's characters who demonstrate the underground psychology and is closely related to *vyvert* and *nadryv*. Belknap explores buffoonery in Maksimov, Fyodor Pavlovich, Khokhlakova, and Kolia Krasotkin, emphasizing the importance of their self-dramatization – the trait that connects them with the underground man. According to Sergei Ivanov, the common association between the canonic *iurodivyi* and the buffoon as a phenomenon of the "laughter culture" is not legitimate:

> the similarity between them is quite superficial: yes, both of them live in a twisted, unreal world, and both cannot fulfill themselves without a spectator. But at the same time, the buffoon is a part of the crowd, whereas the *iurodivyi* is […] completely alone; the buffoon is all in dialogue, whereas *iurodivyi* is fundamentally monologic; the buffoon is immersed in the festive time, and *iurodivyi* is beyond time. (*Blazhennye pohaby* 16)

It is different, however, in the case of secular (psychological) *iurodstvo*, which, as we have seen, should be attributed to the underground character; for instance, Ivanov calls Fyodor Pavlovich "a buffoon who plays a *iurodivyi*" (ibid. 10). I suggest that the cultural archetypes of both the *iurodivy* and the buffoon – in a transformed way – merged in the psychological make-up of the underground character. Of course, the degree to which each of these two components reveals itself in a particular character could be different.

As for the underground man, his relation to laughter is quite ambivalent and testifies to the prevalence of the *iurodivyi* component. Both his "deliberately inelegant discourse" (Bakhtin), full of paradoxical statements, irony and self-irony, and the tragicomic scenes he invents (such as the depiction of a man suffering from toothache) can make the reader laugh. However such laughter, as a reflection of provocation and spite, will necessarily include some discomfort and may even lead to the feeling of angst. The underground man himself is aware of this. As always, he tries to control and manipulate his interlocutor's reaction: "You probably think, gentlemen, that I want to amuse you. You're wrong about that, too. I'm not at all the cheerful fellow I seem to be" (5). "Of course, my jokes are in bad taste. […] But that's because I have no respect for myself" (12). "Gentlemen, I'm joking of course, and I myself know that it's not a very good joke; but, after all, you can't take everything as a joke. Perhaps I'm gnashing my teeth while I joke" (23).

The kind of laughter "from the underground" is a paradoxical one and implies self-annihilation. Nevertheless, there are some important characteristics that the underground man shares with the buffoon as described by Bakhtin, and they help us better understand the phenomenon of the underground. The first of them is that "the very being of these figures [rogue, clown, and fool] does not have a direct, but rather a metaphorical, significance. [...] Sometimes their significance can be reversed – but one cannot take them literally, because they are not what they seem" ("Forms" 159). As we have seen already, this is what the underground man has in common with both the buffoon and *iurodivyi*. His self-abasement and his declared lack of self-respect signify his excessive pride and the feeling of superiority.

The second characteristic emphasizes the fact that both the buffoon and the underground man are "strangers" in this world in the sense that they do not make "common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available; none of these categories quite suits them, they see the underside and the falseness of every situation. Therefore they can exploit any position they choose, but only as a mask" (ibid.).

Finally, Bakhtin views the buffoon's existence as "a reflection of some other's mode of being – and even then, not a direct reflection" (ibid.). In what sense does this apply to the underground man? What Bakhtin means is that the buffoon in a parodied way reflects the image of the typical ordinary man, and therefore "externalizes" it. Despite his initial confidence that he belongs to a chosen few who possess "acute consciousness," the underground man could represent an exaggerated, to the point of grotesque, reflection of a "normal man." As Joseph Frank points out, "the life of the underground man is the *reductio ad absurdum* of that of the man of action" (*Dostoevsky* 322). If there is a statement of the underground man that the reader can trust more than any other, it would be his testimony that he has only "taken to an extreme

that which you haven't even dared to take halfway" (91). After all, in the preface, Dostoevsky directly states that his hero is "one of the characters of the recent past"– a representative of "the generation that is still living its last years" (*PSS* 5: 99), while the above-quoted words of the underground man are found at the end of the novel and, to some extent, connect its end with its beginning. The underground man arrives at the point where he starts to see the underground as a common state of man's existence in the present time: he becomes aware that his notes will produce "an extremely unpleasant impression because we've all become estranged from life, we're all cripples, every one of us, more or less" (91). Thus, he suggests that his "notes" actually play the role of a mirror for his audience (an idea similar to that expressed by Nikolai Gogol through his famous epigraph to *The Government Inspector* – the proverb "no need to blame the mirror if your face is crooked"). As Bakhtin points out, "the clown and the fool represent a metamorphosis of tsar and god [in our case it would be the "normal man," the arbiter of the "mainstream"] – but the transformed figures are located in the nether world" ("Forms" 161). As I will show in Chapter 3, on the level of mythological imagery the underground can, indeed, be associated with the nether world.

Like the idea of parodying the "normal man," another paradoxical idea related to the motif of the underground man as an indirect reflection of some other realm of existence is also expressed by the character on the last page of the book. The underground man speaks of some "living life" (*zhivaia zhizn'*) that, according to him, his generation (we can assume that it is his generation that he refers to by "we") has lost connection with. It is not quite clear what exactly this "living life" stands for, but it is obvious that it is opposed to both the life of the "normal man" and existence in the underground. However, as the hero suggests, despite its being a form of isolation, descending into the underground actually brings him closer to the "living life" than

those who live a life of ordinary people: "in fact, I may be even 'more alive' than you are" (91). Just like Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, who, descending deeper and deeper into Hell, at some point starts to ascend through Purgatory and up to Heaven, the underground man hints at the possibility of the underground as the purification that leads to the exit into the light. This idea, although not realized in *Notes*, will be further elaborated in *Crime and Punishment* (Raskolnikov), *Demons* (Shatov, Stepan Trofimovich), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dmitry).

As we have seen, throughout the major part of the novella, the underground man appears to be a philosophical predecessor of Ivan Karamazov who claims that "absurdities are all too necessary on earth" (*BK* 243). In addition to representing certain psychological patterns, the underground man's *iurodstvo* and buffoonery also serve the philosophical goal of pointing out disharmony and absurdity in the world. In this respect, the underground man reveals the tragic aspect of buffoonery, the one that Belknap explores in *The Brothers Karamazov*. According to Belknap, whereas the Devil embodies the metaphysical rejection of God's world and its order, "buffoonery is the practical, everyday rejection of it, in the name of the self, ordering the world according to one's own patterns, but rejecting the reasonable, the socially acceptable, the religiously acceptable externals, and lapsing into the self-perpetuating shame caught in its self-dramatization" (*Structure* 45). "I'd sell the whole world for a kopeck if people would only stop bothering me. Should the world go to hell, or should I go without my tea? I say, let the world go to hell as long as I can always have my tea," – exclaims the underground man in a fit of hysterics before Liza (86).

Vyvert and Doubling. The Definition of *Vyvert*

As I showed in Chapter 1, the underground inertia results from the character's inability to determine "primary causes," therefore, in his philosophical system, it refers to the world's

absurdity. The *vyverts* he is talking about, in turn, function as perverted attempts to fight inertia, thus representing the active reaction to the same absurdity. Thus, in the underground man's own discourse, *vyvert* is a synonym of buffoonery as defined by Belknap. At the same time, just like *iurodstvo*, *vyvert* is associated with simulation: "it was so boring to spend my time doing nothing; so I'd show eccentric behavior [*puskalsia na vyverty*]." […] I would imagine adventures for myself, inventing a life in order to have some real-life experience" (*PSS* 5: 108). Consequently, *vyvert* is the concept that refers to the *duality* of the underground man.

Duality permeates the whole underground man's existence and the way he communicates with the world. Such duality partially stems from the underground man's romantic background, since he belongs to the generation of the 1840s. Citing himself as an example he ironically demonstrates how the romantic idea of two spheres (the earthy reality and the higher world of romantic dream) and escape from the base existence actually justifies the most disgusting acts: "Either a hero or dirt – there was no middle ground. That was my ruin because in the dirt I consoled myself knowing that at other times I was a hero, and that the hero covered himself with dirt; that is to say, an ordinary man would be ashamed to wallow in filth, but a hero is too noble to become defiled; consequently, he can wallow" (40). The underground man's duality of a quasi-romantic self-perception is superimposed on the duality of his relation with the other which I discussed earlier – his dependence on the other's presence and his hostility to the other as possible authority. As a result, the underground man's personality, in fact, splits into doubles.

The other whom he addresses as his reader is actually himself – after all, every utterance he attributes to his interlocutor in fact belongs to the underground man's own discourse. This psychological process of the "underground doubling" is insightfully described by Girard: "in failure he divides in two and becomes a contemptible person and a contemptuous observer of the

human scene. He becomes Other to himself. The failure constrains him to take up against himself the part of this Other who reveals to him his own nothingness" (60). The period of the underground man's dissipation is replaced by the period of "remorse and tears," in which he is "not at all like the gentleman who, in his faint-hearted anxiety, had sewn a German beaver onto the collar of his old overcoat" (39). The two doubles – the one who demonstrates "eccentric" and repulsive behavior (plays a buffoon, sinks in dirt, and practices self-humiliation) and the one who judges the former one – correspond with the two modes of existence of the Dostoevsky character emphasized by Annenskii: *vyvert* and *nadryv* respectively.

Thus, we can define *vyvert* as one of the two psychological extremes of the "underground consciousness." It may express itself as psychological *iurodstvo* (self-abasement out of pride), buffoonery, provocation, and/or aggression. Its hidden meaning is pointing out and reacting to the irrationality and absurdity of the world. Therefore, *vyvert* represents a manifestation of rebellion against the existing universe and against attempts to justify it by means of reason.

Vyvert and *Nadryv*. The Definition of *Nadryv*

Vyvert associates with the provocative and aggressive aspect of *iurodstvo*. Interestingly enough, double life is also a substantial motif in the canonic description of *iurodivyi*. In the hagiographic narrative, duality represents the opposition of the simulative and the sincere in the character's behavior. As Aleksandr Panchenko points out, in saints' lives there are moments (mostly, at night) when the *iurodivyi* is no longer a performer but a passionate prayer who often accompanies his prayers with tears (Likhachev, et al. 81). This aspect of *iurodstvo* corresponds with the underground character's *nadryv* in Dostoevsky. We can assume that in Dostoevsky, too, *nadryv* is responsible for revealing the character's true self. Belknap's definition of *nadryv* as the opposite of buffoonery supports this idea (*Structure* 46). Both Belknap and Annenskii mention

hysterics and weeping as a possible manifestation of *nadryv*. Belknap, however, focuses on just one possible meaning of *nadryv*: "a twisted response to wealth and benefits received, or at least offered" (ibid.).

According to Annenskii, in *Notes*, *nadryv* corresponds to the underground man's hysterical paroxysm when he receives Liza at his place. The beginning of this *nadryv*, however, should be traced back to his initial conversation with Liza in the brothel. It is here that the underground man realizes something unexpected, uncontrolled, and *real* in his emotional reactions: feelings of self-disgust, shame, remorse, guilt, and, finally, pain. The perversity of the situation he found himself in leads him to experiencing angst: "I'd suddenly realized starkly how absurd, how revolting as a spider, was the idea of debauchery. […] I felt very uneasy" (61). One of the main leitmotifs that links the Liza scenes together is the underground man's *pain*: "I hurt [*Mne bylo bol'no*]" (*PSS* 5: 162); "Something was rising, rising up in my soul continually, painfully, and didn't want to settle down" (76); "I fantasized, […] stifling the stabbing pain in my heart" (90). In my analysis of Part I of *Notes*, I defined the existential meaning of *pain*, as presented from the point of view of the underground man. Consequently, in Part II, the underground man's *nadryv* serves as an illustration of his "theoretical" statements. Through the motif of *pain,* Dostoevsky makes *nadryv* a tragic form of realization of and reaction to the absurdity of the world (e.g. debauchery instead of true love). In this way *nadryv* is both associated with and opposed to buffoonery, which agrees with Belknap's conclusions: "Buffoonery and the *nadryv* may be said to lie on one axis of the novel, the axis which has done most to make Dostoevskij the old testament of the existentialists today, but they lie at opposite ends of this axis" (*Structure* 46).

Pain clusters with another important motif – the underground man's acknowledgement of the true nature of his feelings, as opposed to "putting on an act": "my nervous attack was *genuine*" (84; emphasis mine); "I […] sobbed in *genuine* hysterics for a quarter of an hour" (87; emphasis mine); "the stabbing [*zhivaia* which could as well be translated as *genuine*] pain in my heart" (90). According to the "loophole" principle described by Bakhtin, the underground man's *words* could be both true and false: "A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words" (*PDP* 233). On the contrary, the hero is aware that his *emotions* and *feelings* are either genuine or ostentatious. Thus, the repeated motif of *genuineness* suggests that the underground man is confident that during his encounter with Liza he experienced a few glimpses of his "true self." This, however, was not enough for him to overcome his will to power and tyranny. In *Notes*, *nadryv* takes place when the hidden desire to get out of the underground meets the realization of the impossibility of doing so: "'They won't let me … I can't be … good!' I barely managed to say; then I went over to the sofa, fell upon it face down, and sobbed in genuine hysterics for a quarter of an hour" (87).

Thus, *nadryv* represents another psychological extreme of the "underground consciousness." Just like *iurodsto* and buffoonery, it indicates absurdity, but unlike them it departs from simulation and play and involves genuine pain, angst, hysterics, and tears. Although it is not yet the case in *Notes*, potentially, *nadryv* may lead the hero out of the underground, which will be explored by Dostoevsky in his subsequent works. Thus, it is in the state of *nadryv* that Dostoevsky's underground character finds himself on the "long road" that he must travel "in order to break through to his self," "to break through to spiritual sobriety" (*PDP* 234).

Conclusion

The "underground consciousness" of Dostoevsky's hero presents the existential condition of the human being through the prism of the absurd and takes a rebellious stance against the whole of creation. This philosophical attitude defines the specific underground psychology that explains the perversities and whims in the underground man's behavior. The underground psychology shares with "secular" (psychological) *iurodstvo* such traits as provocation and aggression, while doubling and theatricality reveals its similarities with buffoonery. The notion of *ressentiment* partially explains the underground man's transfer of his aggression into the sphere of his imagination, although his refusal to act aggressively in reality is also directly related to his philosophical devaluation of self-assertion by means of action. The two opposite extremes of the underground behavior become *vyvert* – buffoonery, provocation, aggression, outrage, and *nadryv* – anguish, pain, hysterics, psychological breakdown.

Chapter 3

Imagery of the Underground: the Metaphorical and the Literal

Introduction

Although the protagonist of *Notes from Underground* does not literally live in any kind of subterranean dwelling, he uses the concept of the underground as an overarching image that defines his entire existence, from how he perceives his living space to the way he views his spiritual condition. As a metaphor, the underground gives the narrator, in Yuri Lotman's words, "the possibility of spatial modeling of concepts which themselves are not spatial in nature" (*Structure* 218). In the previous chapters I analyzed Dostoevsky's underground as the metaphor of the hero's "proto-existentialist" philosophical worldview and the psychological pattern characterized by *iurodstvo* and *ressentiment*. It is significant, however, that the underground in Dostoevsky functions as both the metaphor and the concrete image that form his poetics of space. In this chapter, I consider the *poetical* potential of "the inner form of the word" *podpol'e*, that is, its "immediate etymological meaning" (Potebnia 178): *the space under the floorboards.* Analyzing Dostoevsky's texts on the level of motifs, I find that the motif of the underground space, as well as a number of associated motifs that it generates (spider, water, bathhouse, resurrection), accompany Dostoevsky's underground characters in *Crime and Punishment*, "The Eternal Husband," "Bobok," "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," and *The Brothers Karamazov*. I suggest that these motifs serve as an artistic tool that establishes these characters' kinship with the underground man not just on the ideological or psychological planes, but on the plane of poetics as well. I also argue that Dostoevsky's depiction of the underground in *Notes from Underground* leads to a development and refinement of the theme of resurrection, through subsequent works, culminating in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The Underground as a Space and Chronotope

The underground denotes a certain space, in fact, a *chronotope* associated with the underground man. He repeatedly insists that he spent forty years, that is, his entire life, in the underground. From the very beginning, the narrator also wants to emphasize that his existence is inseparable from the space he lives in – a nasty apartment on the outskirts of St. Petersburg: "last year, when a distant relative of mine left me six thousand rubles in his will, I immediately retired and settled down in this corner. I used to live in this corner before, but now *I've settled down in it*" (5, emphasis mine). He uses the metaphor of the shell (*skorlupa*) in order to stress the protective function of his home: "my own apartment was my private residence, my shell, my case, where I hid from all humanity" (79). The similarity between being protected by and invisible because of a shell (for example, like a chick inside an egg, or a snail inside its shell) and hiding in some enclosed subterranean space from the dangers of staying on the open surface is obvious. Yet there is another component of the shell imagery discussed in Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological study of the imagination, which is no less important for Dostoevsky and can also be superimposed on the metaphor of the underground: "A creature that hides and 'withdraws into its shell,' is preparing a 'way out.' This is true of the entire scale of metaphors, from the resurrection of a man in his grave, to the sudden outburst of one who has long been silent" (Bachelard 111). While the latter completely applies to the underground man, since he views his writing as a sort of exit on the surface,[28] the former shows how on the level of motifs the underground in *Notes from Underground* prepares the theme of "resurrection from the underground" in Dostoevsky's later works.

[28] In Part I, chapter X of *Notes*, the underground man describes himself, switching to third-person narration: "Although capable of sitting around quietly in the underground for some forty years, once he emerges into the light of day and bursts into speech, he talks on and on and on" (26).

The literal meaning of the Russian word *podpol'e* refers to subterranean storage space in a house, a sort of a cellar. The cellar, Bachelard writes, "is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces" (18, emphasis in the original). According to Vladimir Dal''s *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*, the word *podpol'e* is synonymous with *chulan* (closet, or storage room) (197). This broadens the field of associations, pointing out that *podpol'e* belongs to peripheral, uninhabitable, and marginal parts of the house, such as a bathhouse. In Slavic folklore, both *podpol'e* and *bania* (bathhouse) have always been associated with demonic activity, as well as with the world of the dead (Budovskaia and Morozov 138; Dal' 197). Indeed, there are two underground characters in Dostoevsky who bear sinister demonic traits and are both remarkably accompanied by the motif of the bathhouse: Svidrigailov in *Crime and Punishment* and Smerdiakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*. While Svidrigailov argues that the afterlife may look like a "village bathhouse" (*Crime* 290), about Smerdiakov the old servant Grigorii would say that he had been "begotten of bathhouse slime" (*BK* 124). Moreover, another symbolic space consistently associated with Smerdiakov is the cellar – the actual *podpol'e* in Fyodor Pavlovich's house. It is in the cellar that Smerdiakov falls down on the staircase, while simulating a fit of epilepsy before murdering Fyodor Pavlovich.

The Underground Animals

The meaning of *podpol'e* as a space hardly intended for living is present in the underground man's description of the place he lives in: "My room is nasty, squalid, on the outskirts of town. My servant is an old peasant woman, spiteful out of stupidity; besides, she always smells foul" (5). If people do not normally live in a *podpol'e*, then its normal inhabitants are, to use the underground man's own words, the "*animaux domestiques*,"[29] including mice, spiders, etc. Apparently, it is this association that prompts the underground man to compare a

[29] Domestic animals.

"man of overly acute consciousness" (that is, himself) to a mouse, an insignificant animal as opposed to a "normal man". This is where we encounter the first literal use of the word *podpol'e* in the text, while the motif of bad smells establishes a link between the "corner" described earlier and the "mouse's" underground:

> this test tube man sometimes gives up so completely in the face of his antithesis that he himself, with his overly acute consciousness, honestly considers himself not as a person, but as a mouse. It may be an acutely conscious mouse, but a mouse nonetheless. […] Of course, the only thing left to do is [...] to creep ignominiously back into its mousehole. There, in its disgusting, stinking underground, our offended, crushed, and ridiculed mouse immediately plunges into cold, malicious, and, above all, everlasting spitefulness. (8)

Another cluster of animalistic associations linked to the notion of *podpol'e* includes insects and spiders. Despite the underground man's statement that he could not "even become an insect" (5), which shows his constant desire to avoid any stable definition in general, there are several instances in the text where he compares himself, or his actions, with insects or similar beings. Alla Latynina has pointed out the "existentialist" symbolism of these animals in Dostoevsky: "All these tarantulas, spiders, and insects represent a personified form of the idea of the world's hostility towards man, or man's hostility towards the world" (234). However, Latynina does not pay enough attention to the fact that different insect-like figures in Dostoevsky have different functions. One of these functions in *Notes* is similar to that of the mouse – it indicates the underground man's insignificance in the eyes of a "normal man." Such is his association with a fly: "I was a fly in the eyes of society, a disgusting, obscene fly – smarter than the rest, more cultured, nobler – all that goes without saying, but a fly, nonetheless, who incessantly steps aside, insulted and injured by everyone" (36). A different function, though, is attributed to the spider – perhaps, the most typical inhabitant of the *podpol'e.* The spider in the

underground man's discourse serves as an embodiment of the idea of depravity (*razvrat*) that he himself partakes in. Exposed to Liza's silent gaze, the underground man "suddenly realized starkly how absurd, how revolting as a spider, was the idea of debauchery" (61). This thought is compared to "a nasty sensation, such as one feels upon entering a damp, mouldy *underground cellar* [*podpol'e*]" (61, emphasis mine). In this context, the underground acquires a new dimension – it functions as space of depravity.

Earlier in the text, the theme of depravity was also accompanied by underground motifs: "I sank into dark, *subterranean*, loathsome depravity"; "I indulged in depravity all alone, at night, furtively, timidly, sordidly. […] Even then I was carrying around *the underground* in my soul" (34, emphasis mine). The basis for such a metaphorical meaning of the underground is also found in reality, which is pointed out by the underground man himself: cheap brothels (the ones that the underground man most likely used to frequent) were often located in basements, literally below the level of the ground. He mentions one such place in the Haymarket neighborhood (in the time of Dostoevsky, a St. Petersburg neighborhood infamous for housing the city's underworld) in his conversation with Liza (the smell of the underground is once again mentioned here):

> "Today some people were carrying a coffin and nearly dropped it," I suddenly said aloud.
> […]
> "A coffin?"
> "Yes, in the Haymarket; they were carrying it up from a cellar."
> "From a cellar?"
> "Not a cellar, but a basement… well, you know… from downstairs… from a house of ill repute… There was such filth all around… Eggshells, garbage… it smelled foul… it was disgusting." (63)

This sketch of the shady street life of St. Petersburg prompts the underground man to envision Liza's own future life as a downward path that ends in a similar "cellar" and, consequently, in the grave:

> "after a year your price will be lower," – I continued, gloating. "You'll move out of here into a worse place [in the original *kuda-nibud' nizhe* – literally, into a *lower* place], into some other house. And a year later, into a third, each worse and worse [lower and lower], and seven years from now you'll end up in a cellar on the Haymarket. Even that won't be so bad. The real trouble will come when you get some disease. […] And so, you die." (64)

Thus, putting together the motifs of the spider and cellar in *Notes*, Dostoevsky links the underground as a spatial concept with depravity, which allows us to uncover the hidden references to *Notes* in Dostoevsky's later works, as well as the "genealogical" kinship between the underground man and other Dostoevsky heroes. The symbolism of the insect, and, specifically, the spider as a personification of lechery is elaborated in *The Brothers Karamazov*, as postulated by Robert Belknap: "In the three chapters called 'The Confession of a Passionate Heart', Mitja links two […] things to his lechery, blood and insects" (28). In recollecting his past "incident" with Katerina Ivanovna, Dmitry Karamazov compares his brutal instincts with the bite of a spider: "Once, brother, I was bitten by a spider, and was laid up with a fever for two weeks; it was the same now, I could feel the spider bite my heart, an evil insect, understand? I sized her up" (113). This episode reminds the reader of the underground man's depiction of his first encounter with Liza: "Something despicable bit me; I went up to her" (*PSS* 5: 151). We can with certainty assume that "something despicable" here was the same "Karamazovan" spider.

At the end of Part III of *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov meets "a tradesman" who accuses him of murdering the two women. "Who is this man who came *from under the ground* [*iz pod zemli*]?" – asks Raskolnikov himself. "Why did he come *from under the floor* [*iz pod*

polu] only now?" (273, emphasis mine). It is no coincidence that this "ghost" foreshadows the first actual appearance of another man "from under the ground," also infamous for his depravity – Svidrigailov. The motif of spiders strengthens the association between the bathhouse that Svidrigailov envisions as "eternity," and the underground as a spatial concept: "imagine suddenly that there will be one little room there, something like a village bathhouse, covered with soot, with spiders in all the corners, and that's the whole of eternity" (289).

As the Liza episodes in *Notes from Underground* illustrate, lechery is the only real field of activity where the underground man can succeed in his aggression and gain power over another person. Thus, not only does the spider in Dostoevsky symbolize lechery, but it has a broader meaning as a symbol of power based on tyranny and aggression. This is especially evident in *Crime and Punishment*, where associations with the spider accompany not only Svidrigailov but Raskolnikov as well: "whether I would later become anyone's benefactor, or would spend my life like a spider, catching everyone in my web and sucking the life-sap out of everyone, should at that moment have made no difference to me!" (419). The spider motif also establishes a direct link between Raskolnikov and the underground man, as well as between Raskolnikov's room and the underground: "Precisely, I *turned spiteful* (it's a good phrase!). Then I hid in my corner like a spider" (*Crime* 417).

The Underground of the Grave

The funeral motifs and images that the underground man incorporates in his dialogue with Liza, and especially the association between the coffin and the basement, reveal yet another literal meaning of the underground – the space of the grave. In order to depress Liza, the hero would go on to describe a detailed scene of burial of the dead "wench" in the Volkovo cemetery. Even earlier, in Part I, the narrator compares his existence with deliberately burying himself

"alive in the underground for forty years" (9). This motif forms a very significant association: the underground as the nether world, and the hero as a living dead man.

The underground location of the nether world is found in many mythologies and religions, including Christianity with its notion of hell. In addition to the obvious function of this association in the novella – emphasizing the hero's removal from "real life" and the world of "spontaneous" people – the underground as the world of the dead implies that, being the opposite of the world of the living, it does not accept its rules and values. In this way, the paradoxical way of thinking, "inelegant" discourse, and unseemly behavior of the narrator are justified not only on the philosophical and psychological levels, but also on the level of mythological imagery. The mythological motif of "underground" life after death is further developed by the underground man in his "preaching" to Liza. Here the imagery of a filthy and damp cellar where a prostitute dies turns into the depiction of the grave where this prostitute continues to suffer as if buried alive: "Mud and filth, no matter how you pound on the lid of your coffin at night when other corpses arise: 'Let me out, kind people, let me live on earth for a little while! I lived, but I didn't really see my life; my life went down the drain; they drank it away in a tavern at the Haymarket; let me out, kind people, let me live in the world once again!" (72).

The motif of being buried alive connects *Notes* with Dostoevsky's short story "Bobok" whose plot is literally set in a cemetery, an underground chronotope of the afterlife with the characters as the living dead men. The similarity between the two works is pointed out already in the short story's genre subtitle – "Notes of a certain person." The kinship of the "Bobok" narrator, a degraded man of letters, with the underground man, was emphasized by Bakhtin. According to him, "a certain person" is "one who has deviated from the general norm, who has fallen out of life's usual rut, who is despised by everyone and who himself despises everyone –

that is, we have before us a new variety of the 'underground man.' His tone is unstable, equivocal, full of muffled ambivalence, with elements of infernal buffoonery (similar to the devils of mystery plays)" (*PDP* 138). One of the images that establish a connection between *Notes from Underground* and "Bobok" on the level of motifs is the image of a grave filled with water. The underground man, elaborating on the topic of the burial of a prostitute, tells Liza that "there must have been water in the grave" because "you can't even dig a dry grave at Volkovo cemetery" – "[t]he place is waterlogged. It's all swamp. So they bury them right in the water" (63). While the underground man confesses to the reader that he actually had never seen it but "heard about it from other people" (63) , the narrator of "Bobok" confirms the authenticity of his imagining: "I looked into the graves – and it was horrible: water and such water! Absolutely green, and ... but there, why talk of it! The gravedigger was baling it out every minute" (*Novels* 293).

In "Bobok," the narrator overhears a conversation between the buried corpses – former representatives of high (or "pseudo-high") society – in a cemetery. One of them quotes their "fellow" dead man, a philosopher, who provides an explanation of their ability to think and talk in their graves:

> "when we were living on the surface we mistakenly thought that death there was death. The body revives, as it were, here, the remains of life are concentrated, but only in consciousness. […] There is one here, for instance, who is almost completely decomposed, but once every six weeks he suddenly utters one word, quite senseless of course, about some *bobok*." (ibid. 303, emphasis in original)

Dostoevsky depicts an absurd situation, where the afterlife turns out to be just another stage of dying which takes place in the underground of the graveyard. The physical decay of their fellows that the characters observe there assures them that the "second" – real – death

represents the absolute end, a thought which makes them want to "arrange everything on a new basis ": "we have two or three months more of life and then – bobok! I propose to spend these two months as agreeably as possible. […] Gentlemen! I propose to cast aside all shame" (ibid. 303). The grotesquerie of the short story allows us to read "Bobok" as a mockery of the "existentialist" outlook (even though the term itself did not exist then), which is taken here to its vulgar extreme, when the inevitability and close proximity of death justifies the principle "everything is permitted." Indeed, the situation, in which the characters of "Bobok" find themselves, could be viewed as a parody of the underground man's situation, illustrating in the most cynical and literal way how the underground becomes a world of shamelessness and depravity. Like the underground man who, writing his fictional confession, does not want to lie ("I've given my word" [34]) and speaks about things "which a man is afraid to reveal even to himself" (28), Klinevich in "Bobok" proclaims:

> "Though meanwhile I don't want us to be telling lies. […] One cannot exist on the surface without lying, for life and lying are synonymous, but here we will amuse ourselves by not lying. Hang it all, the grave has some value after all! We'll all tell our stories aloud, and we won't be ashamed of anything. […] [L]et us spend these two months in shameless truthfulness! Let us strip and be naked!" (*Novels* 304)

As Bakhtin has pointed out, "Bobok" thus realizes the "theme of confession without repentance and of 'shameless truth,' which runs through all of Dostoevsky's work beginning with *Notes from Underground*" (*PDP* 144).

Another of Dostoevsky's short stories written in the 1870s – "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" – introduces a character who shares a number of common traits with the underground man, such as pride, critique of the idea of happiness based on scientific data and rationalism, and, finally, holy foolishness (*iurodstvo*). Like the underground man, the ridiculous man begins with a mixture of humility (the whole world tells him that he is ridiculous), resentment, and pride,

which leads him to a perception of the world's absurdity and meaninglessness: "in the whole wide world *nothing made any difference*" (*Gambler* 338, emphasis in original). He decides to commit suicide, but is saved from it by his "revelation-like" dream. His feeling of absurdity reaches its highest point in his dream, where he finds himself buried alive: "I lay there and strangely enough – I didn't expect anything, having accepted without argument that a dead man has nothing to expect. […] But then suddenly on my closed left eye fell a drop of water that had leaked through the coffin lid." (ibid. 345)

In the case of the ridiculous man, the underground as a worldview turns into the literal underground of the grave in his dream: "And then I'm being buried in the ground" (ibid.). Thus, as in "Bobok," the underground man's metaphor of being buried alive finds here its literal manifestation. However, unlike *Notes from Underground*, in "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," the hero's feeling of absurdity is resolved by a vision of paradise in his dream. Thus, in this short story we see how the theme of spiritual resurrection from the metaphorical underground of skepticism and spite gets the most powerful artistic expression in Dostoevsky through the imagery of literally rising from the underground of the grave. As mentioned earlier, this motif has its origin in *Notes from Underground*.

The Underground as the City

In "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," the existentialist problematic of man's life affected by the "acute consciousness" of impending death, very important for Dostoevsky, is present in its specific variation: the spiritual condition and behavior of a person who has decided to commit suicide. The state of consciousness of the protagonist evokes strong associations with Svidrigailov.

The description of Svidrigailov's night before his suicide shares a number of motifs with *Notes from Underground*, as well as with both "Bobok" and "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man." Svidrigailov's last refuge – a room in the St. Petersburg hotel Adrianople – is depicted by Dostoevsky as the recognizable space of the underground character, and shares qualities of underground space. While it is reminiscent of Svidrigailov's own vision of eternity as "one little room, […] something like a village bathhouse" (*Crime* 290), it also provokes associations with the images of graves at a St. Petersburg cemetery found in *Notes from Underground* and "Bobok." Svidrigailov's room is "stuffy and small, somewhere at the very end of the corridor, in a corner, *under the stairs*" (503, emphasis mine). As Donald Fanger notes regarding stairways in Dostoevsky, "[s]taircases are (despite the confusion of directions) a kind of entrance to the underworld" (196). Dostoevsky mentions a mouse which runs across Svidrigailov, and a fly, which he is desperately trying to catch, to reinforce associations with the space of the underground man. Through the window that Svidrigailov opens, the St. Petersburg night, cold, dark, and wet, penetrates into and merges with the space of the room, thus strengthening even more the underground quality of the entire setting of the scene:

> drops came flying in the window from the trees and bushes, and *it was dark as a cellar.* […] From the blackness and the night a cannon shot resounded, then another.
> "Ah, the signal! The water's rising," he thought. "Towards morning it will flood all the lower places, the streets; *it will pour into the basements and cellars, the cellar rats will float up*, and amid rain and wind people, cursing and drenched, will begin transferring their stuff to the upper floors." (507-08, emphasis mine)

The gloomy Petersburg landscape and Svidrigailov's "existentialist" perception of nature on the night before his death is similar to that depicted in "The Dream of the Ridiculous Man," when the hero also decides that his suicide will take place "without fail that night" (*Gambler* 340). In the Svidrigailov episode, the rainy weather and the Malaya Neva evoke the character's

disgust for water.[30] The rain that stops *at midnight* first changes to wind, which blows drops of water into Svidrigailov's room and causes flooding in the city, and, subsequently, to thick fog in the morning. One might say water describes a full circle here. Water in its different forms is definitely one of the most "natural" symbols of St. Petersburg, the city of rain and fogs, built on the swamps and covered with countless rivers and canals. As we have seen, the motif of water and its transformations often accompanies in Dostoevsky the motifs of underground space. In both works it represents the highest degree of man's alienation from the world. Furthermore, it accompanies the characters' reflections on death:

> I remember precisely I thought that there couldn't possibly be a gloomier time. Even in the physical regard. It had been pouring all day long, and it was the coldest and gloomiest rain, the rain was threatening, I remember that, *with a palpable hostility towards people*, and then suddenly, at eleven o'clock, it stopped, and a strange dampness ensued, damper and colder than when it had been raining, and some sort of steam was rising from everything, from every stone on the street and from every lane. (*Gambler* 339, emphasis mine).

All the aforementioned factors reveal an important feature of the underground as a chronotope in Dostoevsky. This chronotope can be extended to the entire city of St. Petersburg, of which it turns out to be an organic part. In *Notes from Underground*, the Volkovo cemetery that the underground man mentions (and where the plot of "Bobok" is supposedly set) functions as a synecdoche; that is the entire city is perceived by the narrator through the prism of funeral imagery: "Lonely street lamps shone gloomily in the snow mist like torches at a funeral" (60). In his analysis of the functions of landscape and interiors in *Notes from Underground*, Nikolai

[30] The motif of water in *Crime and Punishment* has been analyzed by George Gibian. He noticed that water in Dostoevsky may be regarded as "a symbol of rebirth and regeneration" by the positive characters, while its significance "may be the opposite to negative characters." Thus, for Svidrigailov, water is "the appropriate setting for the taking of his own life" (982-83).

Chirkov finds that they create an atmosphere of "a burial service for the hero while alive, a prayer for the dying" (63).

It is well known that St. Petersburg's bad climate results from its unnatural geographic location; the city's artificial character is also evident in its design when compared to Moscow and other ancient Russian cities. Thus, St. Petersburg as "the most abstract and premeditated city in the whole world" (Dostoevsky, *Notes* 5) appears to be the most proper location for the unnatural "test tube" man of "acute consciousness," as the narrator of *Notes* calls himself. Fanger argues that "[t]here is an ontological consonance between the 'anticity' built in violation of the natural laws of growth and this antihero divorced from life – perhaps even a case of cause and effect" (182). This explains the underground man's passionate reasoning against the idea of moving out of the city – something he himself leaves unexplained: "I'm told that the Petersburg climate is becoming bad for my health, and that it's very expensive to live in Petersburg with my meager resources. I know all that. […] But I shall remain in Petersburg; I shall not leave Petersburg!" (5) This statement by the protagonist, confirming his own perception of St. Petersburg as being the most appropriate space for him, supports the view of the underground as a metaphor for the city.

The Underground in the Language of "The Eternal Husband"

The text of "The Eternal Husband" includes a direct reference to the metaphorical – psychological and moral – aspect of the underground as the two main characters are defined by Velchaninov as "depraved, underground, vile people" (178). As Valerii Kirpotin has pointed out, "[i]n the short story 'The Eternal Husband,' Trusotsky is explicitly referred to as belonging to the class of 'underground people' and buffoons" (191). The study of the characters Trusotsky and Velchaninov allows Kirpotin to come to an important conclusion, namely that in this short story

"Dostoevsky uses the images [*obrazy*] that he had created in his earlier works but he makes them more trivial and less significant" (195). While by "images" Kirpotin means characters, I argue that such a pattern of reduction occurs as well on the level of the underground imagery discussed earlier.

Indeed, one does not find in the short story explicit subterranean images, such as cellars or graves. However, a careful reader may notice the persistent motifs of coming from or falling down *under the ground* (*kak iz pod zemli* and *provalitsia skvoz' zemliu*) which consistently accompany Trusotsky. Although masked as common Russian idioms (meaning "appearing unexpectedly" and "feeling embarrassed," respectively), they acquire additional symbolic overtones through associations with the characters' psychological "undergroundness." From the outset, "the gentleman with crape" appears to Velchaninov "as if from *under the ground*" (*Eternal Husband* 71; emphasis mine). During their first conversation, Trusotsky, who complains about his not being received at Bagautov's, tells Velchaninov, "Ah, Alexei Ivanovich, I'm telling you and I repeat that in this mood one sometimes wishes simply to fall *through the earth*, even in reality, sir" (ibid. 87; emphasis mine). Finally, in chapter XII, when Trusotsky unsuccessfully tries to give the bracelet to his fifteen-year-old bride, the narrator notes that "Pavel Pavlovich was ready to fall through the earth" (ibid. 156). Thus, in "The Eternal Husband," the literal meaning of the underground is present in the most latent form, that is, on the level of idioms, which, nevertheless, only proves that in Dostoevsky the metaphorical underground tends to be accompanied by its literal counterpart.

The Underground as the Nether World. Exit from the Underground

The mythological connotation of underground space in Dostoevsky becomes a source of artistic realization of the theme of resurrection. Some Dostoevsky heroes who in one way or

another are kin to the underground man, have plotlines that are symbolically correlated with the mythological plot of descent into the nether world and escape from it, and the mythological archetype of a dying-and-rising god. René Girard suggests that this model applies to "the entire oeuvre and the very existence of the novelist" as both "have the form of a death and a resurrection" (141). Thus, the strong symbolical potential of the underground in Dostoevsky is obvious in that it serves as a plot-generating symbol.[31]

In "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," the motif of death and resurrection constitutes the central element of the plot and is developed by Dostoevsky in the most literal sense. While the unexpected falling asleep of the hero signifies his "temporary death," inside his dream the motif is rendered literally as a situation of being buried alive and then exhumed by "some dark and unknown being" (*Gambler* 346). In reality, the metaphorical resurrection happens when the ridiculous man wakes up in a new spiritual condition – as the one who has learned the Truth and will henceforth profess it. If, according to Bakhtin, the underground man and the characters of "Bobok" are "as sterile seed, cast on the ground, but capable neither of dying (that is, of being cleansed of themselves, of rising above themselves), nor of being renewed (that is, of bearing fruit)" (*PDP* 147), then Dostoevsky grants such heroes as Raskolnikov, Mitia Karamazov, and the ridiculous man a chance to "ascend" from the underground and be reborn.

The metaphor of man as a seed implies spatial movement down into the ground; then, if the seed dies, it moves up to the surface and rises above already in a transfigured form. This metaphor plays a central role in *The Brothers Karamazov*, which is already obvious in its biblical epigraph: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. John 12:24" (1). Consequently, the mythological motif of descent into the underworld occupies an especially significant place in the

[31] The symbol's ability to function as "plot-gene" is discussed in Lotman, *Universe* 82-101.

novel – from the apocryphal stories about the Virgin Mary's and Christ's actual visits to hell (in Ivan's and the coachman Andrey's renderings, respectively) to the metaphorical "descents" into, "ascents" from, and "residence" in different kinds of "hell" by Alyosha, Dmitry, Ivan, Smerdiakov, and other characters. The story that Grushenka tells Alyosha in Book 7 also exhibits a motif of descent. It describes a wicked woman in hell whose only good deed in life was giving an onion to a beggar. This story suggests that a person always has a chance to find a way out from the underground, and, in the end, it depends on the individual's genuine desire to choose such a path. While the guardian angel could have pulled the woman out from the fiery lake by the same little onion, the woman herself lost the opportunity to be saved when she got angry at the other sinners who were trying to cling to her. As Gary Saul Morson has pointed out, "[w]hat has happened here is that the woman has been given a choice to redefine her life. She may make it resemble all her myriad deeds but one, or she may make it resemble the single act of giving an onion; and she makes the wrong choice" (114-15). Morson also emphasizes the association between the symbols of onion and seed: "It is up to us whether the seed will abide alone or bring forth much fruit" (115).

The other – metaphorical – representation of the journey to hell in the novel has been pointed out by Harriet Murav with respect to Alyosha and Mitia: "Ivan's description of the children's suffering and Alesha's response suggest that the scene can be understood as a verbal tour of hell, with Ivan as the guide and Alesha as the tourist" (141). According to Murav, the description of feasting at Mokroe can also be seen as a descent into the underworld, with Dmitry's subsequent arrest and interrogation corresponding with "the trials that, according to tradition, await us in the underworld" (142). Finally, Dmitry's dream of a starving baby indicates his revival and, therefore, represents an "ascent" from his own spiritual underground.

Interestingly enough, the elder Zosima (as quoted in Alyosha's notes) understands hell primarily in the metaphorical sense – as the "suffering of being no longer able to love" (322). In his last novel, Dostoevsky attributes this idea to Zosima, the main opponent of Ivan's denial of God's world, to assert the connection between the religious concept of the underworld and the psychological and spiritual underground of his "antiheroes": "Oh, there are those who remain proud and fierce even in hell. […] For them hell is voluntary and insatiable, they are sufferers by their own will. For they have cursed themselves by cursing God and life. They feed on their wicked pride" (323). In Dostoevsky's artistic universe, the "sufferers by their own will" described by Zosima are synonymous with the underground characters. Indeed, it is the refusal to love and "conscious burial [of oneself] alive" (Dostoevsky, *Notes* 9) in the underground of one's – often injured – pride that defines such heroes as the underground man, both Raskolnikov and the ridiculous man (before their respective conversions), and Ivan Karamazov.

Conclusion

Starting from *Notes from Underground*, the underground becomes a constant motif in Dostoevsky's poetics of space and an essential part of his urban imagery. The theme of the metaphorical underground as a philosophical attitude or psychological state is often accompanied by the motif of subterranean spaces: mouse holes, basements, cellars, graves and so on. In Dostoevsky's poetic language, the underground is not limited to just a negative, tragic meaning. As it became obvious already in *Notes*, in Dostoevsky's (anti)heroes, the underground qualities are not strictly opposed to those possessed by their opponents but rather are involved in a dialogical situation of self-testing and self-questioning. This situation provides his characters with a possibility of getting out of the underground. Indeed, the grave-like underground space confronted with the motifs of water, bathhouse, seed, and waking up refers not only to death and

dark forces, but also to the possibility of purification, rebirth, and affirmation of life. The theme of spiritual resurrection, central in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, employs the same "underground" poetics as *Notes from Underground*. Thus, "digging into" Dostoevsky's underground reveals its reverse side: the illustration of his most cherished idea that "we shall all rise from the dead, and come to life […] and gladly, joyfully tell one another all that has been" (*BK* 776).

PART II

THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Chapter 4

The Political and the Existential Underground: From Dostoevsky to Leonid Andreyev

> In his books, Leonid Andreyev attacks people like a bird of prey, trying to lure them in his snares, […] the snares of blind despair, darkness, horror and madness; the snares of our dear gratifying underground.
>
> Aleksandr Zakrzhevskii, *The Underground*.[32]

Introduction. Dostoevsky's Underground and Underground Russia at the Turn of the Century

In the late nineteenth – early twentieth century, the term "underground" (*podpol'e*) in Russian literary and cultural discourse was associated primarily with the radical revolutionary movement that began to form in the 1870s and reached its peak by the time of the Revolution of 1905-07. Despite the fact that scholars postulate the highly influential role of literature in the formation of the Russian political underground mythology and even use the term "underground man" (*podpol'nyi chelovek*) to refer to the image of the revolutionary (Mogil'ner), they do not relate it to Dostoevsky. Yet the very "literariness" of the Russian political underground is one of the major aspects of this connection. In this chapter, I determine the points of contact between Dostoevsky's underground and the political connotations of the term. I argue that the interplay between Dostoevsky's underground and the underground as a political phenomenon is especially distinct in the works of Leonid Andreyev (1871-1919). I focus on Andreyev's short stories written in the period of the Russian revolution of 1905-07: "Darkness" (1907) and "Judas

[32] Zakrzhevskii 16.

Iscariot" (1907) to analyze a comprehensive connection between the underground and its political connotations.

In *Notes from Underground*, the underground man speaks of being divorced from the "living life" ("*zhivaia zhizn'*")[33] – a disease whose origins, according to him and his author, are found in the Romantic social illusions nurtured by his generation under the influence of literature in the 1840s. His own case demonstrates how the ideas of the 1840s shape his underground in philosophical and psychological terms, resulting in the hero's alienation from people and the world in general. He lives a double life and is torn between romantic clichés[34] and suffering from the shame of depravity. While he opposes his underground existence to that of normal "men of action," on the last pages of his confession he argues that his opponents too are "divorced from life": "We are not used to life to the extent that we feel sometimes a sort of disgust for the living life, and hate to be reminded of it" (*PSS* 5: 178). At this point, it paradoxically turns out that his moral "underground" ("depravity in the corner" [ibid.]) is much closer to the "living life" than the existence of his opponents: "perhaps, after all, there is more life in me than in you" (ibid.). This paradox establishes a connection, in fact, a certain similarity between the underground man and his opponents, hinting at the fact that they too exist in some sort of underground: "I have in my life only brought to an extreme what you have not dared to take halfway" (ibid.). Taking into account the fact that the underground man's ideological polemic is directed against Chernyshevsky and the fashionable ideology of Socialism and Nihilism, one can argue that it is Chernyshevsky followers who are stillborn and "have been born […] not from living fathers"

[33] The expression *zhivaia zhizn'* (the living life, also translated as real life) is found in different Dostoevsky texts and comprises a broad range of meanings, from "something very simple, the most everyday thing" (*PSS* 13: 178) in *The Raw Youth* to "the idea of God" in *A Writer's Diary* (*PSS* 22: 97; see more on this topic in Kunil'skii, Kustovskaia). I will treat the living life and real life as synonyms, considering that in the underground man's discourse it, firstly, signifies the opposition of everyday life to theoretical, bookish schemes, and, secondly, refers to the failure of such schemes in a quite specific situation – the hero's intimate relationship with a woman.

[34] For example, his dreams about "beneficial, beautiful" activity for the sake of humankind (*PSS* 5: 133), or his acting according to the scenario of redeeming a prostitute in the Liza episode.

and soon will "invent a way to be born somehow from an idea" (ibid.). The mentioning of "lifeless" fathers genealogically connects the two generations – the romantics of the 1840s and the nihilists of the 1860s – and thus "raises a theme which Dostoevsky will later develop in *The Devils:* the intellectual 'fathers' of the 1840s begetting the terrible abstractions, the rejection of 'life', of the nihilists" (Peace 65). As Joseph Frank points out,

> the social Romanticism of the Forties, in Dostoevsky's opinion, had fostered an inflated "egoism of principle," which allowed the Russian intelligentsia to live in a dream world of "universal" beneficence while actually nursing their own vanity with perfect moral complacency. And the moral task confronting these liberal idealists was […] to turn their abstract love of "humanity" […] into a concrete act of self-sacrifice directed toward a particular, concrete individual. ("Nihilism" 58-59)

Tracing the roots of the nihilists' divorce from real life, Dostoevsky, at the same time, prophetically connects his notion of the underground with one that was yet to emerge – the underground as the political opposition.

At the turn of the century, the concept of "underground Russia" (*podpol'naia Rossiia*) was used to refer to "the world of professional revolutionaries, members of leftist political parties, and the social and cultural environment that nurtured radicalism" (Mogil'ner 7). Quite symptomatically, in 1905, the critic Nikolai Asheshov broadens the scope of the term. According to him, on the eve of the Revolution of 1905, all of Russia was split into *nadpol'e* ("aboveground") and *podpol'e* (underground), with the latter standing for "almost all that is cultural, sensible, including not just those disposed to act but also those who are indifferent but provoked to protest […]. All spiritual work has been done in the subterranean [*podpochvennoi*] sphere" (30). Asheshov uses the term "underground" to argue that due to unacceptable political conditions, specifically the flourishing of bureaucracy, Russian culture in general had to turn into a counterculture. "This term [*podpol'e*] […] was once attributed amongst us just to radical

factions, but life has changed the positions of social forces, and absolutely all cultural elements have been forced to disappear from the horizon" (30).

Crucial was the fact that the political conceptualization of the underground in the late nineteenth – early twentieth century took place in the realm of literature and involved the literary imagination. The very notion of "underground Russia" first appeared in 1882 as a title of the book by the famous terrorist Sergei Stepniak-Kravchinskii. Even prior to 1882, in 1878-79, Kravchinskii, as well as another ideologue of the Narodniki movement Nikolai Morozov, in their underground political journalism, had employed mythological chthonic imagery informed by the concept of the underground. Oleg Budnitskii notes the "nonrandom similarity of the imagery" used by *Zemlia i Volia*'s theoreticians of terrorism, and, "above all, the haunting image of the underground [*podzemel'e*] out of which an unknown avenger-terrorist emerges" (56). This is found in the following excerpts from articles dedicated to the justification of political assassination: "A mighty underground [*podzemnaia*] force is fearsomely rising up everywhere. […] 'A monster,' who until now has lived somewhere underground [*pod zemlëiu*] undermining different 'foundations,' suddenly starts to stretch out one of its paws from time to time to strangle a bastard of one kind or another" (Kravchinskii 122); "[a]n underground [*podpol'naia*] power 'unknown to anyone' judges highly ranked criminals, imposes death sentences on them, and the powers that be feel the ground slipping away under their feet, and they fall from the height of their power into some dark, unknown abyss" (Morozov 498).

As a result, the notion of the political underground in Russia from the outset was part of a myth-like narrative with phantasmagoric beings and supernatural forces. The mythological connotations of the underground in revolutionary discourse indicates one aspect of its kinship with Dostoevsky. Mikhail Vaiskopf writes, "[t]he symbolism of revolution tended, on the one

hand, towards monstrous subterranean [*podzemnym*] imagery, and on the other hand, towards the vegetative/gospel theme of the sacrificial death for the sake of all humankind's resurrection" (172). As I have demonstrated in Chapter 3, this archetypal imagery played a crucial role in Dostoevsky as well. While Vaiskopf opposes these two types of symbolism, Dostoevsky's exploration of the underground shows that one, in fact, is deeply linked to another.

In her study of the mythology of the Russian political underground, Marina Mogil'ner arrives at the conclusion that "exaggerated literariness" played an important role in the worldview of the early twentieth-century Russian revolutionaries (6). According to her, the "belletrism of the Russian radical intelligentsia's life became the logical consequence of its not having its roots in the present. Yet it also turned out to be the guarantee of the intelligentsia's apostasy – the preservative of radicalism" (31). However, the literature-informed myth of the political underground did not manage to remain intact for long. The dramatic and painful process of the political underground man realizing the artificial bookish nature of his ideals and trying to find a way out is depicted in Leonid Andreyev's short story "Darkness." I argue that the divorce from real life and "literariness" of Andreyev's terrorist serve as hidden references to Dostoevsky's underground man, which helps Andreyev establish a bridge connecting the existential and the political undergrounds. Further, I demonstrate how Dostoevsky elucidates the nature of the latter, providing clues to a new reading of Andreyev's arguably most famous work "Judas Iscariot." As we remember, provocation was an important aspect of the underground behavior in Dostoevsky. At the beginning of the twentieth century, provocation becomes the major force to subvert the idea of the underground as the political opposition. In "Judas Iscariot," provocation both echoes the contemporary political climate and, through references to Dostoevsky, acquires an existential dimension.

Dostoevsky's Underground in Leonid Andreyev

Annenskii rightly notes that "Leonid Andreyev belongs to the generation educated by reading Dostoevsky" (147). The influences of Dostoevsky on Andreyev are addressed by a number of scholars who have pointed out the similarities between the psychological methods employed by the two authors, emphasizing at the same time their fundamentally different philosophical orientations. Sergei Iasenskii argues that "Andreyev's kinship with Dostoevsky concerns primarily the fictional situations in which Andreyev puts his hero, analyzing his or her spiritual condition. These are extreme, 'borderline' situations […]. And it has to be emphasized that, unlike Dostoevsky, Andreyev does not proceed from religious values" (158-59). Nataliia Bogatyrëva points out that "Dostoevsky and Andreyev are typologically similar in their belief that human beings cannot be completely defined by reason. […] But what is left for a human in his or her 'irrational surplus'? Each writer gives a different answer." While in Dostoevsky it is the human being's moral consciousness, "in Andreyev, beyond the rational there is 'void and mystery' filled by spontaneous rebellion."

Critics agree that Andreyev explores distinctly existentialist themes, such as the universal loneliness of the human being, the absurd, rebellion, and "metaphysical void," thus anticipating the philosophical and literary works of Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Ionesko and others.[35] Valerii Bezzubov compares Andreyev's conception with that of Dostoevsky, postulating that "in Andreev too, the elements of irrationality, the unconscious, and the power of instincts are strong in the human being" (97). Iasenskii arrives at a similar conclusion: "As in Dostoevsky, in Andreyev's conception, human nature is irrational, like the human being's role in life, which is paradoxical because to be human is to be aware of both the idea of immortality and the idea of the finitude of one's existence" (159). While it can be debated whether irrationality and

[35] See Bogatyrëva, Bogdanov 19, Tatarinov 332, Iasenskii 159.

paradoxicality are the most important human characteristics for Dostoevsky, this is definitely true from the point of view of such characters as the underground man, Kirilov, and Ivan Karamazov. Bezzubov argues that "Andreyev continued to develop the theme of 'universal,' existential rebellion – the rebellion of Kirilov, Ivan Karamazov and other Dostoevsky heroes who 'do not accept the world'" (90). At the same time, it is important to note that Andreyev accepted "neither Dostoevsky's Christian ideal of the human being, nor his ideal of the people [*narod*]" (ibid. 86-87). Galina Kurliandskaia expresses a similar idea: "In the works of [Dostoevsky], it is primarily the rebellious attitudes of individualist characters who protest against the laws of the universe" that Andreyev finds to be close to his own artistic philosophy (208). It is, therefore, obvious that Andreyev is the heir to the "existentialist" Dostoevsky, i.e. the Dostoevsky who is primarily associated with his underground characters and their metaphysical rebellion. As Jackson convincingly concludes, "Andreev seems more the follower of the 'underground' Dostoevsky, the man of fear and despair, than the religious Dostoevsky, the man searching for faith, preaching reconciliation with reality and filled with an intense pity and compassion for suffering humanity" (*Dostoevsky's Underground Man* 85).

Many critics, among them Jackson, Bezzubov, Kurliandskaia, Bogatyrëva, and Kseniia Kasatkina, address specific aspects of how Dostoevsky's "underground" influenced Andreyev. Jackson traces the impact of *Notes from Underground* on Andreyev in the way Andreyev approaches the topic of rebellion. In this respect, Jackson analyzes Dostoevsky's "underground" motifs in Andreyev's "The Story of Sergei Petrovich" (1901), "The Wall" (1901), "Curse of the Beast" (1907), and "My Memoirs" (1908). He argues that "[e]ach of these stories treats the problem of 'underground' rebellion against the 'wall,' against fate, against conformity and depersonalization" (ibid. 85). Jackson, however, attributes to Andreyev a more pessimistic

worldview than that of the "underground" Dostoevsky. Regarding "My Memoirs" he writes: "The Underground Man, despite the disfiguration of his personality, clings at least to the idea of human dignity. The memoirist is a mockery of that idea" (ibid. 100). Jackson concludes that Andreyev "accepts 'underground' malice and despair as the only and last means of self-expression for man" (ibid. 93).

Bezzubov, too, points out that "in his rebellion against the 'wall' Andreyev seems to be following in the footsteps of Dostoevsky's 'underground man'" (90). He argues that by emphasizing the importance of the irrational in being human, Andreyev expands Dostoevsky's notion of the underground, since "the characteristics of the 'underground man' [...] are included in a broader conception of the Russian character as well as of what it means to be human in general" (97). Bezzubov also notes that the hero of Andreyev's "My Memoirs" "closely reminds the reader of the imaginary opponents of the 'underground man'" with their capitulation to the wall (91). Conversely, Kurliandskaia argues that "the hero of 'My Memoirs' and Dostoevsky's 'underground man' are siblings, inseparable allies in their understanding of human personality as […] a rampage of irrational forces" (225).

Bogatyrëva compares *Notes from Underground* and Andreyev's "Darkness" through the prism of existentialist motifs. According to her, the short story's hero Aleksei "can be categorized as the rationalist or the 'man of action' as defined by Dostoevsky's underground man," while "Liuba […] originally is closer to the underground man's proposal of irrational rebellion." Kasatkina finds the kinship of Andreyev's heroes with the underground man in their attitude towards others whom they both need and despise. She also suggests that Judas Iscariot, the character from the eponymous story, Dr. Kerzhentsev from "Thought" (1902), and Sergei Petrovich from "The Story of Sergei Petrovich" represent "underground" ideas that "lead to

catastrophic consequences" (Judas's betrayal; Kerzhentsev's murder, and Sergei Petrovich's "ideological" suicide) (244-45).

Clearly, there are numerous ways in which Andreyev was influenced by Dostoevsky in general, and by *Notes from Underground* in particular. Taking into account the valuable observations and conclusions of the aforementioned critics, I focus on an aspect that has not been yet studied: the Dostoevsky "trace" in the interaction between the political and the existential meanings of the underground in Andreyev.

"DARKNESS"

The hero of Andreyev's "Darkness" is a man of the political underground, a famous terrorist (in the beginning of the short story he calls himself Pëtr, and later reveals that his real name is Aleksei). Chased by the police for a few sleepless nights, he decides to go to a brothel to get some sleep. There he meets a prostitute named Liuba who brings about his psychological and spiritual transformation. He decides that he does not want to be "good" any more and live his previous life of a revolutionary; instead he wants to stay with Liuba. In the end the police find and arrest him.

According to Bezzubov, Andreyev's interest in Dostoevsky becomes especially obvious after the failure of the Revolution of 1905-07 (107). Written in 1907, "Darkness" reads like an artistic expression of Andreyev's disillusionment in revolutionary ideals, and Dostoevsky motifs indeed play a prominent role in this text. The short story is based on a situation that constitutes the philosophical center of many Dostoevsky works – the testing of an idea by real life. Like Dostoevsky, Andreyev opposes the ideological underground of the terrorist to the underground of the "living life" – the world of the "humiliated and insulted" represented by the prostitute. Dostoevsky's influence is also seen in the choice of the actual participants of such a situation: an

"underground" man confessing to a prostitute reminds the reader of both *Notes from Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*.[36] The obvious similarity between the terrorist and Raskolnikov is that they both justify the murder in the name of social justice and the world's improvement. Both share the superman complex, supposing that "mankind's benefactors" are by their nature distinct from ordinary men: "'And why are you so good?' the girl asked jeeringly. To which he replied seriously: 'I don't know. I must have been born this way'" (88). [37]

The links between "Darkness" and *Notes from Underground,* at first glance, are not quite obvious, however they are more complex and philosophically more significant than those between "Darkness" and *Crime and Punishment*. They infer the antinomy of the underground introduced by Dostoevsky on the example of the underground man. On the one hand, the underground connotes alienation from life and limiting one's view to idealistic, "bookish" schemes. On the other, the underground is life's "underworld" that turns out to be its true face – chaos, and moral and physical decay. The former corresponds with Andreyev's portrayal of his terrorist as a hero of the political underground. The latter defines the world that Aleksei discovers through Liuba and to which Andreyev refers by his symbolical concept of darkness.

The Terrorist's Underground and the "Living Life"

The terrorist character in "Darkness" is constructed in accordance with the ascetic archetype. His biography includes typical motifs found in Old Russian literature, in the lives of saints; i.e. – departure from home, failure at school, suffering, and overcoming the lust of the flesh.[38] In his depiction of the life of a revolutionary in ascetic terms, Andreyev quite likely

[36] For a comparison of "Darkness" with *Crime and Punishment* see Iezuitova, "Ob arkhetipe" 393; Tal'nikov 2.
[37] For all the quotes from "Darkness," the number(s) in parentheses indicate the page number(s) in Andreyev, *Polnoe sobranie*. The translation is mine, except for the cases when I use L.A. Magnus's and K. Walter's translation (*Dark*).
[38] See Kuskov 7; the motif of the failure at school is found, for example, in the *Vita of St. Sergius of Radonezh*.

relies upon Stepniak-Kravchinskii's *Underground Russia*.[39] According to Stepniak, "[the political underground movement] was […] a sort of a crusade defined by the infectious and all-absorbing nature characteristic of religious movements" (19). Stepniak-Kravchinskii mentions the leading role of literature in the formation of the Russian revolutionary movement. In particular, he names Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov, Mikhailov, Gertsen, and Ogarëv,[40] whom he considers to be the "most prominent" writers of the time and "promoters of socialist ideas […], who have taught the principles of socialism to the entire generation of the 1870s" (10). Mogil'ner notes the paradoxical fact that "often it was not the notions of state injustices but rather these literary impressions that acted as an initial motivation for the revolutionary struggle" (26). Budnitskii makes a similar observation: "Quite a few neophytes joined the terrorist organizations under the influence of 'underground' literature that they read" (46). Andreyev, too, points out the literary nature of his hero's ideals: "He remembered the books according to which he had learned how to live" (103); to the extent that his revolutionary views are defined as "bookish and alien wisdom" (109). Apparently, this is what alienated the terrorist from real life with its base and unsightly side. At the beginning of "Darkness," Andreyev provides the reader with a telling episode: "Once, while committing an important terrorist attack where he was a back-up bomb-thrower, he saw a horse that had been killed, observed its broken croup, with its entrails spilling out, and such […] grotesque […] detail gave him a sensation somewhat even more unpleasant than that of his comrade's death from the bomb thrown in the attack to which he had been party" (79). If the terrorist romanticizes the death of his comrades, or perceives even his own death as something meaningful and legitimate, then down-to-earth manifestations of real life appear to

[39] The association is mentioned in Iezuitova and Klimov 596.
[40] Of course, Dostoevsky could not be included in this list because of his conservative political views. This, however, does not mean that his influence on the revolutionaries was less significant than that of the listed writers. As I show below, the liberal writers would turn to his notion of the underground when they attempted to demythologize the "romantic" revolutionary archetype.

him as "chaos." And yet, Andreyev's hero is ready to die but he is not prepared to see a naked woman: "And the more quietly and fearlessly, and even joyously, he anticipated Thursday, when he would probably have to die, the more was he oppressed with the prospect of a night with a woman who practised love as a profession, – a thing utterly ridiculous, an incarnation of chaos, senseless, petty, and dirty" (*Dark* 6).

That the man from the political underground was ill-prepared to encounter everyday non-heroic life – his inability to live outside of his underground "shell" – was the object of literary reflection by the revolutionaries themselves. In his book *What Never Happened* (1912-13), the former leader of the Socialist Revolutionary party Boris Savinkov, who published under the pseudonym "Ropshin," describes his hero's reaction to the issuance of the Manifesto on the Improvement of the State Order (October 17, 1905):

> He was poisoned by bewilderment: how to get used to life, how to live outside the underground [*vne podpol'ia*], […] how to organize not the world but his own ant-like life? [...] Bolotov admitted with surprise that […] the arduous life of millions of ordinary people was unknown, unclear and inconceivable to him. And he wished that everything had not ended so soon, and the revolution had not already been won […]. He remembered with bitterness words he had once heard […]: "Satan boasted [*gordilsia*] – and fell from heaven; Pharaoh boasted – and drowned in the sea; and we, boasting as we are, what we will be good for?" (Ropshin 58; my trans.)

In an autobiographical note, Savinkov writes that the topic of his novel was the "dirt and putridity of the underground, separated from the people, […] self-confident, [and] selfish" (Savinkov 7). Both the comparison of ordinary people with ants and the psychological characteristics of Savinkov's underground heroes connect his vision of the political underground with Dostoevsky's underground man.

Andreyev was able to identify that particular nature of the political underground and expressed it in his "Darkness" six years earlier than Savinkov, immediately after the First Russian revolution. As is well known, Andreyev was influenced by Nietzsche who likely served as a source of the indirect reception of Dostoevsky's underground psychology.[41] In one of the first critical responses to "Darkness," Ekaterina Kuskova draws a psychological portrait of Andreyev's hero, one which both conceptually and stylistically echoes the underground man's depiction of himself and his generation: "Forever suffering from sick thoughts, a sick heart, and sick conscience, we ramble in the unprecedented chaos of life, constantly re-evaluating all values and fearing joy, personal happiness, and the physicality of the real living life. […] We are and are not alive at the same time; we daydream and prefer illusions and enticing lies to the dull, boring, and sometimes frightening truth (E.K. 2).[42] Immediate, material contact with the world of the humiliated and insulted – those to whom he was always ready to give his life – causes the terrorist in "Darkness" to feel disgust. Such is his perception of Liuba's room in the brothel: "It was all so repugnant, so strange, to think that this also was life, – that people were living such a life day in, day out" (*Dark* 17). Aleksei affirms Ivan Karamazov's genuinely "underground" statement that one is unable to sincerely love one's neighbor: "It's still possible to love one's neighbor abstractly, and even occasionally from a distance, but hardly ever up close" (*BK* 237). Thus, Ivan cites the example of "John the Merciful (some saint)" who was believed to share his

[41] Nietzsche learned about Dostoevsky in 1886-87 when he first read *Notes from Underground*. The book made a huge impression on him. Later he famously referred to Dostoevsky as "the only psychologist […] from whom I had anything to learn" (*Twilight* 52).The fact of Nietzsche's importance for Andreyev's artistic development was acknowledged by Andreyev himself (Kaun 46); both direct and indirect references to Nietzsche are found in many of Andreyev's works.

[42] Compare with the famous underground man's exclamation: "We are all not used to life, we are all cripples, more or less. […] We have reached the point when we see the real 'living life' as work, almost as duty, and we all agree silently that it's better to live according to books. […] We are weighed down by our humanity […] by our real, proper body and blood, we are ashamed of it" (*PSS* 5:179).

bed with a frozen passerby and even to breathe into his mouth, "foul and festering with some terrible disease."[43] According to Ivan, the saint did it "with the strain of a lie [*s nadryvom lzhi*]" (ibid.). Remarkable in this context is Sergei Sergeev-Tsenskii's response to Andreyev's recital of his "Darkness" (as reproduced in Sergeev-Tsenskii's memoirs): "You may have thought this is merely an extreme expression of Christianity? And what of Julian the Merciful embracing not even a prostitute but a leper, a leper who was rotting alive?"

Thus, the psychological nature of Andreyev's hero's asceticism is portrayed by the author in accordance with Nietzsche's understanding of the ascetic ideal as a form of *ressentiment*, "that of an unfulfilled instinct and power-will that wants to be master, not over something in life, but over life itself and its deepest, strongest, most profound conditions; […] while satisfaction is *looked for* and found in […] destruction of selfhood, self-flagellation and self-sacrifice" (*On the Genealogy* 86). Aleksei's denial of the "normal man" in himself (his overcoming the demands of the flesh and his readiness to die) represents a perverse form of the will to power that corresponds with his role as a political terrorist. The latter entails assuming the godlike privilege to kill for the sake of higher justice. This results in the terrorist's psychological split into self-deprecation and pride – the essence of the underground psychology, according to René Girard. Their dialectics are revealed through Aleksei's interaction with the prostitute: he fluctuates between submissive and confessional, and arrogant and contemptuous tones. His feeling of superiority and what seems to truly echo "Satanic pride" reaches its peak after Liuba slaps him in the face, which recalls Dostoevsky's underground hero's ruminations on the perverse pleasure of the slap. The psychological similarity between the underground man and the terrorist is also encrypted in Liuba's comparison of Aleksei to a writer who visits her in the brothel: "you are

[43] The reference is to Gustav Flaubert's 1877 story "The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitalier" that was translated into Russian by Ivan Turgenev the same year under the title "The Legend of Saint Julian the Merciful."

very much like the author. You don't mind? He too at first pities me, and then gets angry, because I do not adore him as though he were an icon. He's so touchy. If he were God, he'd never forgive even one candle"; "[m]y author first said he was fine, but then admitted he was a brute, too"; "'[h]it away', he says, I deserve it'" (*Dark* 24, 28, 26).Taking into account the fact that Dostoevsky's underground man is indeed the fictional author of the book, and given his use of the Romantic cliché of redeeming a prostitute, this reads as an ironic reference to *Notes from Underground.* At the same time, as an example of Liuba's provocative behavior, this passage points to the fact that she, too, possesses certain underground traits, namely provocation, aggression*, nadryv*, and *ressentiment*.

Liuba as an Underground Woman

While the terrorist exemplifies the political underground man's divorce from real life and its psychological consequences, Liuba is related to the underground in a different manner. She belongs to the social underworld – the world of "subterranean depravity" – the underground of the living life that in Dostoevsky's underground man's existence is opposed the heroic dream world. In Liuba's example, Andreyev shows how the social underground forms the underground psychology of its inhabitant. In Natan Tamarchenko's opinion, "[i]n Andreyev, it is the heroine rather than the hero who is endowed with the exceptional instability of the 'underground' consciousness" (151). Indeed, Liuba demonstrates such behavioral patterns of the underground man as provocation and aggression, and *vyvert* and *nadryv*. As Tamarchenko points out, "[i]n the scene that takes place after he [Aleksei] has woken up, her [Liuba's] […] behavior acquires a clearly provoking meaning" (147). She intimidates Aleksei by mentioning the police, deliberately bares her breast, and uses swear words. Her aggression manifests itself in a series of *vyverts* – throwing away Aleksei's collar, striking him, and spitting in his face. She acts like an

iurodivyi when she gets down on her knees, begging Aleksei to try on her underwear. And as in the case of Dostoevsky's underground characters, *vyverts* alternate in her with *nadryvs*. Consider her weeping on the bed after she has struck Aleksei, and, subsequently, her hysterical state: "she was sitting with her arms twisted, laughing, too exhausted to speak" (104).

As in the case of Aleksei, *ressentiment* is also present in Liuba; thus, they are akin in their psychological "undergroundness." Kurliandskaia points out this aspect of Liuba's psychology: "she […] dreamed of meeting 'a good man' and had a burning desire to savor her power over him and to drag him down into the same moral descent" (30). This becomes clear during their psychological "duel," when Liuba decides to use her most powerful weapon – pointing out the shame of being good: "and when, in a tempest of emotion, with proud distended nostrils, he looked at her, he was met by a look as proud and even more disdainful. Even pity shone in the arrogant eyes of the prostitute; she had mounted miraculously astep of the invisible throne. […] Then, with an ominous air of conviction, […] she asked: 'what right do you have to be good when I am bad?'" (*Dark* 28; *Polnoe sobranie* 99).

The Exit from Light into Darkness

Liuba's question comes to Aleksei as a revelation. He discovers that the chaos which defines Liuba's world, "wild, drunk, hysterical chaos" (91), – is, in fact, the real world's true face. "So this is it, the truth," Aleksei realizes (104), just like the underground man who exclaimed: "So this is it, this is it at last – encounter with real life" (*PSS* 5: 148). For Aleksei, chaos also manifests itself on the semiotic level – it undermines the binaries that formerly defined his worldview: up and down,[44] life and death,[45] and his comrades and those outside his

[44] "He doesn't know whether he's up or down" (102).
[45] "[Being a good person] was what he opposed to both life and death, and it was no more" (103).

circle.[46] As a result, such foundational concepts as the revolutionary effort, "comradeship," suffering for the people, and, most importantly, literature, lose their meanings. Darkness – the condition in which one cannot see and loses direction – becomes the appropriate symbolic expression of Aleksei's new existential state: "If it's over, then it's over. Into the darkness – so be it. And what is ahead? I don't know. It's dark there" (105).

The latter phrase shows that darkness in Andreyev's short story represents the opposite of light in the sense that it does not offer any resolution or promise either to Aleksei or to Liuba (one could say that for both of them there is no "light at the end of the tunnel"). In this context, light as a traditional symbol of reason, which is reflected in the word "enlightenment," equally applies to the socialist-utopian idea about finding a formula of social justice and common happiness – the "bookish wisdom" that made Aleksei a revolutionary. Therefore, darkness in Andreev is synonymous with that polemical meaning of the underground in *Notes from Underground,* which deconstructs the rationalist conceptions of societal improvement. Before Aleksei considered himself to be a bearer of light; now he must accept his failure in this role: "If we can't enlighten the whole darkness with our lamps, let's extinguish the lights and all go into the darkness" (110).

But darkness in Andreyev's text also refers to the dark side of real life, which is represented by Liuba and her world. It is the encounter with this reality that results in Aleksei's refusal to be "a good man" and his decision to stay with Liuba. Thus, descending into the dark life's underworld – plunging into its darkness – turns out to be his exit from his former political underground, although a paradoxical one: the exit from lucidity into the dark, and from the ideological underground into the underground of social and moral chaos. It can hardly be called a

[46] "[H]e did not have his own people any longer" (103).

resurrection in a spiritual sense but it signifies the disappearance of the hero's illusions about himself and his role as a revolutionary.

The Subterranean Darkness

Iezuitova and Klimov have pointed out that the central symbol of darkness in Andreyev's short story might relate to Dostoevsky's *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions,* which serves as an important pre-text to *Notes from Underground* (591).The association between *Winter Notes* and "Darkness" elucidates the way in which Andreyev adapts Dostoevsky's underground motifs in his depiction of life at the bottom of society. In *Winter Notes*, Dostoevsky opposes the crystal palace of the Great Exhibition in London, a symbol of Western civilization, to the lower class – the "pariahs of society" who are "abandoned and driven away from the human feast, shoving and crushing each other in the underground darkness [*v podzemnoi t'me*] into which they have been thrown by their older brothers, gropingly knock at any gate whatsoever and seek entrance so they won't suffocate in the dark cellar" (39). Peace points out that "as in *Notes from Underground* the opposite of the 'crystal palace' is the 'underground', and although the actual words used (*podzemnyi* and *podval*) are not identical, this is, nevertheless, an underground of dark protest where man is in danger of losing his 'human form'" (76). Thus, on the motif level, in *Winter Notes*, Dostoevsky uses the subterranean symbolism that throughout his works connects the metaphor of the underground with the literal meaning of the word (see Chapter 3). A similar approach to the symbolic use of space is found in Andreyev. In addition to its aforementioned metaphorical meanings, darkness in Andreyev is also present as the subterranean darkness implied in the symbols of the abyss,[47] the black earth,[48] and the grave (see below). Moreover,

[47] Aleksei was horrified by the "abyss that opened its black mouth right at his feet" (99).
[48] "[H]is foreign bookish wisdom […] was being replaced by something of his very own, wild and dark as the black earth" (39).

even before "Darkness," in his early short story "In the Basement" ("*V podvale,*" 1901)[49] Andreyev portrays the world of social outcasts – thieves, prostitutes, and drunkards – as a basement where the personification of death – "a grey bird of prey"; "a giant grey body" (*Sobranie* 342; my trans.) – patiently awaits its prey. Already in this text, Andreyev employs the opposition of darkness vs. light, and its symbolical role is similar to that developed in "Darkness." Here, too, darkness stands for the chaotic and destructive forces of life (those which put people in basements) and is much stronger than the light with which people try to fight it: "The night came. It arrived, black and evil, […] and spread out its darkness along distant snow fields […]. People fought it with the weak light of their lamps, but, strong and wicked, the night encircled lonely lights with a hopeless circle and filled people's hearts with gloom. And in many hearts it extinguished the weak simmering sparkles"[50] (ibid. 350).

The Whorehouse as the House of the Dead

Like the underground according to Dostoevsky, the underground space in Andreyev relates to the mythological representation of the underworld. Tamarchenko argues that Aleksei's "'own' world (the sphere relating to his activity and his comrades) and the one in which he finds himself are antipodal and mutually exclusive. In this context, the brothel appears as an inverted world, the world's underside" (147). To emphasize this, Andreyev incorporates aspects of the carnivalesque and grotesque into his vision of the social underworld which are, according to Bakhtin, dictated by "the very logic of the lower stratum, of the inside-out and turnabout" (*Rabelais* 391). Carnivalesque inversion, typical in Ancient and Medieval depictions of the underworld, is evident when Liuba prompts Aleksei to put on her underwear and thus to "try on" her status symbolically. Indeed, this episode precedes Aleksei's symbolic death, i.e. his

[49] The Russian word *podval* means "basement" or "cellar" and may be used as a synonym of *podpol'e.*
[50] Remarkably, Andreyev entitled one of "Darkness"'s drafts as "*Noch'*" ("Night").

realization of the fact that he can no longer be good or return unsullied to his fellow revolutionaries. The notion of darkness allows Andreyev to depict Liuba's universe as both the world of the dead and the grave. Aleksei's visiting the brothel is orchestrated by funeral motifs (the black clothes that both he and Liuba wear remind him of a funeral; the entire episode is presented as a funeral service for his former life). Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 3, funeral motifs appear in the underground man's account of his adventures in the second part of the book, "A Propos the Wet Snow." In "Darkness," Liuba differentiates herself from Aleksei by calling herself a dead person (91), which reminds the reader of the underground man's vision of a prostitute as the living dead woman in *Notes*. Subsequently, when Aleksei decides to stay with Liuba, he talks about his comrades, "as the living speak of the dead, or as the dead might speak of the living, and through the even course of his calm and almost indifferent narration it resounded like a funeral knell" (*Dark* 42). Comparison of the brothel with the grave and the chthonic world is present in the episode in which Liuba's fellow prostitutes come to her room to meet Aleksei: "as though the whole Satanic world had gathered there to laugh while sending off his little innocent honesty as it went to its grave" (111). This episode is also remarkable for its use of laughter: the women "guffawed as only the drunken can, without any restraint" (*Dark* 40). Andreyev employs the ancient complex which puts together laughter and death to emphasize "the whole of life"; however, he rethinks it in a typically modernist way so that "these matrices are transformed into sharp, static contrasts and oxymorons" (Bakhtin, "Forms" 199).

Through his use of mythological motifs, Andreyev suggests that the way out of the political underground leads into the "underground" of the living life, which is paradoxically compared to the world of the dead. Seen from this perspective, the plot of "Darkness" imitates the real-life plot of Dostoevsky's own life in that his conversion from a politically underground

person, a member of the Petrashevsky Circle, to an Orthodox Christian with conservative views, happened in prison, "the house of the dead." "It was hell, pitch darkness [*eto byl ad, t'ma kromeshnaia*]," says the narrator of *Notes from the House of the Dead* about his prison experience (*PSS* 4: 12). According to Iezuitova and Klimov, it is quite likely that in "Darkness" Andreyev relied on Vladimir Solovyov's interpretation of Dostoevsky's descent into the darkness of the dead house (592-93). In "Three Addresses in Memory of Dostoevsky" (1881), Solovyov says that prison helped Dostoevsky understand that "he was incorrect in his scheme of social revolution, which was imperative only to him and his comrades. Amid the horrors of the house of the dead, Dostoevsky for the first time consciously met with the truth of people's sentiment and, in its light, clearly saw the error of his revolutionary aspirations" (8-9). This aspect of Dostoevsky's insight in particular, according to Solovyov, defined the plot of *Crime and Punishment*: "From a person having lost this solidarity [with all], first of all is required that he reject the pride of being set apart, in order that he might reunite spiritually with the entire people" (11). It is especially important that Solovyov points out the relationship between the political underground, in which Dostoevsky himself took part, and his underground heroes who commit sins of "pride" and "self-deification." Clearly this relationship was the basis for further elaboration by Andreyev. However, while exiting from all representations of the underground for Dostoyevsky always happens through faith in Christ, Andreyev offers a completely different conception. After his transformation, the hero of "Darkness" ends up in another form of the underground.

"Primordial Rebellion" and the Circle of the Underground

Aleksei discovers a "new and frightening" truth, which is associated with his spiritual "return" to "some of his origins," "to those spontaneous, primordial rebels for whom rebellion

was religion and religion was rebellion" (109). Certainly, because of Aleksei's transformation, the rebels and rebellion mentioned in this phrase are in opposition to the notion of the political revolt that he embodied earlier. Aleksei's declaration sheds light on the nature of this "primordial rebellion," one he professes from this point forward: "To those who are blind from birth! Ye who can see, pluck out your eyes! For it is shameful […] for those who have sight to look upon those who are blind from birth! […] If there be not paradise for all, then I will have none for myself!" (*Dark* 40). By mentioning those who are blind from birth, Aleksei refers not to social but rather to universal injustice – the injustice of the "laws of nature," as Dostoevsky's underground man puts it. Therefore, he rejects paradise the same way Ivan Karamazov rejects the future world's harmony because of the suffering he sees around him.[51] Andreyev shows here that his hero is no longer modeled on the ascetic archetype. Aleksei acknowledges the fact that he would like to associate himself with Christ but he cannot because his new "truth" is somehow in opposition to that of Christ: "did Christ himself sin with the sinners, commit adultery, get drunk? No… [This is not Christ], but something else, something more dreadful" (*Dark* 34; *Polnoe sobranie* 105). Moreover, by using the metaphor of those who are blind from birth, Aleksei implicitly refers to one of Christ's miracles – the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida. Aleksei symbolically rejects Christ as a potential source of light, pointing out the impossibility of healing blind people and releasing them from their darkness. He questions God's creation by imagining himself a "fearsome prophet of eternal justice that God himself will have to obey otherwise what kind of God would he be?!" (105). All together, Aleksei can be seen to enter a state of metaphysical

[51]The similarity between Andreyev's hero and Ivan Karamazov is mentioned in Botsianovskii 67-68; Dzhonson 2. Parallels with Ivan appear also in Aleksei's depiction of the underground revolutionaries. He emphasizes the fact that they are trying to build a better future on blood: "Having travelled by dream to the distant future, […] they lived their short lives like pale blood-stained shadows" (*Dark* 42). This allows the hero to deconstruct the rationale behind political underground activity: "a little group of young men, pitifully young, bereft of father and mother, and hopelessly hostile both to the world they were fighting and to the world they were fighting for" (ibid.).

rebellion similar to that of Dostoevsky's major underground characters – a "protest against his [man's] condition and against the whole of creation" (Camus, *Rebel* 23).

Thus, in "Darkness," Andreyev portrays his character's development as the dialectics of different metaphorical meanings of the underground with hidden references to Dostoevsky. Aleksei moves from the political underground (the realm of the "bookish life" associated with light) to the social underground (the realm of the real life associated with darkness, chaos, and the world of the dead) to the underground of metaphysical, existential rebellion. While this path represents the transformation of the hero's underground state in the philosophical sense (he exits the political underground in order to enter its existential counterpart), it is difficult to say whether he was able to leave his initial psychological underground state of pride and his feelings of superiority. In the last scene of "Darkness," certain phrases seem to indicate that Aleksei returns to his initial psychological underground, which this time is linked not to the ascetic archetype but to that of the *iurodivyi* (see Chapter 2). The narrator demonstrates that, like the *iurodivyi* and the "man of *ressentiment*" in Nietzsche, Aleksei finds satisfaction in self-humiliation. He examines everyone around him "from the height of his new, unmeasured, and terrible truth," while "[t]he fact of his being nearly naked, of having dirty hairy legs with bent and crooked toes, gave him no sense of shame" (*Dark* 119). Finally, from Liuba's point of view he is again "good and proud" (120). And so, the circle of the underground is complete, and therefore shows that the possibility of exiting the underground was for Andreyev an unsolved problem.

"JUDAS ISCARIOT"

One of the most important factors to destroy the myth of the Russian political underground in the early twentieth century was political provocation. In 1909, Russian society was struck by the unprecedented discovery of the fact that one of the leaders of the Socialist

Revolutionary party Ievno Azef was an agent of the Okhranka ("The Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order"). Consequently, the image of the *agent provocateur* began to appear in second-rate literature (Evgenii Lundberg, Nataliia Makletsova, Sofiia Savinkova),[52] while the media proclaimed the duplicity of underground Russia that contradicted the high ideals of revolutionaries. In *What Never Happened*, Ropshin argued that provocation was somehow inherent in the political *podpol'e*. By 1913, the literary critic Aleksandr Izmailov names Andreyev and Dostoevsky as those writers who were the first to determine the psychological nature of the disease of the political underground. Symptomatically, he uses the words *vyvert* and *nadorvavshiisia* (cognate with *nadryv*) to express this idea, thus implicitly connecting political provocation with the psychology of Dostoevsky's underground heroes: "In his *Demons*, Dostoevsky was the first to capture the psychological quirks [*vyverty*] and perversions of those for whom revolution became not just a matter of political faith but a cash cow as well. […] In his 'Darkness,' Andreyev outlined the severe […] psychopathic breakdown of the overstrained mind [*v nadorvavsheiisia dushe*] of the terrorist, who gave up his purity on a prostitute's bed" (15).

The same year he wrote "Darkness," Andreyev published one of his most famous works "Judas Iscariot and Others" ("Judas Iscariot" in subsequent editions). Certainly, it was Andreyev's sensitivity to and deep understanding of the deep burning issues afflicting Russian society that motivated him to develop the topic of betrayal and provocation two years before Azef's disclosure. Annenskii writes that "the new Judas has nothing in common neither with Judea, nor with Galilee. […] Judas's anguish and spontaneity are too clear and close to us to seek their origins on the shores of the Dead Sea" (147). Andreyev's contemporary Mikhail Reisner reads Andreyev's Judas as a sort of a revolutionary: "Judas sells Jesus out with the sole purpose of finally initiating uprising, revolt, and rebellion" (82). It is remarkable that subsequently

[52] For more on this topic see Mogil'ner 146-52.

Andreyev himself compared his Judas with Azef.[53] In a recent article, Mark Brodskii writes: "Judas's act [of betrayal] is in many respects reminiscent of Andreyev's contemporaries; of social-revolutionary terrorists' 'actions' – [we see here] the same neglect of one's own and someone else's life, the same confidence in the righteousness of one's attitude toward the world, and the same will to 'propel' history forward" (28). References to Judas appear in Andreyev's book *S.O.S.* where he describes the political situation in Russia after the Revolution of 1917 (Iezuitova and Kilmov 540):

> The attitude which the Allied Governments have assumed with regard to tormented Russia is either *betrayal* or *madness*.[…] [A]ll betrayals are unexpected, and if the divine Jesus knows well, whither and wherefore departs Judas, nevertheless all his disciples continue to remain in happy ignorance to the very moment of the classical kiss. […] [A]s for the setting, in place of the gentle kiss, you have the wireless and the Eiffel Tower – it naturally changes and progresses with the time, without essentially creating any new values. (*Russia's Call* 14)

Yet, basing his plot on events and characters from the Bible, Andreyev takes the topic of provocation out of the contemporary political context and brings it to the philosophical – existentialist and metaphysical – level.

Andreyev's Judas possesses numerous "underground" characteristics in terms of his psychology. In a recent study, Kasatkina summarizes the similarities between Andreyev's Judas and Dostoevsky's underground man on the psychological plane. Both characters strive "to show others their uniqueness" and at the same time "to overcome their separation from the world" (245); they both oppose the opinion of others and at the same time rely on it; both express sadistic and masochistic propensities. Kasatkina also points out the important role of provocation in Judas's behavior, which she compares with that of the *iurodivyi*.

[53] In an unpublished letter to his friend Belousov, Andreyev writes: "do you also think that I justify Judas, and I am myself a Judas, and my children are Azefs?" (qtd. in Iezuitova and Klimov 538)

More than a century ago, Annenskii noted the kinship between the two characters, directly comparing Judas with the underground man: "when Judas is dreaming about making friends with the best and most respected people and, under cover of night, bemoans [*nadryvaetsia*] the fact that his love for Jesus has been scorned, doesn't it remind you […] of the idyllic, sobbing petty dreams of [Dostoevsky's] sleazy character who goes limp in the hot solitude of his underground?" (149). It is in his analysis of "Judas Iscariot" that Annenskii defines *vyvert* and *nadryv* as two psychological extremes of many Dostoevsky heroes (see Chapter 2). According to Annenskii, they informed Andreyev's construction of Judas's character: "It is impossible not just to understand Andreyev's Judas but even to believe for a minute that Judas is indeed a human being, […] without applying to him these models of Dostoevskian thought – *vyvert* and *nadryv*" (148).

However, *vyvert* and *nadryv* represent just one aspect of the *iurodivyi*-like duality – "[t]he hypocrisy, which he had carried so lightly all his life" (Andreyev, *Judas* 137)[54] – through which Judas's psychological "underground" manifests itself. It is also present in his face: "And while one side of his face was crinkled up in buffooning grimaces, the other side wagged seriously and severely " (20); his voice: "[s]ometimes it was strong and manly, at others shrill as that of an old woman scolding her husband" (6); and his physical condition: he was "fairly strong and well knit, though for some reason or other he pretended to be weak and somewhat sickly" (5).This duality is linked to his inability to distinguish truth from lies, which is rendered through the refrain-like question: "Who is deceiving Judas? Who is right?" (93) It is this question that motivates Judas's provocation. He provokes everyone around him in order to show others and himself that he is right, but instead it always turns out that he is wrong. For example, when Judas manages to prove that the people who had welcomed Jesus in their village later on suspected that

[54] Henceforth I quote "Judas Iscariot" from *Judas* with page numbers in parentheses.

He was a thief, both the apostles and Christ distance themselves from Judas "as though Judas had been proved wrong" (26).

The underground psychology of the double described by René Girard easily applies to Judas. If, according to Girard, the man of underground pride is at once "a contemptible person and a contemptuous observer" (22), then Judas is split into deceiver and deceived; thus, his mouth laughs when inside he is suffering with Jesus. Judas's experience makes him suspect that deception constitutes the nature of the world: "everything deceived him, even animals. Whenever he pets a dog it bites his fingers; but when he beats it with a stick it licks his feet, and looks into his eyes like a daughter" (29). The motif of deception is also important in the underground man's discourse. For example, he regards the universal laws as "a spoof, juggling, and cheating" (*PSS* 5: 106). The underground man argues that the normal man takes "immediate and secondary causes for primary ones" (ibid. 108). Judas conveys a similar idea using the example of dust in the wind: "When a strong wind blows it raises the dust, and foolish people look at the dust and say: 'Look at the wind!' But it is only dust " (57). And just like that of the underground man, Judas's existential angst comes from his awareness (the "acute consciousness") that whether things are good or bad, beautiful or ugly, and true or false only depends on one's point of view. For instance, this idea is expressed by Judas in his dialogue with Thomas about the money that Judas stole: "this morning you called me a thief, this evening you call me brother. What will you call me tomorrow? " (56)

Therefore, Judas wants to find the truth that may not be questioned. He thought he had found this truth in Christ, to whom he says: "in grief and pains have I sought Thee all my life, sought and found!" (57). As James Woodward has pointed out, "[i]n Jesus alone he finds the truth with which he seeks to replenish the void created by his skepticism" (172). Nevertheless,

while one half of his personality believes that Christ is the Truth, the other doubts and needs proof. Thus, his betrayal of Christ is also a provocation, but one of a higher – metaphysical – level. The reader discovers that, through his betrayal of Christ, Judas provokes both people and the world in order to make them clearly see that Jesus is "the very best of men" (115). Since the short story's publication, numerous critics have written that Andreyev's Judas's betrayal of Christ stemmed from good intentions: Judas "betrays Christ out of love for Him, out of his longing for a miracle, in order to make everyone see sooner Who is standing before them. And since this did not happen, […] the whole earth is disgraced in Judas's eyes" (Kozlovskii 353). He "chooses betrayal as the only way to the earliest glorification of Jesus, one that would take place in this world" (Selivanov 569). More importantly though, it becomes apparent that Judas needs to prove to himself that Christ is God, so that his betrayal becomes a provocation not only of others but first and foremost, of himself. The punishment of Jesus is defined by the narrator as "[t]he horror and the dreams of Judas" (128), which reveals Judas's double attitude to Christ's death. Even before that, the narrator states that, "[w]ith one hand betraying Jesus, Judas tried hard with the other to frustrate his own plans" (83). Unlike the other apostles, Judas follows Christ to observe His suffering at all stages of His ordeal, from the arrest to the crucifixion. And throughout all this, he hopes that "[t]hey will understand immediately" (123), "they will be crying: 'He is ours. He is Jesus! What are you about?'" (119). The deceiver in Judas wants to be discredited by seeing Jesus's triumph. It is this Judas who comes to the Sanhedrin after the execution to tell its members that he "betrayed […] an innocent man" (138) and to throw the pieces of silver into Anna's face. It is this Judas who also blames the apostles for not having fought for Jesus and for being alive while Jesus is dead. However, one can apply to Judas the formula by which Kirilov in Dostoevsky's *Demons* defines Stavrogin: "if [he] believes, then he

doesn't believe that he believes" (*PSS* 5: 469). And it is Judas the deceiver who keeps suspecting that Jesus, too, was a lie and consequently deserved his fate: death. Thus, in his conversation with Thomas, Judas reveals his atheistic views, doubting the existence of a higher God's judgment:

> "We were talking all through the night, and came to the conclusion that the court cannot condemn the innocent. But if it does, why then –"
> "What then!"
> "Why, then it is no court. And it will be worse for them when they have to give an account before the real Judge."
> "Before the real! Is there any 'real' left?" sneered Judas. (121)

This Judas is afraid of the possibility of Jesus's exoneration because in this case, he would be deceived again. This idea is accompanied by the motif of victory:

> On the very crown of the hill the cross is raised, and on it is the crucified Jesus. The horror and the dreams of Judas are realized, he gets up from his knees on which for some reason he had knelt, and gazes coldly around.
>
> Thus does a stern conqueror look, when he has already determined in his heart to give over everything to destruction and death […]. And suddenly, as clearly as his terrible victory, Iscariot saw its ominous precariousness. What if they should suddenly understand? It is not yet too late! Jesus still lives. (128-29)

The death of Jesus signifies Judas's victory: it was the first time ever Judas felt that he was truly right. Reflecting Andreyev's existentialist views and anticipating Camus's ideas, the Judas who celebrates Christ's death is the most immediate descendant of Dostoevsky's underground heroes. Like the man of the absurd in Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*, this Judas triumphs when he fearlessly faces the truth about the world's absurdity where no one, even "the very best of men," is able to overcome death.

Thus, the motif of victory emphasizes the ideological subtext of Judas's betrayal, which at the end of the short story reads as a metaphysical rebellion akin to that of Dostoevsky's heroes such as Kirilov, Ivan Karamazov, and the Grand Inquisitor. Therefore, Andreyev inherits Dostoevsky's association between the underground as a psychological complex and as a rebellious ideology that postulates the absurdity of creation. In this respect, the closest predecessor of Judas is Kirilov.

Kirilov uses Christ's crucifixion as an evidence of the world's absurdity and non-existence of God. In his interpretation of the biblical plot he leaves out the resurrection; instead he refers to the same notion with the same meaning of the laws of nature as does the underground man: in the discourse of both characters, nature stands for a hostile and absurd entity that seals the tragic fate of humans:

> One day on earth in the middle of the earth, it just so happened that there stood three crosses. One man on the cross was so filled with faith that he said to another: "You will be with me in paradise today." The day ended, they both died and found neither paradise nor resurrection. […] Listen: that man was the superior man on earth; he was the sole reason for its existence. The whole planet with everything that it has is just madness without that man. […] And […] if the laws of nature didn't pity even *this One*, […] but made *Him* live among lies and die for a lie, then the whole planet is a lie. (*PSS* 10: 471)

Kirilov's suicide is justified by both the world's absurdity[55] and his eagerness to be equal with God. The same is true for Judas. His constant preoccupation with becoming Jesus's closest ally in the end transforms into a truly theomachist statement that he addresses Jesus: "But maybe Thou wilt be angry with Judas when he arrives? And Thou wilt not trust him? And wilt send me to hell? Well! what then? I will go to hell. And in Thy hell fire I will weld iron, and weld iron,

[55] Kirilov formulates the metaphysical absurdity as follows: "God is necessary, and therefore He must exist. […] But I know He doesn't exist and can't exist. […] [A] person who has both these ideas in his or her mind cannot continue to live life" (*PSS* 10: 469).

and demolish Thy heaven" (151). Kornei Chukovskii argues against reading Judas as a god-fighter: "He steals God from the 'world' in order to show that the 'world' barely needs God. […] Judas is not a god-fighter. He is a world-fighter" (494-95). However, Dostoevsky's notion of the underground is linked with the idea that rejecting God's world necessarily means being in opposition to God. Contrary to Chukovskii's argument, Judas's last words indicate that Andreyev's elaboration on Dostoevsky's underground in the context of betrayal and (metaphysical) provocation led him to similar philosophical conclusions.

Unlike in Dostoevsky, in the world created by Andreyev, resurrection – be it physical or spiritual – does not take place. This proves the inherent power of the laws of nature and, anticipating the main argument of Camus in his "essay on the absurd," declares death to be clear evidence of the world's absurdity. Judas is modeled after certain Dostoevsky characters, who, due to their lack of faith, are not given a chance to be resurrected from their spiritual underground. Just like Svidrigailov and Stavrogin, Judas chooses suicide as a means of escape from this absurdity.

Finally, similarly to all underground-related texts discussed so far, the motif of underground space, both explicitly and implicitly, is present in the depiction of Judas, as well. As one manifestation of the theme of his secrecy and the elusiveness of his deeper thoughts, Judas is persistently compared with an underground creature that hides in a burrow or hole: "[Judas] began cautiously to protrude his bumpy head into the light. […] [A]s though creeping out from a ditch [*iama* – pit; hole], he felt his strange skull, and then his eyes, in the light: he stopped and then deliberately exposed his whole face" (12); "he came back again quietly with heavy, slow steps, as a wounded animal creeps slowly to its lair [*v svoiu tëmnuiu noru* – to its dark burrow] after a severe and deadly fight" (77); "with the wonderment of a wild beast as it creeps from its

lair suddenly, charmed by the sight of a white flowerlet – he gently touched His [Jesus's] soft locks and then quickly withdrew his hand" (78). Judas thinks that by betraying Christ he calls "the executioners [out] from their dark holes," with his "voice of love" (106). The comparison of Judas with an animal that hides itself in its lair employs the imaginative potential of the shell discussed in Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, which applies perfectly to Judas's "underground personality": "Everything about a creature that comes out of a shell is dialectical. And since it does not come out entirely, the part that comes out contradicts the part that remains inside. […] The creature is preparing temporal explosions, not to say whirlwinds, of being. […] [W]e attain to the most decisive type of aggressiveness, aggressiveness that bides its time" (108, 111-12).[56] This correlates well with the image of an octopus attributed to Judas by Peter: "you, Judas, are like an octopus – but only on one side" (9). The apostles are intimidated by this comparison: "They recalled the immense eyes, the dozens of greedy tentacles, the feigned repose – and then all at once! it embraced, clung round, crushed and sucked out, and that without one wink of its monstrous eyes" (11). The association of Judas with the multi-armed sea monster appears again after Peter's renunciation when Judas tries to warm himself by the fire: "So, when the fishermen go away at night leaving an expiring fire of driftwood upon the shore, from the dark depth of the sea might something creep forth, crawl up towards the fire, look at it with wild intentness, and dragging all its limbs up to it, mutter in hoarse complaint – 'How cold!'" (111). Elsewhere, Judas is compared to a scorpion: "He creeps into a house quietly, like a scorpion" (1-2). These animalistic associations in Andreyev remind us of the spider in Dostoevsky texts. The octopus and the scorpion play the role of the "underground animals" discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. As mentioned earlier, a similar image of a monster preparing to emerge from

[56]For more on the image of the shell and its relation to the underground see Chapter 3.

his subterranean den was employed by Russian revolutionaries to describe their underground mission.

Another spatial image associated with Judas is the rocky ravine, which also refers to the subterranean level and its inhabitants. In his depiction of the ravine, the narrator discloses a deep, organic connection between this space and Judas. The scorpion is once again mentioned here: "And so for an hour or two he sat on, as motionless and grey as the grey stone itself [...]. The walls of the ravine rose before him […]. And the wild, deserted ravine was like a split, upturned skull, and every stone in it was like a petrified thought. […] A scorpion, deceived by his quietness, hobbled past, on its tottering legs, close to Judas" (34-35). Accordingly, a ravine becomes Judas's grave. Although he hangs himself on the top of the mountain – closer to Christ's "heaven" – people throw Judas's dead body "into a deep ravine, into which they were in the habit of throwing dead horses and cats and other carrion" (77). Thus, after his death, people "finalize" Judas's "undergroundness" both literally and figuratively, by "anathemiz[ing] his shameful memory" and forever labeling him "the Traitor" (154).

Conclusion

In his texts written in 1907, during and shortly after the last months of the First Russian revolution, Leonid Andreyev provides an unconventional view on the Russian political underground, drawing upon Dostoevsky's conception of the underground as a psychological and philosophical phenomenon. Through the example of Aleksei in "Darkness," Andreyev shows that, like Dostoevsky's underground man, the man of the Russian political underground is divorced from real life. Putting Aleksei in contact with the "living life" by way of an encounter with a prostitute, Andreyev exposes in him the recognizable traits of "underground" psychology, the combination of self-humiliation with egotism and pride, and leads the hero to the realization

of the artificiality of his ideals. Aleksei enters the state of the "existential underground," thereby giving up the idea of the political revolution in favor of "metaphysical rebellion" against the unjust universe akin to that of Ivan Karamazov. Expanding on Dostoevsky's thought and anticipating the ideas of French existentialism, Andreyev points out the deeper similarities between social and "metaphysical" revolt: both imply a rejection of God and, ultimately, lead one to take over God's role. This idea is expressed in Andreyev's "Judas Iscariot," a modernist revision of a biblical story. In this text, Andreyev implicitly reveals the similarities between Judas, Dostoevsky's underground characters, and contemporary *agents provocateurs*, demonstrating that provocation and duality constitute the archetypal patterns of underground psychology. In addition to the psychological and philosophical aspects of the underground, Andreyev inherits from Dostoevsky his use of the imaginative potential of the term *podpol'e* and incorporates the subterranean motifs in the space of his texts.

Chapter 5

"*Podpol'e pomyslov svoikh*":[57]

Dostoevsky's Underground and Leningrad Unofficial Culture of the 1970s-80s (Viktor Krivulin)

When ascetics go, there come emigrants.
Emigrants are replaced by dissidents.
And when dissidents evaporate, the underground takes over.

Vladimir Makanin, *Underground, or A Hero of Our Time*.[58]

U nego v karmane Sartr,
u sograzhdan v luchshem sluchae piatak.[59]

Boris Grebenshchikov, "Ivanov."

Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, the underground in Russia acquires a new meaning that refers to unofficial (uncensored) literature and art, and a specific (counter)culture of *samizdat* publications, seminars, and exhibitions that surrounded unofficial writers and artists. As Stanislav Savitskii shows, the term *podpol'naia literatura* (underground literature) as applied to Russian writers whose texts did not satisfy the aesthetic and/or ideological requirements of Soviet censorship and therefore could not be published, comes into use in the 1950s-60s and originates in the language of the Russian literary émigré community, primarily the publishing house "*Posev*" and its journal *Grani* (21). The émigré publishers simplistically assumed that to be an unofficial writer in the Soviet Union necessarily implied expressing a distinct anti-Soviet stance. Thus, they tried to "undertake the politicization of uncensored literature" (ibid. 25) by drawing parallels between the notion of the political *podpol'e* of the nineteenth – early twentieth

[57] "The underground of one's own intentions." From Viktor Krivulin's 1974 poem "*Voskresen'e*" ("Sunday"; Krivulin, *Stikhi* 8).
[58] Makanin, *Andegraund* 203; my trans.
[59] "He has Sartre in his pocket, while his fellow citizens have a penny in theirs at best."

centuries and the unofficial literature of the 1950s-60s. For example, in 1962 *Grani* published the Moscow *samizdat* journal *Feniks* in its entirety, introducing it as an "underground [*podpol'nyi*] journal" with a "radical revolutionary character" ("Ot redaktsii," *Grani*). However, propagators of Russian forbidden literature abroad disregarded the fact that the "revolutionary *podpol'e*" had by then become part of official Soviet mythology with which most of the underground artists did not want to be associated (Savitskii 21). Moreover, the young generation of independent artists who worked in Moscow and Leningrad in the 1970s-80s insisted that they were apolitical.[60] Yet, since the 1960s, the concept of *podpol'e* (and, later, the anglicized *andegraund/andeRground*) has been appropriated by the Russian unofficial culture's discourse and self-consciousness.[61]

The main protagonist of the present chapter is the Leningrad/Petersburg poet Viktor Krivulin (1944-2001), the leading representative of the literary underground culture of 1960s-80s, and its theoretician.[62] In his poetry and cultural criticism, Krivulin directly addresses the

[60]Viacheslav Dolinin and Dmitrii Severiukhin have pointed out that most of the writers and poets who ended up underground "did not think of any kind of underground [*podpol'naia*] work" but rather "sought to gain access to the reader, considering their creative work to be of artistic and social significance" (15). For example, the poetry anthology *Lepta* (*Contribution*) that a group of Leningrad unofficial writers (Iuliia Voznesenskaia, Boris Ivanov, Viktor Krivulin, Konstantin Kuz'minskii and Evgenii Pazukhin) unsuccessfully tried to publish in 1975 "did not contain any political or ideological sedition" (27). Evgenii Pazukhin remembers: "There was almost no political opposition […] in our milieu. We could be persecuted by the State […] but we ourselves were absolutely indifferent to it" (164). However, one should not disregard the long-established tradition according to which being apolitical in the Soviet Union was considered subversive. The Soviet administration clearly expressed this in its infamous decree on the journals *Leningrad* and *Zvezda* (1946): "The Soviet system cannot tolerate the education of youth in a spirit of indifference to Soviet politics, to ideology with a carefree attitude" (qtd. in Sjeklocha and Mead 48). Even though the 1970s were much more liberal compared to the Stalinist 1940s, little seemed to have changed in the authorities' attitude to the issue of political indifference.

[61] In addition to *andegraund* and *podpol'e*, among the synonymous words and expressions that referred to the unofficial artistic community in the 1960s-70s were *vtoraia (neofitsial'naia) literatura* (second [unofficial] literature), *vtoraia kul'tura* (second culture), *al'ternativnaia kul'tura* (alternative culture), *dvizheniie nonkonformistov* (non-conformist movement), and *nezavisimaia literatura* (independent literature). See Savitskii 26-33, Kalomirov, Sedakova, "V Geraklitovu." Especially popular was the term "second culture," which I use here as a synonym of unofficial culture.

[62] It is important that Krivulin who majored in Russian literature at Leningrad (St. Petersburg) State University's Faculty of Philology was able to harmoniously combine these two – quite different – roles: the role of an artist and the role of a professional critic commenting on his own and his fellow artists' texts and contexts. For this reason, Krivulin represents an especially valuable case for the present study.

concept of the underground,[63] thus both participating in the creation of the cultural myth of which he was part and analyzing it from a scholarly distance. I argue that Krivulin played a major role in purging the concept of the underground of the political overtones I hadt acquired in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In his texts, he re-establishes the underground as a multi-dimensional – philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic – phenomenon, pointing out its Dostoevskian origins. While scholars have mostly focused on Krivulin's creative dialogue with the preceding traditions of the Golden and Silver Ages poetry of Baratynskii, Pushkin, Tiutchev, Bely, Briusov, Mandelstam,[64] his engagement with Russian classical prose, namely Dostoevsky, has not yet been studied. I discuss the conceptualization of the underground in Krivulin's essays and critical writings, placing it in the broader context of Russian unofficial culture of the time. I also examine the concept of the underground in Krivulin's poetry written in the 1970s,[65] showing that Krivulin employs *podpol'e* as an intertextual motif that involves his texts in a dialogue with Dostoevsky.

The Formation of the Literary Underground

In the 1990s, Krivulin wrote several articles and essays analyzing the phenomenon of the unofficial ("second") culture of the 1970s-80s. One finds here the concurrent use of the terms *podpol'e* and *andegraund*;[66] they function as synonyms (Krivulin, "Zolotoi vek" 345). Krivulin

[63] In his writings, Krivulin uses both the Russian *podpol'e* and the term adopted from English *andegraund*. One can disagree with Savitskii who writes that "[o]ver the course of the 1970s [the term] *podpol'e* was completely forgotten" (25). On the contrary, in his 1970s poetry and essays, Krivulin actively uses the word *podpol'e* and its derivates. Hereafter I distinguish between the specific Russian equivalents of "underground" each time I refer to concrete contexts in which the word appears, while the English *underground* denotes the phenomenon under study here in all its complexity regardless of the particular differences between its Russian renderings.

[64] See B. Ivanov, Sedakova, "Ocherki," Walker, Zitzewitz.

[65] Most of the poems I refer to in this chapter are from Krivulin's book of poetry entitled "*Voskresnye oblaka*" ("Sunday Clouds").

[66] The anglicized equivalent of *podpol'e – andegraund* – becomes popular only in the 1980s-90s and, at first, is used in the discourse of rock culture (Sedakova, "V Geraklitovu"; Savitskii 32-33).

defines *andegraund*/*podpol'e* as a "subculture," or "counterculture"[67] of uncensored art and *samizdat* production whose representatives were united by the "aesthetic non-acceptance of the Soviet reality" (*Okhota* 133, 128, 131). In these pioneering surveys of Russian unofficial culture and samizdat, Krivulin appears as its insightful historian. According to him, *andegraund* as a distinct literary environment begins to form in the late 1950s with the "shift of the center of literary life from official venues to private apartments" – for example, Evgenii Kropivinitskii's house in Lianozovo or Anna Akhmatova's *dacha* in Komarovo ("Zolotoi vek" 347). Thus, its formation coincides with the Soviet *intelligentsia*'s disillusionment regarding the possibility of political liberalization and freedom of speech, which emerged during the first years of Nikita Khruschev's rule, the historical period known as the Thaw. The trials of the poet Joseph Brodsky (1964), writers Andrei Siniavskii, Iulii Daniel' (1966) and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1974), among others, served as clear examples of the State's hostility toward independent literature and art. Krivulin points out that after the events of 1968 (the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia that gave rise to the protests of the Soviet dissidents and the subsequent political trials against them), the center of literary samizdat moved to Leningrad where a "specific poetic school" had by that time formed (ibid. 351). This school, represented by poets such as Oleg Okhapkin, Elena Shvarts, Arkadii Dragomoschenko, Aleksei Khvostenko, Leonid Aronzon, and Krivulin himself, will later be called the Leningrad poetic *andegraund*. The crucial event for the *andegraund*'s self-recognition as a truly alternative culture was the "*Sovetskii pisatel'*" publishing house's refusal to publish the poetry anthology *Lepta* in 1975. According to Krivulin, this made the "rupture between the official and unofficial cultures" complete (ibid. 352). This also triggered the foundation of the samizdat journals *37* (co-edited by Krivulin, Tatiana Goricheva, and Lev Rudkevich) and *Chasy* (*The Clock*) (edited by Boris Ivanov and Boris

[67] Krivulin uses the terms subculture and counterculture synonymously.

Ostanin) that became the main venues of the Leningrad literary and philosophical *andegraund*. Krivulin points out that the orientation of these journals was not towards politics or the advocacy of human rights but rather philosophy, religion, and cultural studies. The flourishing of samizdat and the related development of the *andegraund* movement in literature, art, and thought made Leningrad "the center of the spiritual and aesthetic opposition" in the 1970s (*Okhota* 132). Krivulin concludes that this was due to the specific political conditions which distinguished the "second capital" from Moscow: the authorities maintained a stricter attitude toward art in Leningrad, trying to eradicate the high ambitions Leningrad artists inherited from the city's past as one of Europe's cultural centers (ibid. 130). Unlike in Moscow, in Leningrad it was almost impossible for an independent artist to have an official occupation in his or her field without open demonstration of his or her allegiance to the regime. As a result, many of them preferred low-skilled jobs such as elevator operator, boiler room stoker, or caretaker, which gave them more time for creative activity (ibid. 131).

The Leningrad Underground between Existentialism and Religious Philosophy

Podpol'e as a leitmotif appears in several of Krivulin's poems written in the 1970s. The lyrical hero of two of them, "*K cheloveku podpol'ia*" ("To the Underground Man," 1970) and "*Krysa*" ("Rat," 1970) is directly referred to as *chelovek podpol'ia* (underground man) and *podpol'nyi zhitel'* (denizen of the underground), respectively. These clear references to Dostoevsky allow us to suppose that Dostoevsky's *podpol'e* was consciously perceived by the Russian *literaturnoe podpol'e* in the context of a possible genetic kinship.

The Leningrad *andegraund* culture's affinity with Dostoevsky's underground reveals itself if we consider the three aspects used to describe the latter: philosophy (existentialist absurd

and rebellion), psychology (*ressentiment, iurodstvo*, *vyverts* and *nadryvs*), and space or the chronotope (the literalized metaphor of the underground).

As I demonstrate in Chapter 1, the underground in Dostoevsky underwrites a philosophical discourse that addresses the absurdity of human existence under the dictatorship of the "laws of nature" (essentially, mortality), and the major role of irrationality in human behavior. It suggests metaphysical rebellion against an "unjust" universe, as well as confrontation with the "mainstream" consciousness that accepts the universe's laws. In this respect, the underground philosophy in Dostoevsky reads as an anticipation of the philosophy of the absurd and rebellion in existentialism.

Existentialism played an important role in the intellectual life of Russian unofficial culture in the 1960s-70s. In 1974-75, the Leningrad philosopher and translator Tatiana Goricheva[68] and the poet Sergei Stratanovskii initiated the formation of an unofficial study group, the Religious-Philosophical Seminar (*Religiozno-Filosofskii Seminar*).[69] The Seminar was originally dedicated to the examination of issues of religion and theology with a focus on Christianity; however soon it broadened its thematic scope to include a variety of cultural, philosophical, and literary topics. Its core members were representatives of the Leningrad literary *andegraund*: Krivulin, Oleg Okhapkin, Evgenii Pazukhin, Aleksandr Mironov, and Elena Shvarts. The samizdat journal *37* became the Seminar's "press organ." While the Seminar's attendees were primarily interested in re-discovering the heritage of Russian religious thinkers (Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdiaev, Pavel Florenskii), "the path towards Russian religious philosophy was often paved by the young poets' acquaintance with Western philosophy," in particular existentialism (Zitzewitz 9). Both existentialism and Russian religious philosophy

[68] Goricheva and Krivulin were married 1974-80.
[69] For a detailed account of the Seminar's formation and activity see Zitzewitz.

represented an alternative to the only officially accepted philosophical doctrine of Marxism-Leninism. Goricheva who, before her conversion to Christianity in 1973, had been drawn to Nietzsche and the existentialists personally and as a scholar,[70] remembers: "in cafes and on the bus, the *intelligentsiia* discussed the problems of the absurd and nauseous existence" (*Nous* 18). Reading Camus and Sartre became a sign of belonging to the culture of *andegraund*. The Leningrad/St. Petersburg rock musician Boris Grebenshchikov, who himself belonged to the *andegraund* in the late 1970s-80s, ironically reflects on this infatuation with existentialism in two of his 1981 songs – "Ivanov" and "Two Tractor Drivers." The hero of the former, a man who lives a bohemian underground life, is secretly distinguished from his fellow citizens on the bus by the fact that he has a book by Sartre in his pocket while the others only have a penny in theirs, at best. Similarly, a tractor driver in the latter song "cherishes" a copy of Sartre in his pocket.

The translation of Sartre's essay "Existentialism Is a Humanism," where the origins of existentialism are traced back to Dostoevsky, appeared in Russia in 1953. It is no surprise that Dostoevsky was perceived in the *andegraund* circles through the prism of existentialism. Boris Grois, who was a core member of the Religious-Philosophical Seminar, published his essay "Dostoevsky and Kirkegaard" in the 1977 issue of *37*. In his reading of Dostoevsky, Grois refers not just to Kirkegaard, but to Sartre as well. He analyzes *Notes from Underground* and specifically the underground man's protest against rationalist conceptions of the organization of society (42). Stratanovskii tells us in an interview that in the early 1970s he translated into Russian the chapter "Kirilov" from Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*, without knowing that the

[70] Goricheva wrote her diploma thesis on existentialism and corresponded with Martin Heidegger.

entire book had already been translated by another Leningrad underground poet Rid Grachëv (Sabbatini, "Leningradskii tekst").[71]

The Myth of Sisyphus was extremely popular among the members of the *andegraund* community. Goritcheva names *Myth* as one of the texts that drew her to existentialism and philosophy in general ("Mne"). The essay's central concept of the absurd became a fashionable word in the discourse of *andegraund*, yet in most cases it seemed to have had lost its direct association with Camus and essentially referred to the absurdity and irrationality of the Soviet system (Savitskii 97-98). Explicit references to *Myth* are found only in Boris Ostanin's book *Punktiry* (*Dotted Lines*, 1972-75)[72] and Stratanovskii's poetry. Both appropriated the Camusian motif of the human being's alienation from the world. For example, we find it in Stratanovskii's poem "*Sotsiologicheskii traktat v stikhakh o fenomene alkogolizma*" ("A Sociological Tract in Verse on the Phenomenon of Alcoholism," 1971): "*O ty, fenomen otchuzhden'ia, / Sizipho-zhizn', nikchëmnyi trud*" ("Oh you, the phenomenon of alienation, the Sisyphus-life, pointless labour"; my trans.).

In Krivulin's theoretical essays one finds an attempt to understand Leningrad underground culture through the prism of existentialist concepts such as death, boundary situation (*pogranichnoe sostoianie*), and the absurd. Krivulin points out that in the Leningrad *andegraund*'s discourse, "the full recognition of the true reality of one's own existence took place only through the prism of death" ("Peterburgskaia spiritual'naia lirika" 100). For the *andegraund* community, the traumatic memory of the recent Soviet past (in particular, the Siege of Leningrad and the Stalinist terror), the wretched conditions of Soviet *byt* (everyday life) in the

[71] Grachëv translated it in 1964 and published in *Chasy* (no. 3) in 1976.
[72] The parallels between Ostanin's essay and Camus's *Myth* are analyzed by Savitskii (104-07).

present, and the "hostile" Petersburg nature[73] intensified their experience of the fragility and absurdity of human existence. As Vladimir Markovich points out, in the poetry of the Leningrad *andegraund,* "[e]veryday life [*byt*] and nature collaborate to torture mankind, creating an atmosphere of absolute despair" ("Reanimatsiia" 351). Thus, the reality of Soviet Leningrad was for the *andegraund* intellectuals the source of existential angst. This theme is distinct in Krivulin's poems of the 1970s. For example, the poems "*Angel voiny*" ("Angel of War," 1971), "*I ubozhestvo stilia, i ubezhische v kazhdom dvore"* ("Both the squalor of the style and a shelter in every yard,"1972), and "*Stroiat bomboubezhishcha*" ("They are building bomb shelters,"1972) are united by the image of the underground bomb shelter. Underground bomb shelters were invariably attached to Soviet residential buildings. In the 1960s-70s, citizens perceived them as a gloomy reminder of the possibility of a new world war as a result of the nuclear arms race between the Soviet Union and the USA. An instance of the literalized metaphor of the underground in Krivulin's poetry, this image conveys the lyrical subject's apocalyptical anticipations: "*I ubozhestvo stilia, i ubezhische v kazhdom dvore / vozbuzhdaet vo mne sostradan'e i strakh katastrofy / neizbezhnoi*" ("Both the squalor of the style and a shelter in every yard arouse in me compassion and the fear of an inevitable catastrophe)" (*Stikhi* 50).[74] Accordingly, despite its nominal life-saving function, the bomb shelter in "*I ubozhestvo stilia*" and "*Stroiat*" embodies the space of death, the nether world[75] – probably because of the

[73] See, for example, in Krivulin's poem "*Srebristykh sumerek reka, tuskneia, gasnet*" ("The river of the silver twilight dims and dies," 1970): "*Okno raskryto ne v Evropu — tam teplo — / v sad ledianoi, gde skorb' mertva i zlo, / i snezhnyi smerch zastyl poseredine*" ("The window is open not on Europe – it is warm down there – / but into an icy garden where there's dead sorrow and evil, / and the snowy whirlwind stands still, frozen, in the middle"; *Stikhi* 35; my trans.).

[74] Hereafter, Krivulin's poetry is quoted from *Stikhi* with page numbers in parentheses, unless indicated otherwise. All translations are mine.

[75] In "*Stroiat*," the path down the "steps of salvation" leads "under the canopy" of asphodels (50), flowers associated with the world of death in Greek mythology.

understanding that no bomb shelter can save anyone in case of nuclear war.[76] And vice versa, the mythical kingdom *Shu* from the poem "*Protsessiia*" ("Procession," 1972) – the nether world reminiscent of the biblical *Sheol* from another Krivulin poem[77] – reminds the reader of a bomb shelter whose walls are no longer intact and protective, as well as of gas chambers used to kill people in Nazi concentration camps: "*iz treschin uzkoglazykh / strui tianutsia udushlivogo gaza / k zakopchënnym svodam*" ("jets of suffocating gas run from the slant-eyed fissures, rising up to the smoky vaults"; 67). These images and motifs, linking scientific progress with destruction and death, develop the existentialist view of history as absurdity, expressed by Dostoevsky's underground man. As we remember, the underground man polemicizes with Buckle's idea that through civilization, humankind "becomes softer, and consequently less bloodthirsty and less suited for war" (*PSS* 5: 111). He argues that, in fact, civilization helps humankind develop "the variety of sensations" through which it becomes not only more bloodthirsty but "more viciously bloodthirsty" (ibid. 112).

Urban civilization alienates the human being from the whole of creation. This existentialist motif constitutes the plot of Krivulin's poem "*Gorodskaia progulka"* ("A Walk in the City," 1972). The poem's epigraph – "*Da khriashch inoi*" ("Different soil") – suggests it should be read in the context of Evgenii Baratynskii's poem "*Na posev lesa*" ("On the Occasion of Planting a Forest," 1842).[78] In Baratynskii's poem, the lyrical subject experiences his unity with nature and envisions his afterlife as the well-being of the trees he is planting. Consequently, the central image of Krivulin's poem becomes the grain that dies when cast in the fertile ground

[76] "*Angel voiny*" represents an antithesis to the statement of hopelessness in the other two "bomb shelter" poems. It suggests, in accordance with Krivulin's religious views, that there is always hope for salvation and resurrection, which is found through faith in Christ. See more on this poem in the section "Space and the Chronotope."
[77] See section "Space and the Chronotope."
[78] Baratynskii was Krivulin's favorite poet. His poetry affected Krivulin to the extent of experiencing an artistic and spiritual transformation (see *Okhota* 7).

("plunges into darkness") in order to rise and come out into the light. In Krivulin's poem, the lyrical subject takes a walk in a modern city with Baratynskii himself and asks him about the fate of the seeds he had planted. Baratynskii replies,

> что могильныя плиты
> совсем не тяжело откинуть покрывало,
> совсем не тяжело восстать из немоты:
> кто был зерном — тому и слова мало.
> that taking the blanket of the gravestone
> is not hard at all;
> and it's absolutely not hard to rise from the silence,
> for one who once was a grain will not be satisfied with words. (9)

The image of the grain implicitly refers to another famous epigraph, namely the biblical parable of the grain that opens Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. Linking the underground with resurrection (see Chapter 3), Dostoevsky's grain metaphor joins with Baratynskii's comparison of poetry with a forest to allow Krivulin's hero to wonder whether he would be able to rise up from his own underground of silence ("*vosstat' iz nemoty*"):

> Да, Боратынский, ты живешь. Твоя стезя,
> иная слову, иглами шевелит.
> Но мне-то лечь в асфальт, что над землею стелят!
> Не в землю, но туда, где умереть нельзя,
> чтобы воскреснуть.
> Yes, Boratynskii, you're alive. Your path,
> away from words, rustles its needles.
> But I will have to lie down into asphalt
> that's being spread out on the ground!
> Not down into the ground, but [just] there where one can't die,
> to rise [again]. (9)

The theme of the underground poet's fate in Krivulin is treated in the context of the broader metaphysical topic of death and the afterlife. The poem's setting – roadwork in a contemporary city – evokes the motif of the technocratic world that subverts the metaphysical dimension of the universe by dissecting it with its deadening mechanical tools:

> Жестокого покрова
> лишённая земля – и таинства могил
> кой-где уродливо и ржаво проступала
> как пятна крови сквозь бинты...
> Devoid of its hard cover,
> the ground – and the mysteries of the grave –
> revealed itself unsightly here and there, like rust,
> like spots of blood through bandages. (9)

Contrary to Baratynskii, Krivulin's hero denies the afterlife for himself because he perceives the asphalt as an impenetrable barrier between the fertile soil and the surface. Destined to be buried in this barren layer and unable to enter the underground of the afterlife, he sees the afterlife as being stuck between life and death, alien to the eternal cycle of immortal nature.[79] Symbolizing twentieth-century "urban" civilization, asphalt separates the hero from his roots both metaphorically (i.e. from the traditional religious worldview) and literally, making his feeling himself existentially abandoned and doomed to non-existence.

According to Krivulin, the distinct feature of Leningrad unofficial culture was "spirituality" (*spiritual'nost'*) – a metaphysical quest that combined elements of different religions and spiritual philosophical doctrines. Remarkably, this "atmosphere of a spiritual adventure" is closely associated in Krivulin's view with the absurd that he understands as a "method of detecting reality in its liminal states" ("Peterburgskaia spiritual'naia lirika" 102). He

[79] In the same way the hero of Vladimir Makanin's novel *Escape Hatch* (1991) experiences the fear of getting stuck in the hole in the ground that connects the city with its underground counterpart. See Chapter 6.

implicitly links the absurd with another existentialist concept – Karl Jaspers's "boundary situation,"[80] which allows him to define *andegraund* as a "*pogranichnoe soobshchestvo*" (boundary/marginal community). The same idea is expressed by another underground writer Vadim Nechaev who defines unofficial culture as the "second culture": "The 'Second culture' […] lives in the boundary situation. And regular moral and aesthetic standards do not apply to boundary situations, just as regular everyday life [*byt*] is not possible in times of war or in the concentration camp, and is replaced by an absurd and paradoxical existence […]. Such is [its] existential plane" (308). According to Jaspers, boundary situations include death, suffering, struggle, and guilt. Inherent in human existence, they by definition bring human consciousness to the point beyond which it cannot reach (*Philosophy* 178).

Unlike in Camus, in Jaspers death does not inform the absurd but instead allows the human being to be aware of his or her existence. However, both Jaspers and Camus use similar concepts when they speak about the limitations of human consciousness, which shows that they share a precursor in Dostoevsky. Jaspers compares the boundary situation with "a wall we run into, a wall on which we founder" (ibid.), evoking the underground man's metaphor of the wall of the "laws of nature." Krivulin operates with both Jaspers's and Camus's concepts. He interprets *andegraund* in general as a boundary situation that leads its members to "existential elucidation" ("Peterburgskaia spiritual'naia lirika" 182). However, by calling it the "religious absurd" he evokes Camus's interpretation of the boundary situation as the exposing of "absurd walls" when the meeting of irrationality with "nostalgia for the absolute" in human

[80] Krivulin was certainly well aware of Jaspers's ideas since Jaspers was among the philosophers discussed in the circle of the Religious-Philosophical Seminar (largely due to Goricheva's professional interest in existentialism). Goricheva's translation of Jaspers's lectures "Philosophical Faith" was published in *Chasy* (nos. 1, 8, 10) in 1976-78. Interestingly enough, this text deals with the themes closely associated with Dostoevsky's underground man's philosophical meditations, such as the impossibility to define the human being by means of reason and ironical references to Darwin's theory of evolution.

consciousness gives birth to the absurd (*Myth* 31). Consequently, through the prism of Camus's theory of the absurd, the Leningrad *andegraund*'s preoccupation with religious and spiritual issues (*spiritual'nost'*) should be attributed to its members' desire to overcome the aforementioned existential angst by means of what Camus calls "the leap" – the situation when the absurd begins to be associated with the transcendental. "The moment the notion transforms itself into eternity's springboard, it ceases to be linked to human lucidity. […] Man integrates the absurd and in that communion causes to disappear its essential character, which is opposition, laceration, and divorce. This leap is an escape" (ibid. 35). Thus, many *andegraund* philosophers and poets eventually became orthodox believers relinquishing the *andegraund* mode of being: for them unofficial culture was "a path leading from an atheist world to the realm of faith" (Krivulin, "Peterburgskaia spiritual'naia lirika" 104).

Another aspect of the same process was the *andegraund*'s perception of existence as a permanent *kaif* (buzz) – an attitude formed under the influence of Western rock-n-roll (counter)culture, first and foremost, *The Beatles*. Krivulin points out that "[a]t that time even Brodsky was a fan of *The Beatles*. He had a book about *The Beatles* that he preferred not to display but read all the time. Here the main thing was […] the perception of every moment of existence as *kaif* because this moment borders with death and destruction" ("Poeziia"). The leap from the absurdity to spirituality, this "intoxication of the irrational" in Camus's words (*Myth* 35), in the life of *andegraund* was necessarily accompanied by literal intoxication from excessive drinking.[81] It allowed the representatives of the unofficial culture derive pleasure from the absurdity they found around them, turning "a lucid mind away from the absurd" (ibid.). Krivulin justifies this Camusian reading of the *andegraund* culture as an attempt to escape the absurd that

[81] Drinking was understood by the unofficial community as its *modus essendi* (Venzel'), and it is no surprise that a genuinely existentialist interpretation of drinking constitutes the theme of the legendary text of the Russian literary *andegraund* – Venedikt Erofeev's "*Moskva – Petushki*" ("Moscow to the End of the Line,"1970).

its members recognized all around them. He notes that in both the artistic and real-life practices of the Leningrad *andegraund* poets, "the absurd increased to such a degree that it was no more" ("Poeziia").

Both existentialism (including its atheist version) and religious philosophy helped unofficial poets conceptualize their underground existence as a form of not political but rather "fundamental, […] philosophical protest" against the Soviet mainstream ideology with its materialist and positivist worldview (Krivulin, *Okhota* 131-32). This points out the most immediate kinship between the Leningrad *andegraund*'s worldview and Dostoevsky's underground as a philosophical outlook. The underground man's invectives are directed against science with its pretensions to decipher the laws of nature in order to find a formula of social harmony. This theme is addressed in Krivulin's poem "*Razdet romantizm do poslednikh pustot*" ("Romanticism is stripped naked so that its last void is seen," 1970-71).[82] The poem depicts a world where "*naisteril'neishikh pomyslov nashikh / pochti ne kasaietsia bremia zabot*" ("our most sterile thoughts are almost free from the burden of worries"), where "*bol'she ne nado ni voli, ni sily, ni tainoi svobody, ni prochikh svobod*" ("one no longer needs will, or strength, or secret, or any other kind of freedom)," and where "*poslednii romantik umrët*" ("the last romantic will die"). In this depiction, the reader recognizes the world of the "crystal palace" envisioned and ridiculed by the underground man, where "science itself will teach the human being […] that he/she doesn't really have any caprice or will," and "so-called desires" and "so-called free will" will no longer exist (*PSS* 5: 112). Krivulin employs several concepts pivotal in the underground man's discourse: romanticism, freedom and will, pain, and negation. Indeed, the disappearance

[82] I quote the poem's text from its on-line publication (http://seredina-mira.narod.ru/krivulin1.html; according to this website, the text is provided by Krivulin's widow Olga Kushlina). This text is different from the one published in *Stikhi* where the word *naisteril'neishikh* (the most sterile) is changed to *naiochishchennykh* (purified), and the last stanza, quite important for the understanding of the poem, is abridged. Why Krivulin chose to publish an abridged version merits separate study.

of romanticism with its interest in the irrational in human nature signifies the reign of "two times two equals four." Especially remarkable in this context is Krivulin's use of the concept of secret freedom. As I mentioned in Introduction, this concept originates in Pushkin and is famously re-evoked in Aleksandr Blok's "To the Pushkin House." According to Blok, secret freedom has been the subject of Russian poetry since Pushkin. As a reference to Pushkin, the notion of secret freedom also reminds the reader of Romanticism as a literary trend that underwrote the aesthetic continuity between the Golden, Silver, and Bronze[83] ages of Russian poetry. Moreover, in the discourse of unofficial culture, secret freedom referred to the generation of poets to which Krivulin himself belonged (Betaki), and, therefore, was synonymous with the underground. Hence, by saying that "secret freedom is no longer desired here," Krivulin postulates the uselessness of his own poetry, as well as poetry in general, in the paradise-like world that he imagines.

> Indeed, the world he portrays recalls paradise,
>
> где запах тончайших болот
> почти не присутствует в девственных чащах,
> где наистерильнейших помыслов наших
> почти не касается бремя забот...
> where the smell of the subtle swamps
> is barely present in the virgin thickets,
> where our most sterile thoughts
> are almost free from the burden of worries…

Yet the repeated *pochti* ("almost," "barely") of this stanza implies the possibility of disharmony in this seemingly perfect universe. From the hero's perspective, however, such disharmony has positive value, just like suffering and pain that the underground man considers to be "the primary

[83] The poetry of the post-Stalinist period is often referred to as the Bronze Age of Russian poetry.

reason of consciousness." The music of this world, here compared to a lily, sucks the lyrical hero's blood, ties his hands and brings him the pain of knowledge;[84] the latter is compared to a fruit. Apparently, Krivulin alludes to the Biblical forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. The forbidden fruit of knowledge, associated with the expulsion from Eden, evokes the theme of metaphysical rebellion (shared by both the Romantic writers and the existentialists) and so restitutes the values that were absent in the "sterile" universe: Krivulin depicts romanticism, freedom, and suffering. Like Adam and Eve, the hero who "plucks" the fruit experiences the sense of shame, however it's not *his* nakedness but that of the world that causes this feeling. The knowledge he acquires is "about the world […] shamefully stripped naked [*o mire do dna ogolënnom, do srama*]." The parallels with the underground man's critique of the crystal palace allow us to interpret the naked world as a world "stripped" of its secrets by the positivist, scientific mind. At the same time, the motifs of nakedness and the world's "bottom" remind one of Dostoevsky's "Bobok"'s underground characters and their "shameless truth,"[85] thus suggesting an association between the "rationalist" paradise (the underground man's "2x2=4") and the materialist underworld depicted in "Bobok."

The ultimate result of the world's exposure is declared in the poem's last stanza, especially its last phrase:

> И нежданная, в звуке
> завяжется боль потому ли, что плод —
>
> в мучительной завязи нового знанья
> о мире до дна оголенном, до срама,
> до ямы, до судороги отрицанья…

[84] In Russian, the words *soznanie* (consciousness) is derived from the word *znanie* (knowledge) by adding the prefix "so-."
[85] See *PDP* 144.

And unexpectedly, pain will bud in the sound,
perhaps because the fruit

consists in the painful germ of the knowledge
of the world stripped naked to the core, to shame,
to the pit, to the convulsion of negation.

It is not clear who is the subject of this negation – the world, the lyrical subject, or (most likely) both.[86] Yet from the point of view of the lyrical subject, the chain of experiences – pain, knowledge, and negation – replicates the underground man's reasoning against the utopian universe: "suffering is the only cause of consciousness," and "suffering is doubt and negation" (*PSS* 5: 119). To be able to negate the order prescribed from above (based on "logarithms"), even if this order means prosperity, is what makes the human being something more than just a "piano key" – this genuinely existentialist idea of the underground man underlies the ending of Krivulin's poem. He would later confirm this, pointing out "the courage with which the [*andegraund*] poets refused the very possibility of the narrow wellbeing" ("U istokov" 119).

From Underground Consciousness to Underground Conscience: *Podpol'e* and Grace

The spiritual, religious orientation of *andegraund* culture led to Krivulin's revisiting of Dostoevsky's concept of *podpol'e*, emphasizing its ethical rather than "proto-existentialist" meaning. In "*K cheloveku podpol'ia*" and "*Krysa*," Krivulin employs several leitmotifs that establish direct intertextual connections between these texts and Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*: the nameless character who lives in *podpol'e*, the chronotope (Petersburg winter), the motif of a visit by a female character, and the motif of pain clustered with the motif of teeth. Yet, against this intertextual background, the differences are especially distinct: while

[86] A possible interpretation would be to associate negation with nihilism as a doctrine based on materialism and positivism.

Dostoevsky's mouse grows into Krivulin's rat, Dostoevsky's underground man's *consciousness* (*soznanie*) turns into Krivulin's protagonist's **conscience** (*sovest'*).[87] This latter transformation indicates the weakening of the existentialist implications of *podpol'e* compared to those in Dostoevsky: unlike consciousness, **conscience** is foreign to the existentialist discourse and native to the discourse of ethics and religion.

Dostoevsky's comparison of the underground man with a mouse instigates the plot and imagery in Krivulin's poem "*Krysa*."[88] The poem thematically divides into two parts. The first part (the first three stanzas) is concerned with the moral and philosophical problematic of sinfulness and remorse. It features two characters – "the underground denizen" (*podpol'nyi zhitel'*) who resembles a rat and the rat, a "friend of the underground," who embodies conscience. The rat pays a visit to "the underground denizen" and symbolically bites him with the "two fires" of its eyes. The second part (the last stanza) addresses the fate of the writer in Russia, which is "to whistle under the floorboard, and to glorify the sharp-faced folk […], sitting in the tongueless underground" ("*pishchat' pod polovitsei, / vospet' narodets ostrolitsyi* […], v *podpol'e sidia bez'iazykom*"; 53).

[87] Note that etymologically these words are similar (calques of the Greek *syneidesis* and Latin *conscientia*, respectively), derived from the synonymous Old Russian verbs *znati* and *vedati* ("to know") by adding the prefix *so-* meaning joint action.

[88] Liudmila Zubova names some possible sources of Krivulin's vermin imagery: Pushkin's comparison of conscience with a "sharp-clawed beast [*kogtistyi zver'*]," the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin (see section "Space and the Chronotope"), and the Russian expressions "*ugryzeniia sovesti*" (gnawing conscience), "*beden kak tserkovnaia krysa*" ("poor as a church rat"), "*kantseliarskaia krysa* ("clerical rat" = pencil pusher), "*podopytnaia krysa*" (lab rat) that correlate with different aspects of the underground in Krivulin (132-34). However, she does not mention Dostoevsky, who, as I suggest, serves as a primary source of the association between *podpol'e* and the rat. In addition, it is worth mentioning the dream of the Mayor in Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (1836), in which two rats forestall the news about the government inspector's coming to town. In his later play *The Denouement of the Government Inspector* (1846), Gogol provided his own religious interpretation of *The Government Inspector*, comparing the inspector with conscience that has to be awakened before God's judgment. An association between the writer and the mouse (not rat) who "whistles under the floorboards" is implied in the last stanza of "*Krysa*" by the hidden reference to Kafka's story "Josephine the Songstress, or the Mouse Folk" (1923-24) (noticed by Zubova [133]), since the writer's fate is to "glorify the sharp-faced folk [*vospet' narodets ostrolitsyi*]," where the Russian verb *vospet'* can equally mean "to sing."

Accordingly, the underground in the poem unfolds as a two-dimensional concept. Firstly, it denotes a "pitch-dark," nighttime chronotope of the human psyche where suppressed guilt ("*vsë, chto nochi otdano*" [53]) encounters conscience. Therefore, the rat's visit becomes "God's judgment"; together with the motif of *fire* representing punishment,[89] this indicates that in "*Krysa*," Krivulin's underground, just like Dostoevsky's, refers to the religious notion of hell. Secondly, the underground defines the permanent state of the writer in Russia, which appears to be hell worse than that of guilty conscience:

> Что боль укуса плоти грешной
> или крысиный скрытый труд,
> когда писателя в Руси
> судьба — пищать под половицей!
> The pain of a bite into sinful flesh,
> or the hidden work of the rat, is nothing
> compared to the fate of the Russian writer,
> which is to squeak under the floorboard. (53)

The comparison between these two kinds of suffering – that of having a guilty conscience and that of having to communicate from the underground – suggests that both parts of the poem address the same person.

In the article "*Intelligent pered litsom smerti*" ("The *Intelligent* Facing Death," 1981) commemorating Yuri Trifonov, Krivulin argues that the "terminally ill conscience" is a traditional theme in Russian classics (Dostoevsky and Chekhov) that had vanished from Soviet literature and re-appeared in Trifonov's novellas of the 1970s (Berezhnov 263). Krivulin attributes this spiritual disease to the entire class of the Russian *intelligentsia*, which obviously

[89] In the poem, remorse is associated with "*kalënyi son*" ("red-hot dream") and the rat's bite is compared to a burn from two embers.

includes writers. This article should be regarded as Krivulin's own commentary on his poems written in the early 1970s – "*Krysa*" and "*K cheloveku podpol'ia*."

The leading motif of conscience, as well as some other motifs and images, establish connections between "*Intelligent*" and "*Krysa*." Thus, in the article, Krivulin postulates that guilty conscience allows an average *intelligent* to discover the "nocturnal" aspect of his or her life, which becomes the highest possible point of his or her spiritual "ascension" (ibid. 273). Pain is another key motif in both "*Krysa*" and "*Intelligent*," which serves as an intertextual marker relating these texts to Dostoevsky's *Notes*. As I showed in Chapter 1, toothache in Dostoevsky's hero's discourse has a metaphorical, existential meaning: it is associated with the spiritual suffering inflicted by nature's hostility. In "*Intelligent*," Krivulin uses the expression "soul's toothache" ("*zubnaia bol' dushi*"; ibid. 265) to describe the emotional landscape of Trifonov's late works. He points out the existentialist context in which such spiritual pain arises: the hero's "helplessness" at the realization that death is "the radical failure that awaits every human" (ibid. 272). Yet, Krivulin finds the origins of the existential angst and spiritual pain of the contemporary *intelligent* first and foremost in the moral failings of his or her past. In "*Krysa*," the motif of pain is accompanied by the image of the rat's teeth: "*I past', useiana zubami, / pred nim, kak nebo so zvezdami – tak sovest' iavitsia na zov*" ("And he sees before him a mouth strewn with teeth, like the sky full of stars, – that's how conscience will come when called"; 53).[90] The "underground denizen" is "ready to suffer from the spiritual pain" of "belated

[90] Zubova notes that "probably, the comparison of teeth with stars is provoked by the contexts of Annenskii, Mandelstam, and Tsvetaeva, in which heaven [*nebo*] is likened to the palate [*nëbo*]" (133). In addition, I would argue that the association between conscience and the starry heavens in Krivulin refers to Immanuil Kant's notion of the Categorical Imperative and his famous statement: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me" (qtd. in Guyer 1). In 1972, the same year he wrote "*Krysa*," Krivulin also wrote a poem entitled "*Kategoricheskii imperativ*" ("The Categorical Imperative") devoted to Kant.

memories" and "repentance" (53), and the "bite" of the "rat-like" conscience responds to this sentiment.

In "*Intelligent*," Krivulin demonstrated that, due to his heroes' and his own atheist background, Trifonov failed to formulate the idea that would have resisted the annihilating realization of human mortality. Making conscience the major topic of his poem a decade earlier, Krivulin tried to accomplish this task concurrently with Trifonov.[91] He does this, in particular, through his references to Dostoevsky's underground, and unlike his "bomb shelter" poems, "*Razdet romantizm*" or "*Gorodskaia progulka*," it is not so much the existentialist, rebellious philosophy of the underground man that interests Krivulin in "*Krysa*," as the religious perspective on the underground that was of such importance for Dostoevsky.

Like Dostoevsky, Krivulin refers to the complex, antinomic nature of the underground as a spiritual state. As I showed in Chapter 3, the underground in Dostoevsky, while signifying a character's fall from grace and constituting his or her "personal hell," at the same time implies the possibility of "ascension," i.e. purification, resurrection, and return to God. Krivulin includes the latter component in his vision of *podpol'e*; that is why he ends his "*Krysa*" comparing *podpol'e* with Heaven: "*v podpol'e sidia bez'iazykom / kak by sovsem na nebesi!*" ("sitting in the tongueless underground, as if really in heaven!" (53) The motif of resurrection permeates Krivulin's book "*Voskresnye oblaka*" and is implied already in the book's title where Krivulin plays with the Russian words *voskresen'e* meaning both Sunday and resurrection. It is hard to completely agree with Josephine von Zitzewitz who states that "the topic of these [Krivulin's] poems is not the Christian idea of eternal life, but rather the attempt of the poetic self to assert

[91] "*Krysa*" was written in 1972, and the article on Trifonov appeared in 1981, the year of Trifonov's death. In the article, Krivulin points out that the theme of the "terminally ill conscience" informs Trifonov's late works, beginning with his critically acclaimed novella *The Exchange* (*Obmen*, 1969). Thus, Krivulin's own elaboration of this topic follows its reappearance in official Soviet literature due to Trifonov.

itself" (54). In fact, it is both. Dostoevsky, to whom Krivulin refers by his use of the term *podpol'e*, helps us reveal the religious meaning of resurrection in Krivulin. As I have already mentioned with regard to "*Gorodskaia progulka,*" in Krivulin, as in Dostoevsky, subterranean space is associated with the nether world and accompanied by the vegetative motifs symbolizing the mythological cycle of death and rebirth. And like Dostoevsky, Krivulin treats going/being underground as a hope, or a preparation, for ascension.

Krivulin's poem "*V tsvetakh*" ("In Flowers," 1971) serves as a particularly good example of the above statement. The poem begins with the image of flowers that rise "from the rot of the earth" ("*iz gnili zemnoi*"; 14), symbolizing a transfiguration of "ashes" (*tlen*) into a living being. Accordingly, the lyrical subject compares himself with a substance absorbed by soil, with "precious wine in the cellars of mould and dampness" ("*vino dorogoie v podvalakh, / gde plesen' i syrost'*"), and with "flowers in a subterranean state, perfect for growth" ("*tsvety v sostoian'i podzemnom, prekrasnom navyrost*"; 14). All these metaphors express his hope that "everything will eventually come out into the light of day; everything will turn into spirit" ("*vsë vyidet kogda-to naruzhu, / vsë v dukh obratitsia*"; 14). Paradoxically, malodor in the poem functions as an olfactory orchestration of the motif of resurrection: although it denotes "subterranean" decay, it also anticipates the pleasant odor of the future flowers or the smell of a good wine. As such, it plays a role similar to that in Dostoevsky, associating the underground with resurrection: on the one hand, bad smells surround the underground man who claims to be more alive in his underground than his opponents are; on the other hand, Zosima's stinking body in *The Brothers Karamazov* is linked to resurrection and drinking the new good wine with Christ, which becomes obvious in Alyosha's dream where he attends the Marriage at Cana. Just as Dostoevsky does in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Krivulin plays with the word *dukh* meaning both "stench" and "spirit,"

which culminates in an oxymoronic concept of "*tlennaia dusha*" ("mortal," or, more literally, "perishable soul").

In Dostoevsky, conscience as a sign of God's presence in human life plays the primary role in the process of spiritual rebirth. It is conscience that saves such characters as Raskolnikov and Dmitry Karamazov from their spiritual underground; conscience also causes Ivan Karamazov's suffering which indicates his desire to leave his underground of disbelief and pride. In *Notes from Underground*, despite the fact that the underground man builds his philosophy on the "proto-existentialist" understanding of *consciousness*, it is important that the notion of **conscience** is also significantly present in his discourse. The entire second part of *Notes*, in fact, represents an expression of the underground man's guilty conscience that makes the hero reiterate the painful memories of his interaction with Liza. He postulates that he wants to write "Apropos the Wet Snow" under the pressure of an old memory, which remains with him like an "annoying musical motif" (*PSS* 5: 123). The epigraph to the second part of *Notes*, Nikolai Nekrasov's poem "When from the gloom of erring ways" (1865), despite its being a sarcastic reference to the ideals of the people of the 1840s, brings up the motif of memory punishing the "forgetful conscience." This motif reads as a key to the underground man's moral state both at the moment of his writing and at the time of the events described. For instance, on the day after his first encounter with Liza, her memory lives on "at the bottom of [his] heart and *conscience*, […] manifesting itself as searing angst" (ibid. 165; emphasis mine). He confesses that he experienced genuine mental anguish after he abused Liza. And it is the underground man's conscience that makes him "envision" Liza fifteen years later, i.e. when he is writing his "notes": "I was feeling ashamed all the time writing this story" (ibid. 178). Thus, Krivulin's poem "*Krysa*" not only presents the underground as a moral (in fact, religious) category, but also

elucidates this aspect in Dostoevsky's notion of the underground for the intertextually aware reader.

It needs to be emphasized that unlike in Krivulin's critical essays, in his "*Krysa*," *podpol'e* represents the fate of any writer and is not limited to unofficial culture. The torments of the writer's experience in his "underground hell," according to Krivulin, are due to the absurd discrepancy between his abilities and obligations. While the writer can only "squeak," he needs to "sing"; moreover, the writer's underground is defined as "*podpol'e bez'iazykoe*" – the "tongueless underground," or the "underground lacking language."[92] Thus, the underground as the worst kind of hell is characterized by the artist's inability to express him or herself. The main reasons for that (and they are obviously intertwined) are isolation from the world and the people, and the lack of an appropriate language. It is important that the root *iazyk* in the word *bez'iazykii*, normally meaning "language" or "tongue," may also be treated as the obsolete word for "the people," originating in Old Church Slavonic. As such, it is common in poetry, for example, in Pushkin's 1836 poem "*Ia pmiatnik sebe vozdvig*" ("I have erected a monument to myself"): "*Slukh obo mne proidët po vsei Rusi velikoi, / i nazovët menia vsiak sushchii v nei iazyk*" ("I will be known everywhere in great Russia, and every people living in it will call my name"). Therefore, *podpol'e bez'iazykoe* also translates as the "uninhabited," "unpopulated," or "deserted underground." The fate of the writer exemplifies the universal, existential problem of communication and alienation, which becomes the central theme of the poem "*K cheloveku podpol'ia*,"[93] where *podpol'e* is associated with a "deserted land" ("*pustynnaia zemlia*").

[92] In a 1990 interview, Krivulin remembers that he started to write poetry trying to overcome a state of "*bez'iazykovost'*" ("languagelessness"): "I needed to express an inner longing, a metaphysical sensation which I hadn't even hoped to be able to express" ("Maska" 173).
[93] The poem is quoted from Krivulin, *Stikhi* 54.

Placed next to each other in the book "*Voskresnye oblaka*" ("*K cheloveku*" follows "*Krysa*") and unified by the character who lives in the underground, as well as by several other motifs, these two texts can be treated as parts of Krivulin's "underground" cycle, with "*Krysa*" elucidating certain images and motifs of "*K cheloveku*." At the beginning of the poem, the underground hero is waiting for guests whose voices are compared to "claws," and at the end a female guest (*gost'ia*) arrives, showing her "sugar-like teeth."[94] All together, this emphasizes the guest's kinship with the rat from the eponymous poem. At the same time, the fact that the protagonist is granted a "high voice, almost beyond one's hearing abilities" ("*pridan golos vysokii, pochti za granitsami slukha*") reminds the reader of the mouse-like squeaking of the writer in "*Krysa*." Another detail signaling that the poem's underground character should be perceived as a writer is the mention of the *stol* (desk) – an emblematic characteristic of the writer's workplace. In the poem, *podpol'e* is located "under the desk's belly" ("*pod briukhom stola*").[95]

[94] The description of the guest is complex and ambivalent, which, in my opinion, is also due to its multiple intertextual connections with *Notes from Underground*: "*Vot gost'ia voshla. / Ulybaetsia. Taet zubov eë strazhdushchii sakhar*" ("The guest entered. / She is smiling. The longsuffering sugar of her teeth is melting"). The situation of a female character visiting the underground man easily evokes in the reader associations with Liza's visiting Dostoevsky's hero at his place. It is clear that Liza in *Notes* awakens the hero's conscience, and Krivulin's *krysa* plays a similar role. The guest's smiling corresponds with Liza's "pathetic, crooked, unnecessary smile" that kept haunting the underground man for fifteen years (*PSS* 5: 166). The Old Church Slavonic word *strazhdushchii*, meaning "longsuffering," further supports the comparison of the guest with Dostoevsky's Liza (and subsequently, Sonya) as a martyr-like figure. The fact that the "sugar of teeth" is melting, annihilates the threatening aspect of the guest's teeth and therefore implies humility and mercy. Accordingly, sugar in Dostoevsky's text refers to the hidden humble, even child-like side of the underground man's personality. This relates to the theme of his inability to build healthy relationships with others since his fears of direct expression of positive emotions make him suppress and overturn them into aggression (for more on this topic see Martinsen). According to Martinsen, Liza "crumbles his [defenses] by offering him the metaphorical cup of tea that he writes about in his second paragraph" (165). The underground man's awareness of the discrepancy between his inner true self and his behavior and appearance is of direct relevance to the problem of miscommunication. The association between sugar and tea reminds one of the important role of tea in the underground man's conversation with Liza. Apollon brings tea which functions as both a psychological detail (the underground man wants Liza to drink it first "in order to burden her even more" [*PSS* 5: 172]) and a symbol of the underground man's cosmic alienation from the world: "I say let the whole world go to hell, but I should always have my tea" (ibid. 174).

[95] This image reminds the reader of the Russian expression "*pisat' v stol*," literally "to write for the desk drawer," which means to write without publishing. The expression best defines the condition of the writer's work in the

Organization of space plays a crucial role in the poem, symbolizing the obstacles that impede adequate understanding of the other's voice. In *podpol'e*, which is compared to "the black throat of the well" ("*chërnoe gorlo kolodtsa*"), the hero's "defective hearing" ("*ushcherbnyi slukh*") perceives sounds in a distorted form: voices are muffled, while a whisper "roars" ("*revët*") and "rumbles" ("*grokhochet*"). Moreover, his own "high" voice, which itself is not easy to hear, turns muffled and grouchy when transformed by the acoustics of a well-like yard. In addition, the character's mouth is filled with dust. Through the allusions to Dostoevsky (the underground character in a Dostoevskian Petersburg setting), Krivulin points out that his underground man's tragedy is similar to that of Dostoevsky's hero – they both are unable to efficiently communicate with others and to convey their genuine voices, i.e. their true selves. Indeed, "grumbling"[96] is an appropriate characteristic of Dostoevsky's character's "inelegant" discourse (Bakhtin) which expresses his primordial hostility toward the other's consciousness. This hostility defines the underground man's communicative strategies famously described by Bakhtin as "the word with the sideward glance" ("*slovo s ogliadkoi*") and "the word with the loophole" ("*slovo s lazeikoi*").[97] Both make the character's communicative efforts futile. Robert Belknap shows that, on the narrative level, the communicative failure of the underground man results from the contradiction between the genre of his utterance (confession) and his intention (he does not repent) ("Unrepentant Confession"). On the psychological level, according to Deborah Martinsen, communication fails because "the underground man repeatedly chooses aggressive self-protection over the vulnerability of relation" (158). The underground man admits

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literary *andegraund*. If so, the motif of the desk's big belly ("*briukho*") emphasizes the amount of unpublished work.

[96] Krivulin seems to be intentionally using the word *briuzglivo* (grouchy) as a homophone of *brezglivo* (squeamish). Remarkably, the latter is present in Dostoevsky's underground man's discourse where it defines his contemptuous attitude toward his schoolmates and others in general (*PSS* 5: 125).

[97] According to Bakhtin, "the word with the sideward glance" manifests itself as the anticipation of and retort to the other's response; the "loophole" is "the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words" (*PDP* 229, 233).

that he is not spiteful, and yet he does everything to be perceived as such by others: "choosing egoism and isolation over relation and community, he fortifies his prison" (ibid. 161).

The idea of the underground as prison, manifesting Dostoevsky's broader theme of transgression and punishment, is also present in Krivulin's poem "*K cheloveku*." In the phrase "*gudit ledianaia voda odinochek*" ("the freezing water of loners is humming") , describing the sounds that the character hears, the word *odinochka* means both "lonely person" and "solitary confinement" (an abbreviation of *odinochnaia kamera*). Indeed, the world of the poem looks like a system of isolated prison cells (the motif of the well) that separate people by distorting the sounds of their voices. The comparison of the hero's pillow with an executioner's block (*plakha*) further strengthens the penitentiary associations. As in "*Krysa*," in "*K cheloveku*" the writer's *podpol'e* and his inability to communicate adequately with the world outside his "cell" becomes his punishment for some "original" transgression. The nature of this transgression is not revealed in the poem, but it becomes clear if we consider Krivulin's article on Trifonov, "*Intelligent pered litsom smerti*."

In "*Intelligent*," Krivulin addresses the problem of distorted communication in the context of contemporary Russian literature and its language: "The spiritual and linguistic conditions of the contemporary Russian writer are such that, with a roar, noise, hum, and waves of silencing [*zaglushka*] in the background, he has to boost his voice, overstrain, and shout in order to be heard" (Berezhnov 279). Note that Krivulin describes the origins of these "spiritual and linguistic conditions" in religious terms. He argues that the contemporary writer's language lacks the spiritual quality known in Christianity as grace (*blagodat'*) – a divine gift associated with Christ, which "completes and perfects humanity's relationship with God" (McFarland). Krivulin distinguishes between "literature [*literatura*] as profession and art" and "literature

[*slovesnost'*] as a result of grace," postulating that "[i]n our days, the artistic word is graceless [*bezblagodatno*]" (Berezhnov 276). He considers Dostoevsky and Chekhov to be the predecessors of Trifonov – the writer who introduced the topic of "ill conscience" into Soviet literature. Yet, as Lyudmila Parts has correctly argued, Chekhov distinguishes between religious faith and conscience suggesting that moral living does not necessarily imply believing in God.[98] Conversely, in Dostoevsky, faith and conscience are inseparable. Therefore, Krivulin's view on the problem of conscience is much closer to that of Dostoevsky rather than that of Chekhov. Following Krivulin's argumentation, one concludes that Trifonov's linguistic and ideological failure results from the fact that he did not follow Dostoevsky's religious approach to this topic. Therefore, Krivulin's article "*Intelligent pered litsom smerti*" helps us understand that in "*Krysa*" and "*K cheloveku*," he evokes Dostoevsky's context in order to point out the religious and metaphysical implications of the underground writer's tragedy, suggesting that his alienation results from his fall from God.

"*Podval'naia genial'nost'*": Psychology of the Literary Underground

In his 1979 article "*Dvadsat' let noveishei russkoi poezii*" ("Twenty Years of the New Russian Poetry"),[99] Krivulin employs the term *podpol'e* to define the psychological milieu of unofficial culture. He speaks of unofficial artists' "delusion of grandeur," which he calls the "underground of soul [*podpol'e dushi*]," the result of their existence in the literary *podpol'e*. This specific psychological meaning of *podpol'e* reveals its kinship with Dostoevsky's use of the concept – an association that is further enforced by the fact that the metaphor of the

[98] "Religious faith for Čechov is neither a must nor a given but rather an ideal unattainable to most. As with most such ideals he relegates its achievement to a far-away future. […] Moral living, however, cannot be postponed till this distant future. It is everyone's responsibility, given not by God, but upheld consciously every day by personal choice" (Parts, "In the Ravine" 384).

[99] The article appeared under the pseudonym "Kalomirov," which apparently helped the author maintain a scholarly distance from the poet Viktor Krivulin whose poetry was included in the material analyzed.

"underground of soul" originates in the discourse of Dostoevsky's underground man: "I had the underground in my soul" (*PSS* 5: 128).

The social and artistic isolation of the "second culture" from the mainstream created its peculiar psychological atmosphere. Due to the fact that unofficial poets could not publish their texts except in samizdat (making samizdat synonymous with *andegraund*), they did not have access to a broad audience of readers and critics who could have provided them with feedback. In fact, their only audience was the fellow denizens of the *andegraund* who maintained primarily friendly as opposed to professional relationships with each other. The unity of the *andegraund* culture was also defined by the low social status of most of its representatives. Pazukhin argues that an important characteristic of the literary *andegraund* was its members' social and economic uselessness (163). Apparently, these circumstances caused the psychological vulnerability of *andegraund* poets, and there was a tacit taboo on the explicit expression of one's true opinion regarding fellow poets' writings in the unofficial community: "Any attempt of critical evaluation of one's poetry was perceived as a personal offense. We could only criticize each other sight unseen" (Kalomirov). This formed the psychological phenomenon that Krivulin aptly calls "*podval'naia genial'nost'*" ("cellar/underground genius"): "the nature of communication [between members of *andegraund*] made almost every poet think that he or she was the uniquely chosen one" (ibid.). *Podval'naia genial'nost'*, even on the level of the spatial imagery it involves, evokes associations with Dostoevsky's underground; its definition reminds one of the underground man's declaration of his uniqueness which is mistakenly unrecognized by others: "I am the one and only, and they are *everyone*" (*PSS* 5: 125).

The mechanism of *ressentiment,* similar to that defining the behavior of Dostoevsky's underground hero, shaped the literary *andegraund*'s psychology. According to Max Scheler, "the

origin of *ressentiment* is rooted in a tendency to make comparisons between others and oneself" (122). As Aleksandr Zhitenëv correctly points out, "[t]he primary source of *ressentiment* in the 'Bronze Age' [i.e. unofficial] poetry […] was the awareness of *the illegitimacy of its presence in literature.*" Therefore, for an *andegraund* poet, "in order to feel his or her significance, it was necessary to have a number of unique qualities or a special status confirmed from the outside" (215-16; emphasis in the original). Consequently, the aforementioned psychological vulnerability of many *andergraund* poets had the same nature as that of Dostoevsky's underground man: both were afraid to realize that nothing really distinguished them from their fellows. Krivulin observes that "the anthology [*Lepta*] […] revealed the presence of similar, repeated motifs and images and an abundance of analogous rhythmical patterns, syntax constructions, and phrases that were preferred not just by two or three poets but by ten or twenty of them at once" (Kalomirov). Similarly, René Girard in his analysis of the underground psychology in Dostoevsky points out: "All underground individuals believe they are all the more 'unique' to the extent that they are, in fact, alike" (21).

Scheler names the "imitation of Christ" as a possible pattern of *ressentiment* (122-23). This pattern indeed played an important role in the *ressentiment* psychology of *andegraund* culture. The *andegraund* poets' repressed desire for recognition by the mainstream culture (after all, they always dreamt of being published officially) together with their interest in spirituality and religion sublimated into their view of themselves as a sort of hermits. This is reflected in Krivulin's poem "*P'iu vino arkhaizmov*" ("I drink the wine of archaisms," 1973): "*Dukh kul'tury podpol'noi, kak ranneapostol'skii svet, / brezzhit v oknakh, iz chërnykh klubitsia podvalov*" ("The spirit of underground culture / like the light of the early Apostles / glimmers from the windows, curls up like smoke from the black cellars"; 109). Zitzewitz notes that "there is a

traceable, defiant pride in many of Krivulin's poems, in which the marginality of underground poets in Soviet society is turned into a watermark of their status as the chosen ones" (67). Unofficial poets took on the role of unrecognized and persecuted prophets and even compared themselves to Christian martyrs, which convinced them that they possessed moral and aesthetic superiority over the profane mainstream culture. This follows from Krivulin's reading of the life and poetry of his fellow *andegraund* poet Oleg Okhapkin. Krivulin maintains that when Okhapkin was starving in the 1970s, he wanted it to be perceived by others as an "ascetic resistance to the seductions of the surrounding Soviet reality [*sovok*]," which took place in the "hermit cave" of his *khrushchëvka* apartment." Krivulin concludes that "Okhapkin tried to imitate the crucified Christ in every life circumstance" ("Peterburgskaia spiritual'naia lirika" 104). Okhapkin's case leads Krivulin to a conclusion about the psychology of his entire literary community: "Paradoxically, the imitation of Christ nourished pride, and almost every poet who was engaged in the unofficial literary process compensated for being rejected by society with a feeling of inner […] superiority over the world around them" (ibid.). Therefore, the "asceticism" Krivulin attributes to Okhapkin fits Nietzsche's conception of *ressentiment* of the ascetic whose voluntary self-torture and self-destruction indicate his "unfulfilled power-will" (86). In the case of the *andegraund* poet, the "unfulfilled power-will" is obviously the will for the symbolic power in the literary field.

Pride nourished by (self-)humiliation is similar to the underground pride of Dostoevsky's hero – "the primary psychological […] motor which governs all the individual and collective manifestations of the underground life" (Girard 23). As we have already seen, "the dialectic of pride and humiliation" (ibid. 27) that Dostoevsky explores in his underground characters expresses itself as "secular" (psychological*) iurodstvo*. *Iurodstvo* (specifically, that of

Dostoevsky's heroes) and *buffoonery* corresponded with the fundamental values of the artistic and literary *andegraund* of the 1960-80s, i.e. its aesthetic and philosophical protest against mainstream culture.[100] It is remarkable in this respect that Krivulin names the legendary Leningrad poet Alik Rivin as one of the first genuinely *andegraund* artists, a sort of an archetypal figure for the "second culture." Little is known about Rivin's life and just a few of his texts survive, but the random facts present him as a *iurodivyi-like* prophet (he predicted World War II in his poems) who "designed his life and works according to the rules of the cultural *podpol'e*" (Krivulin, "Zolotoi vek" 345). He practiced "anti-behavior,"[101] demonstrating his "abnormality, […] dancing at streetcar stations […] and begging passers-by for a penny" (Khmel'nitskaia); he committed thefts and trapped stray cats to sell them to laboratories (Bobyshev). *Buffoonery* was important in the poetics of the *andegraund* group *Khelenukty* (Nikolai Aksel'rod, Vladimir Erl', Dmitrii Makrinov, Aleksandr Mironov, Viktor Nemtinov, Aleksei Khvostenko) who combined "high avant-garde art with profane lower culture" (Savitskii 38).

The fact that psychological *iurodstvo* akin to that of Dostoevsky's underground man was a significant semiotic model that defined the psychology of the artistic *andegraund*, was acknowledged and analyzed by Goricheva who was a major intellectual voice in unofficial culture in the 1970s. An admirer of Dostoevsky, she states in an interview that she particularly likes the "scandalous" (i.e. "underground") aspect of his works. In her reading, it is linked to the "apophatic" (i.e. providing negative examples) mode of preaching God ("Mne"). Likewise, she

[100] Marco Sabbatini has correctly pointed out that the semiotic model of *iurodstvo* was important for unofficial culture as "a response to the Soviet utopia, to its ethics and aesthetics" ("Pathos" 338). However, Sabbatini's vague understanding of *iurodstvo* as both the absurdist and rebellious discourse and the religious quest of the Leningrad *andegraund* seems to disregard the difference between the psychological ("secular") and religious models of *iurodstvo* (see Chapter 2).

[101] Boris Uspensky defines anti-behavior as "the replacement of certain regulating norms with their opposites" (320).

analyzes *iurodstvo* in the context of the apophatic tradition. On the one hand, Goricheva sees clear associations between *iurodstvo* and Dostoevsky's underground;[102] on the other hand, she directly connects it with twentieth-century (counter)culture: "the thirst for sanctity in those who have not found it reveals itself […] in different forms of holy-foolishness [*iurodstvovanie*] […]. In Russia, most neophytes, i.e. those who converted to Christianity as adults, prior to this had gone through a strange and destructive path of 'liberation' – they had been drunkards and hippies, lived a bohemian life, […] despised conventional morals, outraged the public opinion" (*Pravoslavie* 43). She considers the "cynic who plays a holy fool [*iurodstvuiushchii tsinik*]" to be the most frequent type of the 'secular' *iurodivyi* in Soviet (counter)culture. Her depiction shows its deep kinship with Dostoevsky underground characters: "[*i*]*urodstvo* helps one avoid specificity and responsibility and create […] a protective response to society" (ibid. 46).

The patterns of psychological *iurodstvo* – the *vyverts* and *nadryvs* that characterize the psychology of Dostoevsky's underground characters – characterized the lifestyle of the *andegraund* community. For example, Pazukhin and Viktor Toporov both mention the "wild" ("*buinoe*") behavior of Elena Shvarts for whom scandal and physical aggression were "essential component[s] of interaction" with her *andegraund* fellows (Pazukhin). Pazukhin recalls that during one debauchery Shvarts started to hit everyone with a long strap handbag, while during another she quarreled with Ostanin and smashed a bottle of vodka over his head. This typical *vyvert* was followed by *nadryv* when a few days later Shvarts (according to Krivulin's words reproduced in Pazukhin's text) "at first wanted to hang herself but then wrote a poem."

Even though memoirs such as Pazukhin's do not necessarily provide an accurate account of the events that took place in reality, he describes a psychological pattern that was common among the unofficial *bohème* – the underground sequence of aggression followed by remorse,

[102] See Goricheva, "Iurodivyie." For more on this topic see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

and/or scandal followed by a retreat into the "beautiful and sublime." It reappears in Krivulin's essay on the *andegraund* avant-garde painter Evgenii Mikhnov-Voitenko to whom Krivulin attributes the typical characteristics of the underground person: the anti-social attitude of a hermit, a conflict-provoking personality, and pride that leads to solitude. "People who didn't know Mikhnov very well were surprised by the discrepancy between his everyday behavior – impudent, deliberately provocative, scandal-seeking […] – and the spiritual purity, clarity, and serenity of his compositions" (*Okhota* 166). According to Krivulin, this discrepancy reflected Mikhnov's artistic philosophy, "[its] emphasis on the dramatic conflict between the 'horizontal' and 'vertical' planes of the artist's existence" that was constantly and deliberately present in his works (ibid.). Krivulin identifies in Mikhnov the aforementioned "syndrome" of the "cellar genius" (although, in this particular case, Krivulin finds it legitimate given Mikhnov's outstanding contribution to art). Moreover, in his diaries, Mikhnov himself reveals an affinity with the underground man's discourse by making a statement of his unique place in art: "*Vse – izmy gruppy. A ia ne prinadlezhu ni k kakim*" ("All '-isms' are groups, but I don't belong to any").

For many of the reasons described above, we can discern that duality similar to that of the underground man was also characteristic of the *andegraund* psychology. The opposite side of *andegraund*'s asceticism was its debauchery, drunkenness, and the lack of self-discipline in the emotional and sexual spheres. Dostoevsky's underground man's binary "either a hero or dirt" becomes for the literary *andegraund* "either a hermit or a drunkard." Krivulin ironically reflects on this in his aforementioned poem "*P'iu vino arkhaizmov*." Although he ascribes to the "second culture" an apostolic mission by comparing it to the life in catacombs of the early Christians, he also subverts this association, saying that *andegraund* poets and artists frequent pubs rather than

churches, and their lives remind one of a dark and oily subterranean river (probably, even sewage): "*Kto skazal katakomby? / V pivnye bredëm i apteki! / I podpol'nye sud'by / cherny, kak podzemnye reki*" ("Who said catacombs?/ It is beerhalls and drugstores that we wander into / And [our] underground lives / are dark as subterranean rivers"; 108). This poem shows how the *ressentiment* consciousness of the *andegraund* affects its poetics: "In the situation of *ressentiment*, the evaluative consciousness becomes 'fragile,' fluctuating between the exaltation of subjectivity and its self-denunciation, while the creative act is understood not as an overcoming of this duality but as its extreme manifestation" (Zhitenëv 216).

Interestingly, in the *andegraund* writers' discourse on their lifestyle, one can clearly see a tendency to interpret their outrageous behavior as a negative, inverted ("apophatic") reference to the spiritual ("vertical") plane of existence (which, of course, reflected the "atmosphere of spiritual adventure" attributed by Krivulin to the entire Leningrad *andegraund* community). We remember that Dostoevsky's underground man also attributes his *iurodstvo* to his nostalgia for an unattainable higher ideal – a crystal edifice he wouldn't want to stick his tongue at. In the censored part of *Notes*, this higher ideal was directly related to faith in Christ. In an essay, Shvarts meditates on the phenomenon of scandal and distinguishes between the primitive "kitchen" scandal and the "intellectual, spiritual" one, which may be a form of "serving God." The former can transform into the latter, which, she thinks, happened in her case. According to Oleg Rogov, a distinct characteristic of Shvarts's poetry is the "metaphysical scandal," that is, "sorting things out […] on the sacral plane, the plane of the person's attitude toward God and His creation." Zitzewitz has pointed out that the heroine of Shvarts's poetic cycle "*Trudy i dni Lavinii, monakhini iz ordena obrezaniia serdtsa. Ot Rozhdestva do Paskhi*" ("The Works and Days of Lavinia, Nun in the Order of the Circumcision of the Heart. From Christmas to Easter,"

1984) is modeled on the holy fool archetype, which "provide[s] important cues on how to read Shvarts's poetic persona." Linking her "metaphysical scandal" with the idea of *iurodstvo*, Shvarts "indicat[es] that she belongs to a long tradition" (Zitzewitz 122). As we have seen, in the context of this tradition, the closest literary predecessor of unofficial artists and poets was Dostoevsky's underground man and his psychological *podpol'e.*

Space and the Chronotope of Unofficial Culture

As in Dostoevsky, the underground in unofficial culture functions as a literalized metaphor; it is present not just in literary texts of the *andegraund* writers (numerous images of subterranean spaces), but in the "text" of their lives as well. Krivulin remembers a half-serious artistic manifesto that he and his friends wrote in 1959 where they "insisted on [their] 'undergroundness' in spite of the propaganda machine which hysterically encouraged [them] to strive to new heights" ("U istokov" 185). The manifesto commenced with the following words: "WE, THE CARERTAKERS OF THE OLD ART; WE, THE STOKERS OF THE NEW ONE" (ibid; capitals in the original). This turned out to be a prophetic statement about the fates of many *andegraund* intellectuals who twenty years later found themselves "at the very bottom of society, which was its bottom in the literal, and not metaphorical sense, – in the underground of boiler rooms and caretaker rooms" (ibid.).[103] Indeed, the profession of the stoker in a boiler room was especially popular among unofficial culture representatives, which is exemplified by poets such as Okhapkin, Pazukhin, Mironov, rock musicians such as Viktor Tsoi, Aleksandr Bashlachëv, Sviatoslav Zaderii,[104] the painter Tatiana Kerner and others. As I have already pointed out

[103] Note that Krivulin himself did not reach the "very bottom" of society he was talking about. For seventeen years he worked at the "*Sanprosvet*" publishing house, which allowed Vladimir Zheltov to call him "the most published author": "he authored most of the leaflets that encouraged people to wash their hands before eating and to exterminate flies and cockroaches. […] Moreover, always in need of money, Krivulin wrote eighteen dissertations for graduate students."

[104] All the rock musicians mentioned worked in the famous Leningrad boiler room known by its unofficial "nickname" *Kamchatka* (Blokhina street 15), which in the 1980s-90s became the mythological "center" of the

previously, occupations such as elevator operator, caretaker, or stoker satisfied the needs of members of the *andegraund* community as they offered relatively flexible schedules and were not 'intellectual,' which meant they did not involve that much ideological control from supervisors. At the same time these menial jobs reflected the low socio-economic status of *andegraund* artists, which also defined the kinds of dwellings many of them lived and met in. These were basements and garrets, places where "'normal people' do not live" (ibid.), which remind one of the living spaces of the underground man and Raskolnikov. These "favorable" conditions for the formation of the "second culture" were provided by the exclusion of unofficial poets from mainstream society on all levels – culturally (through censorship), economically (low-skilled jobs), and, last but not least, spatially.

Therefore, it is safe to assume that the strong association between the metaphorical notion of *podpol'e*/*andegraund* as (counter)culture and the actual space inhabited by many unofficial intellectuals was semiotically significant for the self-identification of the "second culture" as a genuine underground with its own chronotope. It is remarkable that the center of the *andegraund* intellectual life in the 1970s was the semi-basement "non-residential [*nezhiloi fond*]" dwelling known as "apartment number 37," which was rented by the new-weds Krivulin and Goricheva together with Lev Rudkovskii – "a giant basement flat with rats and cats on Kurliandskaia street" (Goricheva, "Iz komsomola"). The meetings of the Religious-Philosophical Seminar took place there, and the samizdat journal *37* got its name because of the apartment's number. As we have already seen, the adjective *podval'nyi* (basement, cellar) as in *podval'naia genial'nost'* ("cellar genius"), and the noun *podval'nost'* ("basementness") (for example, in Goricheva's expression "*podval'nost' i elitarnost' 'Vtoroi kul'tury'*" ["the

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Leningrad rock underground. In 2003, thanks to efforts of Sergei Firsov it was turned into a museum of Petersburg rock and a rock club.

basementness and elitism of the 'second culture'"]) were frequent in the discourse of unofficial culture; in fact, they were synonymous with *andegraund*. Krivulin reflects on the importance of marginal space for *andegraund*, saying that "it is only there, in life's backyard, that Russian unofficial culture could emerge and exist" ("U istokov" 185). The spatial "bottom" naturally corresponded with the low social and economic status of *andegraund* artists, which, in accordance with the *ressentiment* logic described in the previous section, they perceived as a sign of their spiritual elitism and superiority. Discussing the cultural importance of the concept of *nishcheta* (poverty, misery), Krivulin argues that "while literal *nishcheta* defined the lives of the founders of the new culture, spiritual *nishcheta* virtually became a synonym of the courage with which poets refused the very possibility of wellbeing narrowly understood" (ibid. 187). Therefore, the spatial "down" in the "second culture"'s discourse signified the moral "up." The cultural *podpol'e* isolated the underground writers from a broad readership but it elevated them metaphysically in their own eyes. *Podpol'e bez'iazykoe* (the "tongueless underground") was, in fact, their "heaven under earth," as is suggested by the concluding line of Krivulin's "*Krysa*."

The concept of *podpol'e* in the context of Russian unofficial culture signified its distinct separation from the contemporary Soviet mainstream, however it also helped the *andegraund* establish connections with classical Russian prose and, above all, with Dostoevsky. As I have already shown, as in Dostoevsky, in Krivulin's poetry *podpol'e* becomes an important component of his poetics of space and the chronotope. In his novel *Shmon* (*Search*, 1990), Krivulin establishes a chain of associations that brings together Leningrad unofficial culture and Dostoevsky's chronotope through the motif of *podpol'e*. In a corner room of a Leningrad communal apartment, a few representatives of the *andegraund* discuss "the common hero of modern Russian prose" – "the underground man in a hostile linguistic and metaphysical

environment," which reminds the narrator that Dostoevsky preferred corner rooms (11). Note the intertextual reference to Dostoevsky's underground man's statement about his settling down in "a corner" discussed in Chapter 3.

As in Dostoevsky, in Krivulin, *podpol'e* as the literalized metaphor reveals itself as subterranean spaces that refer to the mythological representations of the world of the dead. Depicting the underground nether world, Krivulin borrows motifs and images from various world mythologies and religions (Greek myths, Judaism, Christianity) and makes them part of his own poetical universe. For example, in his poem "*Slyshu klëkot reshëtki orlinoi*" ("I hear the screaming of the eagle fence," 1971), he compares the shadow of a lion sculpture's mouth with "the entrance to the underground kingdom Sheol" (14). The concept of *sheol* (translated from Hebrew as "grave," "pit," or "abode of the dead") is found in the Old Testament; it denotes "the underworld […] where departed spirits go" and where "people existed as 'shades' in a world of misery and futility" (Rainwater 819). This prompts the poet's meditations on the relative nature of the visible reality, on the fluidity of the boundary between animate and inanimate beings (humans vs. monuments), the living and the dead. He imagines the underground Sheol as a world "where all the flowers made of metal and tin would come to life with a light rustle and where the eagle would wake up with crunch" ("*gde by s shorokhom lëgkim voskresli / vse tsvety iz metalla i zhesti, / gde by s khrustom prosnulsia orël*") but where the lyrical narrator would turn into a "motionless and shapeless clod" ("*nepodvizhno-besformennyi kom*"; 14). As we remember, the nether world (the grave) of the underground as the world of "living" compared to the deadening world of "2x2=4" is a significant motif in Dostoevsky's *Notes*.

Similarly to Dostoevsky, in Krivulin's poetical mythology, the idea of the underworld and related subterranean images are linked to the question of the irreversibility of death and the

possibility of coming back to life. For this reason, in several of his poems, Krivulin revisits the Greek myth of Orpheus who descended into the underworld in order to retrieve his dead wife, Eurydice. We find the echo of the Orpheus myth in the poem "*Vstrecha*" ("Meeting," 1973) dedicated to Joseph Brodsky that provides an important variation of the nether world theme since it treats emigration as the afterlife. From the point of view of an *andegraund* poet, Soviet life may seem unreal in its absurdity, reminding him of the kingdom of shades. Yet there is a world outside the Soviet Union that is both much more "unreal" and much more "underground." Thus, the spatial distance and the national frontier symbolize the hardly penetrable border between the two types of (under)worlds: the Soviet Union and "the globe all of whose hemispheres for the inhabitant of this place is the myth of Orpheus's descent into the ancient abyss to retrieve a shadow" ("*globus, / ch'i vse polushariia dlia mestnogo zhitelia – mif / o spuske Orfeia za ten'iu v antichnuiu propast"*"; 116). That is why even the hypothetical possibility of meeting someone who has left the Soviet Union induces in the narrator an existential "nauseous fear" similar to that of meeting the living dead: "The fear of seeing the gaping earth is nauseating – Dost thou let your dead men leave, thou other kingdom?" ("*I strakh toshnotvoren pri vide razvërstoi zemli / – svoikh mertvetsov otpushchaeshi, tsarstvo inoe?*" 116). Yet the desire to see how anything could be more "unreal" than the "unreality" of the narrator's own existence ("I represent the people who are no longer real and not yet born" ["*sostavliaiu narod, / uzhe ne real'nyi – eschë ne rozhdënnyi*"]; 116) and to know "how it feels like for him [an acquaintance who emigrated], a mortal being, to be abroad, or, more precisely, beyond the grave" ("*kakovo emu smerntnomu tam /* [...] *za granitsei, tochnei, za mogiloi*"; 116) drives him with its centripetal force toward the center of the earth.

This reveals another important motif that also involves subterranean imagery and can be defined as *the underground of the nether world.* It is explicitly present in *Shmon*, where an occupant of a communal apartment retells a novel depicting Leningrad as the underworld.[105] Next to the official names of the rivers ("the Neva," "the Fontanka," "the Moika") one finds "the underground [*podpol'nye*] interpretations of the aquatic names" (Lethe, Styx, Acheron) – "that's how the posthumous *intelligentsia* identifies itself in the milky fog of the world culture" (10). Moreover, "the Leningrad nether world [*tot leningradskii svet*] has its own underground [*podpol'e*] – secret seminars and universities, discussion clubs and churches, – that one enters through the sewer hatch" (9).[106] The development of this motif should be attributed to the fact that unofficial culture, a kind of the underworld by itself, perceived itself as a (counter)culture in a binary model where the mainstream culture already represented the world of the dead.

As we saw in the previous passages from *Shmon*, for Krivulin, the underground of unofficial culture is seen as inseparable from the city of Leningrad, which, in turn, also acquires the characteristics of the underworld, familiar from the representations of St. Petersburg in Russian literary classics, including Dostoevsky. In Chapter 3, I illustrate that Dostoevsky treats the underground as a metaphor of St. Petersburg, seeing the city as space of death. In addition to the traditional components of the Petersburg myth that emphasize its "underworld" characteristics (a city built on bones, whose climate is barely compatible with life), the perception of the city in the late twentieth century included the notion of the dead Russian Empire whose remnants were present as multiple monuments; the tragic memory of the Stalin purges, and that of the Siege of Leningrad that killed more than one million people. All these implications were important for the existentialist-like self-consciousness of *andegraund* culture.

[105] According to Mikhail Berg, Krivulin refers to Berg's novel *Vozvrashchenie v ad* (*Coming Back to Hell*, 1980).
[106] A similar situation is depicted in Vladimir Makanin's novel *Escape Hatch* (1991). See Chapter 6.

Moreover, having become "the capital of the provinces" in the twentieth century,[107] Leningrad embodied the center of the Soviet cultural oppression and ideological manipulation, which pushed the most talented people into the social (menial jobs), mental (asylums), cultural (samizdat), and, finally, literal, i.e. spatial (boiler rooms, basements, and graves), underground. To illustrate this, in his poem "*Zemnoi grad"* ("The Earthly City," 1972), Krivulin envisions "the earthly city" ("*grad zemnoi*," i.e. Leningrad) as "the underground city" ("*grad podzemel'nyi*"), since its citizens are driven underground "following the perfect path of the rat-catcher [*sovershennym putëm krysolova*]" (36). He refers to the medieval legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.[108] The legend tells of a man who used his magic talent to lure living beings with his pipe. He drove rats out of the German city of Hamelin and made them drown in the river, and when the city refused to pay him remuneration, he did the same with the residents' children. In his essay "*Gamburg v luchakh peterburgskogo mifa*" ("Hamburg in the Light of the Petersburg Myth," 1996), Krivulin postulated the importance of the Rat-Catcher myth for the literary image of Leningrad/Petersburg in the twentieth century: "it is in the city on the Neva that this mystical story turned out to be frighteningly real in the context of the suicidal luring of crowds of people into the mouth of wars and revolutions, to the hypnotic music of flutes and drums."

The ambiguity and complexity of the concept of the underground in Krivulin discussed in the previous sections reveals itself, in particular, on the level of space. Thus, even though the subterranean images in his poetry often represent the underworld and imply death and decay, occasionally they acquire protective and life-saving functions, realizing the religious motif of salvation and resurrection. Such is the bomb shelter in the poem "*Angel voiny*" where Archangel

[107] For more on this topic see Krivulin, *Okhota* 129-31.
[108] In Russian, *Gamel'nskii krysolov* – the Rat-Catcher of Hamelin.

Gabriel[109] descends during the apocalyptic times[110] in order to bring to life a "weak," "mortal" person. Reflected in the angel's big eyes, the person recognizes his similarity with the crucified Christ:

> Голым увидит себя, на бетонных распластанным плитах.
> Ангел склонится над ним, и восходит в орбитах
> две одиноких планеты, слезами налитых;
> в каждой — воскресший, в их темной воде отражен.
> He will see himself naked, sprawled out on the concrete slabs.
> The angel will bend over him,
> and two lonely planets, filled with tears,
> will rise, each one has a resurrected [soul], reflected in its dark water. (52)

This similarity is further emphasized by Krivulin's use of the word *voskresshii* (resurrected, revived), which both defines the state of the lyric persona and serves as an indirect way of naming Christ. Thus, in Krivulin, as in Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (considering its censored part), the underground promises resurrection and new life to those who accept Christ as their ideal. This is the only way that the grave, the underworld, or the subterranean prison can turn into a haven and potentially lead its denizen up to the surface, to the light and fresh air.

Conclusion

The examination of the concept of the underground (*podpol'e*, or *andegraund*) in the texts by the leader of Leningrad unofficial culture Viktor Krivulin reveals similarities between his and Dostoevsky's conceptions of this phenomenon. Not only does this testify to Dostoevsky's strong (both direct and indirect, through the existentialists) influence on Russian unofficial writers, but also suggests that Dostoevsky's discourse on the underground represents a

[109] He is referred to by the name of his famous twelfth-century icon from the Russian Museum – "*angel Zlatye Vlasy*" ("Angel with Golden Hair").
[110] The motif of the stopped watch in the poem reminds the reader of a similar item from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum – a watch stopped at the time of the atomic bombing. This association, as well as other valuable observations on the theme of the third world war in Krivulin are found in L'vovskii.

useful tool for the understanding of the philosophical, psychological, and poetical foundations of Russian underground literature and art.

Dostoevsky's underground helps us trace the antinomies of Russian unofficial culture: like many Dostoevsky motifs, it brings together two existential poles: the pole of skepticism, disbelief, and angst, and the pole of salvation through faith. On the one hand, the texts of unofficial writers depict the absurdity of official Soviet history, ideology, and life in general. On the other hand, they seek ways to overcome this absurdity by confronting the "crystal palace" of the Soviet (anti)utopia with a metaphysical quest that leads underground culture into the realm of religion.

Dostoevsky's underground elucidates the tragic fate of the Russian underground writer consisting in his/her inability to express him or herself properly, not just because of external obstacles (censorship and persecution), but because his/her communication with the world is distorted by underground "barriers" such as injured pride and *ressentiment*. The latter reveal themselves in psychological patterns similar to that of many Dostoevsky's characters (*vyverts*, *nadrys*, and *iurodivost'*). Both Dostoevsky and Krivulin portray the spiritual torments of underground existence that are caused by a guilty conscience, which, at the same, promises an exit from the underground along a path that leads back to God.

Finally, the Dostoevskian antinomy of the underground influenced Krivulin's poetics of space. His subterranean imagery, through mythological and religious references, combines the characteristics of the space of decay and the fertile soil, the underworld and heaven, the world of fantasy and the primary reality.

In his works, Krivulin demonstrated that Russian unofficial culture has much more in common with Dostoevsky's philosophical and psychological notion of *podpol'e* than with the

political *podpol'e* of the late nineteenth – early twentieth century, thus redefining the concept of the underground in existential terms. This is how the underground will be treated in subsequent Russian literature and culture, including the writer Vladimir Makanin and rock (counter)culture.

Chapter 6

"*Vozmozhno, andegraund ne nastoiashchii*":[111]

Vladimir Makanin's Novel *Underground, or A Hero of Our Time*

> A novel needs a hero, whereas here one finds all the characteristics of an antihero gathered together.
>
> Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* .[112]

The prominent contemporary Russian writer Vladimir Makanin (1937-) never belonged to the literary underground, but neither was he a proponent of official Soviet aesthetics. He refused to establish a definite system of values, that is, to provide a definitely positive hero, or judge his characters' morals or ideology. Nevertheless, Makanin's poetics incorporate elements of surrealism and the absurd, and in many respects align him with the underground writers of the "second culture". All this limited the appeal of Makanin's works for the literary journal editors who defined the fate of writers in the late Soviet period. Although Makanin managed to publish quite a few books even before the collapse of the USSR, he described his status in literature using the underground image of the grave: "to publish a book without first publishing it in a journal meant to end up in a common grave. Not only had you been buried, but even dumped in an anonymous pauper's grave" ("About" 19).

Makanin's 1997 novel *Andegraund, ili Geroi nashego vremeni* (*Underground, or A Hero of Our Time*) explicitly addresses the concept of the underground[113] in Russian culture. But already in his earlier works of the 1970-80s he had provided an artistic analysis of the philosophy and psychology of being in opposition to the mainstream. Thus, the main protagonist of

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[111] "Perhaps, it's not the genuine underground" (Makanin, *Andegraund* 40). All quotes from Makanin's *Andegraund* are in my translation.
[112] *PSS* 5: 178.
[113] The novel's narrator mostly uses the English calque *andegraund,* although occasionally he switches to its Russian version – *podpol'e*.

Makanin's short story "The Antileader" (1976) consistently maintains a certain existential state of not tolerating – and fighting against – anyone who would become the public's favorite of the moment. There are many outsider-type characters in Makanin's works, and interestingly enough, they are often accompanied by motifs of literally going/being "under the ground" (digging pits and underground passages, wandering through tunnels, or travelling on the subway). In his novel *Laz* (*Escape Hatch*, 1990), Makanin's character Kliucharëv journeys to an underground city, which becomes the metaphor of the artist's fate in an apocalyptical age.

Just like Kliucharëv who, at one point finds himself stuck in a tunnel that connects the subterranean world to the surface, Makanin found himself between the worlds of unofficial underground culture, to which he never belonged but with which he sympathized, and mainstream literature. Makanin distinguishes between the "wrongly understood" underground, the one synonymous with the political opposition – "writers who were just waiting for their 'happy hour' to come, and it came when Perestroika started," and the "genuine underground" that "cannot become part of an Establishment" and "never go[es] to the top" (ibid. 23).[114] On the one hand, Makanin, who maintains that after Perestroika he "didn't become a bit closer to the political elites" (ibid. 20), conforms to his own understanding of the underground. On the other hand, representatives of unofficial culture "considered [him] a recognized writer after perestroika. [In fact he did become one – V.I.] And they regarded all successful writers as trash" (ibid. 23) In 1997, Makanin published *Andegraund,* a novel whose narrator insists that he is a genuine representative of unofficial culture, which can be read as Makanin's attempt to promote the myth of himself as a "native" of the underground, something he never was in reality. In this chapter, I explore Makanin's representations of the underground in the novel. I argue that Makanin fails to convincingly represent the underground as "high (counter)culture," most likely

[114] This idea is also expressed by the protagonist of *Andegraund*'s.

due to his lack of inside knowledge. Instead, through references to Dostoevsky, Makanin focuses on the mental and psychological underground of his hero's soul, and has a former underground writer turn into an unrepentant criminal, thus offering a gloomy view of the underground as culture. The only positive character in the novel is the main character's brother Venedikt, a mentally ill man, formerly an avant-garde painter who embodies the Christian humility that in both Dostoevsky and Makanin oppose the destructive forces of underground egocentrism.

The Dialogue of the Undergrounds

The main protagonist of the novel is its narrator, the former underground writer Petrovich,[115] whose texts were never accepted by Soviet publishing houses, not because they were politically inappropriate but simply because the writer appeared to censors to be "different" (*drugoi*),[116] i.e. not satisfying the Soviet literary canon. In fact, neither the aesthetic quality nor the content of Petrovich's writings interest Makanin. Moreover, in the figure of Petrovich, Makanin emphasizes the absurdity of the unofficial (unpublished) writer's status in the early 1990s, once "everything becomes permitted": Petrovich does not want to write any longer, nor has he kept his own past writings that he would have been able to publish now that times have changed. Furthermore, the underground does not play a major role as a notion of political nor aesthetic (counter)culture in the novel either. Both contemporary literature and politics are barely present in the novel's space, except for the questionable poetry of the underground poetess Veronika (one of the many women with whom Petrovich has had a love affair), no less questionable prose of Mikhail and the brief mention of the August Coup of 1991.

Makanin's hero is a homeless person (*bomzh*) with just a couch to crash on in a huge apartment building, a former dormitory (*obshchaga*), in Moscow. He makes his living working

[115]Petrovich is a patronymic, while the hero's first name is never revealed in the novel. As he explains: "everyone called me this way now. Getting older, I virtually enjoyed having lost my first name, which I later forgot" (48).
[116] The adjective that was frequently used by critics in regard to Makanin himself.

as an occasional "apartment-sitter" (*storozh*) in the same *obshchaga*, which is barely enough for him to survive on, yet he refuses all offers to change his social and professional status and secure his own "place under the sun." Thus, for example, when Veronika becomes a leader of the "first call" ("*pervyi prizyv*") democratic movement, she proposes that Petrovich "partake in the undertaking" (74) and "serve" in a "sub-committee," which he can only perceive in a comical, or even ironic, light:

> I can just imagine our imminent family grotesquery. […] So much to do! (Two zealous democrats.) […] Everything is wonderful, but I stare at her and notice that I don't want her… As soon as I imagine that I'm taking off my broken shoes and (silently) push them into an unseen corner under the bed, I can't hold back the laughter. I myself want to remain there. Under the bed. Where the shoes are. To lie there and to call her into my corner from there, meaning, I'm the underground man [*podpol'nyi, mol, ia*]. (52)

The adjective *podpol'nyi* used here functions as one of the many references to Dostoevsky, and suggests parallels between Petrovich and the underground man. Elsewhere, Petrovich invents a neologism *dozhival* (a noun meaning someone living out his/her final days/years) that he applies to his generation, thus evoking an association with Dostoevsky's introductory footnote in *Notes from Underground* where he defines his hero as a representative of the generation that lives out its final years – *dozhivaiushchee pokolenie*. But what does *podpol'e*/the underground mean for Makanin, and how is it related to Dostoevsky?

The underground in the novel is a poly-semantic concept. It refers to the social "bottom" (*dno*)[117] – marginal groups of people (homeless people, migrant workers, prostitutes, criminals, etc.) whom Petrovich encounters on his journey through the novel's plot. In Petrovich's discourse, the underground (*podpol'e*) also denotes the dark sides of modern society's life in

[117] A reference to Maxim Gorky's famous 1902 play *Na dne* (*The Lower Depths*), but also to Dostoevsky's depiction of the shady parts of Petersburg. For an analysis of the "dialogical relationships" between Makanin and Gorky see Alekseeva, "Gor'kovskii 'sled.'"

general that suddenly become visible in post-Soviet Russia through their "signs," such as the advertisement: "*Abortion under anesthesia*. […] *Protection from racketeering*. […] The underground [*podpol'e*] and its appropriately underground advertisements" (60; original emphasis). Finally, the underground is literally the subterranean level of the city, specifically the Moscow subway, in which Petrovich often finds himself – not because he needs to go somewhere, but because his soul "is drawn here, under these vaults" due to "the underground nature of [his] feelings" (309). He often descends into the subway to take an "underground" walk (60); here he finds his rest and his "nirvana" (208). All these meanings of the underground intertwine: for example, it is on the subway that Petrovich meets a young girl (most likely, a prostitute) to whom he gives twenty dollars, and it is in the subway car that he reads the advertisement signs and meditates on their relation to the *podpol'e*. In Petrovich's mind, these undergrounds partake in a dialog, like subway stations connected by a short tunnel: "this suggests the idea of undergrounds that call out to each other. Contact between the undergrounds" (214). In *Andegraund*, Makanin continues to develop one of his favorite metaphors – the metaphor of the world as system of communicating vessels[118] present in "A Short Story about a Short Story" (1976), "Kliucharëv and Alimushkin" (1977), "Where the Sky Meets the Hills" (1984) and other works.

An important leitmotif that connects all the different undergrounds in the novel becomes the motif of the corridor (and its derivative – the tunnel). All the main *loci* associated with Petrovich in the novel are marked with this motif, and, therefore, represent different spatial variations of the underground. The university dorm's corridor where Petrovich used to meet his

[118] See Solov'ëva 329.

brother Venia transforms into the corridor of Petrovich's *obshchaga,*[119] which is juxtaposed with the corridor of the mental hospital where Venia was "treated" for nonconformity and where later Petrovich strives to save his own self. The motif of the corridor allows Makanin to imagine that all of Russia is also a form of the underground: "they will be kicking us out, but we will knock at one door after another, […] hoping that there is a small room for us somewhere in the endless corridor of the huge Russian *obshchaga*" (203).

The most significant feature in the protagonist's discourse, and yet the most elusive, becomes the concept of the underground as the (counter)culture with which Petrovich associates himself. Makanin defined the novel as "a requiem for the Russian Underground" ("About" 23), suggesting that its main topic is Russian unofficial culture, that is the literary and artistic underground discussed in Chapter 5. The authority of Makanin's direct comments on *Andegraund* and the novel's first-person narration in the intimate, confessional voice of the hero who shares a number of traits with the author[120] tempt the reader to accept the statements of both Makanin and his hero more or less without question. Thus, Petrovich sees himself, his friends (Mikhail, Vik Vikych, Vasilëk Piatov), and his brother Venedikt as representatives of genuine unofficial culture – the underground that remains in spiritual opposition to the mainstream despite any and all political, social, or economic changes. He traces the origins of the underground back to the medieval ascetics:

> The ascetic is like an internal emigrant. When ascetics go, there come emigrants. Emigrants are replaced by dissidents. And when dissidents evaporate, the underground takes over. […] This is – us. In Russia, like nowhere else, the novelty of an idea eventually turns into its inversion. We are martyrs not because of ideas but because of

[119] Remarkably, the slang word *obshchaga* (dorm) sounds quite similar to the Russian *age (AG)* – an abbreviation of *andegraund* frequently used by Petrovich.
[120] They are of the same age, share the same Urals childhood in a small town on the border between Europe and Asia, and the same experience of being rejected by Soviet publishers.

> painful changes in their interpretations. […] We are the subconscious of Russia. Whatever the situation looks like here […] they will be kicking us out. (203)

Nevertheless, the Petrovich figure embodies the contradictions and antinomies that subvert the idea of his belonging to the "high (counter)culture" of the Russian literary and artistic underground. This becomes clear to us if we consider, for example, that it is Petrovich, the drunkard and womanizer who proclaims the underground's affinity with asceticism and reclusion. Moreover, it is Petrovich the unrepentant murderer who in his conversation with former fellow underground writer Zykov acts as a representative of the "underground of the society's subconscious" (526) – or, rather, the unofficial society's *conscience*, – refusing to forgive Zykov for his brief acquaintance with a KGB major. Like Viktor Krivulin, Petrovich describes the "cellar genius" complex as a substantive characteristic of underground culture: "Every underground man [*ageshnik*] from time to time uses words like *man of genius* [*genii*], *ingeniously* [*genial'no*], *we both are men of genius* [*my oba genii*]. There is no underground without the word *genii*" (135; emphasis in the original). However, he is well aware that he is not a man of genius, which is obvious, for example, when he ironically describes Mikhail's and Veronika's attempts to include him in this paradigm: "When Mikhail or someone else repeats what kind of *genii* I am, it feels as if someone tickles my left heel with a twig of wormwood. I'm serene. Fresh air infuses my soul. No more than that. […] While the real *genii* [is] my brother Venia" (135).

Underlying the hero's comparison of the underground to internal exile and even martyrdom is the mechanism of *ressentiment* that, as I show in the previous chapter, nourished the feelings of elitism and spiritual exclusivity among the members of the "second culture." However, neither the status of Petrovich as a writer without works, nor the motivations behind his actions justify (or are justified by) the idea that he is an exemplary representative of

unofficial culture. Worthy of note is Petrovich's *ressentiment,* which reveals in him not an oppressed underground writer, rather an average Soviet *intelligent* (an "engineer") – the typical "little man" of Russian literature. As a result, Petrovich exemplifies the concept of the personal underground – a worldview, but first and foremost, the psychological patterns that assert the primacy of one's ego and approve of its protection by any means. This is where Makanin's notion of the underground connects with that of Dostoevsky.

"If There Is Immortality, Everything Is Permitted": Philosophy of *Udar*

In her reading of Makanin's *Andegraund*, Elena Krasnoshchekova suggests that Petrovich should be understood "with an eye […] to his predecessor" – Dostoevsky's underground man. She argues that the underground man's confession of his shameful behavior with Liza results in his "moral treatment," and similarly "[s]elf-expression, self-awareness in the Word, becomes the sought-after means of 'betterment'" for Petrovich: "Once again (in Dostoevsky's footsteps) composition becomes 'corrective punishment'" (138-39). While it is true that Petrovich shares a number of common traits with the underground man,[121] the differences between them are even more significant. As I show below, it is these differences that allow us to doubt whether Petrovich undergoes "corrective punishment" and changes (or even demonstrates a potential for change) for the better.

At first glance, Petrovich, indeed, reminds us of the protagonist in *Notes from Underground*. Like the underground man who resists any attempt to define and explain himself from the perspective of someone else's consciousness, Petrovich constantly strives to preserve his sensitive self. On the one hand, his idea of remaining in the permanent underground serves exactly this goal – something he refuses to explain to those, like Dvorikov, who offer him ways out of the underground: "I told him directly that […] I don't want to be published. […] I didn't

[121] The parallels between the underground man and Petrovich are also addressed in Semykina 108-14, 122-23.

want to become an adjunct of literature anymore. […] 'I don't want to,' I repeated without explanation because any other words would have confused him even more" (71). Refusal to publish (even though he does not have the actual texts to publish) becomes Petrovich's protest against mainstream culture's absorbing the former underground "men of genius." He alienates himself from anyone who manages to "float up" to the surface – from his girlfriends to his fellow underground writers.

On the other hand, Petrovich expresses a hidden desire to free himself from the literary underground as yet another form of dependence – the dependence on texts, both his own writings and those of the "great Russian literature" that had informed his literary personality. Out of this desire emerges his conception of *udar* (the blow), introduced in the chapter "*Kvadrat Malevicha.*"[122] In this chapter, Petrovich is arrested for being indirectly involved in a conflict between old men who fight over a spot in the queue at a grocery store. At the police station, annoyed by the arrogant smile of a *druzhinnik*,[123] Makanin's hero hits him in the dimple on his chin, explaining that "he reveled in his power over my ego ['*ia*']" (68). The hero's *udar* results in his detention, but at the same time it makes him feel released from his literary works: "Perhaps, it is in the bustle of my first minutes behind bars that the residues of my […] vanity and my ambitious attempts were peeling off from my ego. […] With a light heart I felt myself outside of my texts" (87). *Udar* allows Petrovich to oppose the "hyper-reality" of the literary underground (his former literary ambitions) to the underground of the "prose of life" (such as the base reality of the detention cell) and to realize that his self belongs to the latter rather than the former. Earlier in the chapter, the notion of *udar* appears in Petrovich's musings on Kazimir Malevich's avant-garde painting of a black square: "we need perspective, […] a goal, the light in

[122] "Malevich's Square."
[123] A member of Voluntary People's *Druzhina* – a detachment intended to assist the *militsiia* (police) in maintaining public order, while remaining formally independent from it.

the end of the tunnel, as soon as possible. […] That's why Malevich's *black square* is a masterpiece; it's a stop; it's made especially for us and our hasty souls; it's an *udar* and great deceleration" (75; original emphasis). The detention cell window reminds the hero of the black square, and this parallel provides him with the comforting feeling that slows time and narrows space, and that his whole existence is just an "ordinary cell for humans, with a lattice door and an unobtrusive bucket for urine in the corner" (88). The motif of the black square is later echoed in the image of the dark subway tunnel, which shows that it is related to the underground as a world without light and visible perspective – a metaphor of the Godless world[124] of one's ego living in its *here and now*.[125] The black square becomes a visual representation of *udar* – the only means by which one's ego asserts its existence in the underground of the "prose of life."

The notion of *udar* marks a significant difference between Makanin's and Dostoevsky's heroes, as well as between their undergrounds. Petrovich lacks the existentialist depth of Dostoevsky's underground heroes with their rebellion against the absurd and their longing for a different, "more comforting" existence. For Petrovich, *udar* connotes first and foremost rebellion against the power of someone else's consciousness, manifested in people and texts. Makanin's hero does address the central problem of existentialism, death; however, despite his occasional references to existentialist philosophers,[126] Petrovich does not see death as something that makes the human being aware of his/her own existence (Heidegger) and/or its absurdity (Camus). His attitude to death is similar to that of the Greek philosopher Epicurus: "Death […] is nothing to

[124] In the novel, the concept of the Word (*Slovo*), often capitalized, refers to the Biblical notion of God as the Word originating in the first line of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Petrovich quotes this line during a conversation with Venia in the chapter "*Brat'ia vstrechaiutsia*" ("The Brothers Meet"). Thus, in Petrovich's discourse, life without words/texts/literature becomes synonymous with life without God.

[125] The motif of the *here and now* as the protagonist's preferred mode of being is introduced at the very beginning of the novel: "my soul has just calmed down in yet another *here and now*" (7).

[126] Petrovich reads Heidegger at the beginning of the novel, and the Heideggerian motif of Time (often capitalized) frequently occurs in Petrovich's narrative. Elsewhere, he refers to Sartre's idea of the existential choice.

us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not" (50). Petrovich escapes the problem of death not by means of the "leap" into metaphysics – yet, on the contrary, by reducing his existence to the primitive, biological level:

> These eyes (the eyes of my *ego* which killed and now was covering its tracks, *like all people do*) looked like the eyes of animals. […] There is a great deal of pain and sorrow in these eyes, but there's just one little thing missing in them […] the awareness of death. There's instinct instead. These eyes are watching without knowing about impending death. And, therefore, on this side, *ego* is quite self-sufficient – it is alive, and everywhere its half-sad half-childish gaze can reach, there's immortality; and there's no death and will never be. (171)

From this point of view, Petrovich perverts Ivan Karamazov's idea that *if the soul is not immortal, everything is permitted*, which, according to Sartre, laid the foundation for French existentialism. Conversely, according to Petrovich, "if there *IS* immortality, then everything is permitted" (171; emphasis mine). Whereas in both religious and philosophical discourses the idea of immortality is closely tied to the idea of God, for Petrovich it is related to the animalistic state of being unaware of death. Thus, his *everything is permitted* results not from "excess" of underground consciousness which is unable to accept God, but from the primitive, animalistic worldview, where *udar* looks more akin to the survival instinct rather than to any kind of philosophical attitude. Associating himself with the animal as a natural phenomenon, Petrovich reminds the reader of the underground man's definition of the "normal man" as a "natural" creature not afflicted by the "disease" of consciousness. From this moment onwards, Petrovich will stick to his "normalcy," understood as freedom from moral and legal laws as maintained by Russian literature, in his struggle against his guilty conscience.

The underground man of "overly acute consciousness" argues that it is better to sit "frozen in inertia" (*PSS* 5: 106) and exercises his aggression only in words, since the reader

never sees him giving someone an actual slap in the face. Irina Reyfman points out that the underground man fails as a duelist due to his "tendency to reflect," which has "positive value" (226). Asserting his ego by means of direct action is inconsistent with his philosophy, because it would turn him into his ideological enemy, the "man of action" who, in his motivations, takes immediate causes for primary ones. "The hesitant, ineffectual reflection characteristic of the underground man may be more decent than the unyielding simplemindedness of men of action who […] spit in people's faces and slap them without a second thought" (Reyfman 227). Petrovich, on the contrary, values direct action over words as a means of protecting his ego from the intrusions of someone else's consciousness or will. He explains the concept of *udar* to his brother Venedikt, saying that "*udar* is not at all aggression and the boxer glove aiming at someone's face; it's absolutely not […]. The world of *udar* is boundless and versatile" (117). However, in Petrovich's own practice, *udar* is first and foremost an act of aggression.

Thus, *udar* stands in opposition to underground inertia. As such, it establishes Makanin's protagonist's connection with another Dostoevsky hero who tried to break with his underground inertia by means of aggression: Raskolnikov. Just like Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*, Makanin makes his hero test the limits of what is permitted through homicide. In a struggle against someone else's offences against his ego Petrovich kills two people – a Caucasian who robbed and humiliated him (offended his national pride) and a KGB informer Chubik who secretly recorded his conversations with Petrovich on a tape recorder.

"Am I a Trembling Engineer or Do I Have the Right?": Petrovich between Bashmachkin and Raskolnikov

Petrovich directly relates his state of mind after the murder to that of Raskolnikov, in order to avoid the psychological pitfalls of the investigation, as well as the ethical traps of

Dostoevsky's novel's moral message: "When someone commits murder, he or she becomes dependent not on the fact *per se*, but on everything he or she read about murders […]. [One needs to] 'drop out' of the plot and the feelings that it informs. Not to partake in it. […] And if there is no feeling, there is no murder" (168); "for Russians, literature is a powerful autosuggestion" (185).

Although Petrovich succeeds in "dropping out" of the detective plot of *Crime and Punishment* (he misleads the investigation and avoids arrest), he mirrors Dostoevsky's character in philosophical and psychological respects. Then, once he is no longer under suspicion, Petrovich tries to justify the murder to himself in philosophical and moral terms. First, like Raskolnikov, he speaks of the relativity of the "*thou shall not kill*" principle and distinguishes between those who have always had "the right" to kill ("the state, the power, the KGB") and regular people – "trembling creatures," to quote Raskolnikov: "They were able to kill and they did. They didn't reflect on whether it was necessary or not. But for you murder was not even a sin, a sinful action, no, – it was simply *not your fucking business*" (185; original emphasis). Secondly, he delineates the approaches to murder in literature and real life, saying that "*thou shall not kill* on the page does not necessarily mean *thou shall not kill* on the snow" (186). He opposes Dostoevsky to another Russian literary authority, Pushkin, reminding the reader of Pushkin's fatal duel with Georges D'Anthes. Makanin's hero emphasizes the fact that Pushkin sincerely intended to kill his opponent: "did he ever consider or was he going to repent afterwards? Had he killed D'Anthes, would he have knelt down at the crossroad? Not at all" (186). Finally, Petrovich demonstrates the superman complex, similar to that of Raskolnikov. He feels no responsibility, neither to God, nor to people, not even to literature, his most sustained value: "Indeed, to whom must I answer? To God? Not at all. God will not ask me. […] Much

less must I answer to the people and their vanity. Who are the people for an individual like me?! I have nothing in common with their greed and their petty concerns about life improvement; all these problems belong just to them. […] The only collective judge […] is Russian literature" (178).

Acknowledging the fact that Russian literature (in this case, Dostoevsky) is "indirectly tied to God" through advocating Christian values, he concludes that "one doesn't give an account [to God] indirectly, as if through an agency" (179). Although Petrovich polemicizes with Dostoevsky, providing arguments similar to those of Raskolnikov, it is important to note that, unlike in *Crime and Punishment*, in Makanin's novel the hero develops a theoretical justification of his crime *after* he commits the actual murder. This inversion demonstrates that Petrovich's philosophical meditations divert the reader's attention from the primarily psychological motivation of his murder – his resentment and his "underground" pride. It is not philosophy, rather it is underground psychology that represents the most substantial connection between Petrovich and Dostoevsky's hero.

Makanin shows that the murder of the Caucasian results from Petrovich's resentment: he sees that Caucasians have no respect for "our humble *intelligent*" who they refer to as the "engineer" – "a funny word" which means "a kind of a squalid person [*ubogii*]" (129). This theme emerges in the chapter "*Malen''kii chelovek Tetelin*"[127] as a "preface" to Petrovich's murder described in the following chapter "*Kavkazskii sled*."[128] Beginning with a direct reference to Gogol's "The Overcoat" (1842), which is a story about a petty clerk, Bashmachkin,

[127]"Little Man Tetelin."

[128]"A Caucasian Trace." Just like the novel's second title, *A Hero of Our Time* (the title of Mikhail Lermontov's novel), many titles of its chapters replicate or transform the titles of Russian classics (Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Gorky, Solzhenitsyn), as well as of Makanin's own previous works. Thus, "A Caucasian Trace," elaborating the "eternal" theme of the Caucasus vs. Russia, refers to all the "Prisoners in the Caucasus" in Russian literature – Pushkin's (the poema *Kavakazskii plennik*, 1822), Lermontov's (the poema *Kavakazskii plennik*, 1828), Leo Tolstoy's (the short story *Kavkazskii plennik*, 1872) and Makanin's own (the short story *Kavkazskii plennyi*, 1994). The functions of quotations in Makanin's titles are addressed in Alekseeva, "Tsitatnoe pole."

who dies after his hard-earned overcoat is stolen, Petrovich describes a poor and miserable *intelligent* named Tetelin who for a long time dreamed of getting himself a pair of tweed pants which he finally buys from a shop managed by Caucasians. The pants do not fit, and Tetelin dies of a heart attack, trying to shorten them with scissors after a few unsuccessful attempts to return them to the seller. In the next chapter, Petrovich observes a scene where the Caucasian salespeople jeer at yet another *intelligent*, "an engineer in both the literal and the metaphorical senses" by the name of Gur'ev (148): "A Caucasian salesman stuck a knife in the table in front of him. […] But he [Gur'ev] stood and smiled. Yes, this damned little engineer [*inzhenerishka*], my past, my pain, the half-imaginary anguished type who has controlled me silently, deep inside for so many years – now he smiled at them all" (148-49).

It is important that the narrator feels no genuine compassion either for Tetelin or for Gur'ev – in fact, he treats them both "as shit" (127) and in this respect, he is likened to the Caucasians rather than to his "fellow *intelligenty*." However, the idea that he too may be perceived as a "miserable engineer" triggers the *udar* by means of which he seeks to gain freedom from an important myth of Russian literature – the myth of the powerless "little man" (Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky). Thus, resentment in Petrovich turns into *ressentiment* in Nietzschean terms: as a Bashmachkin who transforms into a Raskolnikov, he embodies the revolt of the weak.

To Hell and Back: the Underground Circles

Among the ideas that help him justify this murder of the Caucasian, Petrovich mentions the duel because of its being a ritualized, quasi-legitimate form of aggression. For this reason, he finds it much more difficult to conceptualize his second murder – an assassination of the art critic Chubisov, a KGB informer, – and to control his mental state upon it: "my conscience insisted on

my guilt – I stabbed the poor guy! Meaning, this time it has nothing to do with the snowy duel […]. I just stabbed him, that's it" (294). From this moment onwards, Dostoevsky's novel clearly starts to occupy Petrovich's mind, affecting his perception of things around him. In parts three and four of *Andegraund*, Makanin's plot follows two key motifs of *Crime and Punishment*: the criminal's alienation from society and his sickness as a consequence of crime. On the one hand, Petrovich feels that the *obshchaga*'s residents' "antipathy was instinctively motivated by the fact that I fell out from their communal nest. To put it simply, I am dangerous since I lynched someone: I stubbed a human being and left his kids without a father" (294). On the other hand, he is haunted by "the thought as old as the world that when you killed a human being, you destroyed something not only in him or her, but in yourself as well" (297). Evicted from his *obshchaga*, Petrovich metaphorically "descends"[129] into yet another underground (society's bottom, *dno*) – a shelter for homeless people (*bomzhatnik*) near Savëlovskii railway station. Here, his anxiety evolves into real sickness: "I am constantly in bed and from time to time think my thoughts, which I call *my plot*. Annoying, like sickness. Or even without the 'like' – this is sickness; I'm sick. (I broke my plaything). The assassinated KGB-man [*gebeshnik*] Chubisov wouldn't let me off" (315). This condition culminates in his mental *nadryv* when he suddenly starts to cry and rage. The motifs of pain and moaning in this episode remind the reader of the *nadryvs* of Dostoevsky's underground man (see Chapter 2). In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov's *nadryv* – his psychological and, ultimately, philosophical breakdown results in the hero's spiritual transformation and resurrection at the end of the novel. While Raskolnikov's

[129]In my use of spatial metaphors that describe Petrovich's progression through the novel's plot (or lack thereof), I follow Gerald Smith, who imagines the structure of *Andegraund* as a vertical spiral axis with three enclosed spaces corresponding with the hero's "ascents" and "descents" *obshchaga*, *bomzhatnik*, and *psikhushka* (the mental hospital). However, as I show in this chapter, it is difficult to agree with Smith that "[t]he 'underground' of the novel's subtitle has nothing directly to do with this vertical movement" (437).

nadryv leads him out of his underground, in Makanin *nadryv* does not transform the hero spiritually and thus illustrates Petrovich's inability to get out of the underground of his soul.

The lowest point of Petrovich's "descent" becomes "ward number one" – the mental hospital ward where suspects were treated with strong antipsychotics in order to make them confess. The narrator follows the fate of his older brother Venedikt, an avant-garde painter, who was forcefully put in the same mental hospital by the KGB a few decades earlier and "overtreated" there as a form of punishment for his "underground" pride. The trope of the underground character in a mental hospital reflects the fate of many representatives of Russian unofficial culture. In this context, the difference between Makanin's hero and the man of the underground culture becomes especially important: just like the novel itself, the chapter "*Palata nomer raz*"[130] reveals in him not an underground writer, but an underground criminal.

Makanin describes the effect of compulsory antipsychotic treatment on his character's psyche in great detail. Although the author himself has never undergone such treatment, the accuracy of his descriptions can be supported, for example, by those of Egor Letov,[131] an underground punk rocker who was "treated" for nonconformity in the 1980s: "After an injection of a high dose of these drugs […] the person has to mobilize all their energy in order to control their body. […] These are suppressives that turn one into an idiot. […] After this, the person

[130] "Ward number one," a clear reference to Chekhov's short story "Ward No. 6" (1892). The chapter connects with Chekhov's text through multiple motifs: the mental asylum as prison; the former visitor to the mental hospital turning into its patient; the existential meaning of pain and suffering. Nikolai Leskov famously noted that Chekhov's ward no. 6 can be read as a symbol of Russia (*A. P. Chekhov* 316). Similarly, in Makanin, the psychiatric ward becomes a symbol of oppression in the totalitarian state. Before Makanin, Valerii Tarsis in 1963 and Viacheslav P'ietsukh in 1992 each wrote his variations on Chekhov's "Ward No. 6": an autobiographical novella and a short story, respectively; both entitled their texts "Ward No. 7." Following Chekhov, both Tarsis and P'ietsukh explored social and political protest as the path to the madhouse – a prison in disguise (see Parts, *Chekhovian Intertext* 87-94). As is the case with Dostoevsky's intertext in *Andegraund*, Makanin's hero challenges the archetypal Chekhovian plot. Thus, Petrovich is imprisoned in ward number one not for his non-conformism but for a real sickness triggered by crime. However, deeper similarities between Makanin's and Chekhov's wards are found on the level of archetypal imagery: in both authors the psychiatric ward replicates the mythological underworld. Chekhov's ward no. 6 as the underworld is analyzed in Markovich, *"Arkhaicheskie" konstruktsii* 12-13. The literary variations on Chekhov's "Ward No. 6" in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian literature are examined in Rybal'chenko.

[131] Letov's artisitic personality and his texts are addressed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

becomes 'quiet,' 'compliant,' and broken for the rest of their life" ("Imenno"). In a similar way, Makanin shows how over-drugged Petrovich resists stupefaction, trying hard to regain control over his body and emotional reactions: "With another series of shots, the active vital centers get blocked and feelings are suppressed. […] Then comes the anguish of alienation. All you want is to cry" (391). His task becomes "to stay here, to cling to something, to fall into every man's commonness" (397).

In a letter to a friend, Letov compares the mental hospital with Hell as depicted in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* by the elder Zosima: one's simultaneous desire and inability to love. "Complete indifference to everything. […] It was nearly the same way with me" (*Zdorovo* 21:41-43). Makanin too depicts the psychiatric ward as the underworld – in both the mythological and the Dostoevskian senses. His narrator perceives ward number one as a world of shadows tormented by "eternal sorrow": "We were the eight shadows"[132] (390). The inability to love is illustrated by the fact that antipsychotics suppress all emotions of the ward number one patients: they live "a non-life (not-yet-life) […] with unsalted tears and insensitive feelings" (389); "the drug caused absolute indifference to people around you" (394).

Most importantly, ward number one represents a world not just without love but without the Word: "Words were like a need," but "we didn't have them for each other; all words were reserved for *them* [the doctors, the interrogators – V.I.]" (395; original emphasis). Letov's key to survival in a similar situation was his creative writing: "At some point, I understood that in order not to go insane I must create. All day long, I would compose – I wrote short stories and poems" ("Imenno"). However, this path is closed for Petrovich who made a living without texts ("No day with a line" [515]) the principle of his underground life. Deeply rooted in his subconscious, literature does offer him its helping hand, suggesting compassion as a means of

[132] In Chekhov's "Ward No. 6" Ragin sees the ward's inmates as "dark shadows" (135).

survival: "the key to survival is […] in someone else's suffering. […] It was my last thought, but wasn't it the last thought of Russian literature?" (397-98). When he observes the hospital attendants' cruelty towards the violent insane Sudar'kov, he attempts to feel for him: "I was persuading myself that he was in pain […]. And why do I, a man of Russian literature, observe violence so impassively and just contemplate it?" (409). He imagines himself in Sudar'kov's place: "It was *my* grey hair that the bitch was shaking off of his hands; it was *me* who they dragged over the rough floor" (410; emphasis mine). However, Petrovich deceives "the man of Russian literature" in himself, turning the idea ("the Word") of compassion, a synonym of love for the *other*, into a concept of aggressive action intended to protect one's own ego – *udar*: "I was saved by a miracle, and the miracle was called by the same word: *udar*" (408). By making Sudar'kov's pain his own through empathy, Petrovich revives his suppressed ability for *udar* and hits the hospital attendants with the walking stick of another patient. Injured during the fight, he is moved to a different hospital for surgery, which gives him time to get rid of the "chemicals" in his blood and convince the new doctor that he is mentally healthy.

It is important to note that from Petrovich's point of view ward number one is not opposed to the rest of the world: even before he had been taken to the mental hospital, he was worried by the fact that "mankind is left without the Word" (333). In the chapter "*Sobach'e skertso*"[133] the hero wonders whether "these days the human being […] learns to live without literature," and what happens "if we denied [the Word], and our thought will never sparkle again in the happy curve of the line" (310). This corresponds to his apocalyptical vision informed by the "wordless" reality of ward number one: "I saw […] twentieth-century human beings […] the way they are […]. Whatever tortures they will have to endure in the desert, […] they will not speak of God anymore, neither will they invent religion. […] [T]he Word will not burst forth

[133] "Dog's Scherzo."

from their mouths anymore" (395). Thus, the world without the Word becomes the world without God: the underworld, a kind of Hell that, according to Petrovich, characterizes the reality both inside and outside the mental hospital. In this way Makanin subverts the well-established literary tradition of representing the mental asylum as *anti-world* (for example, in Gogol, Chekhov, Bulgakov, and Venedikt Erofeev). However, Makanin points out that it is not so much the world as the hero himself who "learns" to live without the Word through his refusal to be a writer and to be held accountable to Russian literature as the moral authority: "What if our only concern is […] the fear related to our survival instinct? We just live our life. Like I do. Without looking back on a possible […] text about us, about me" (310). In essence, the world around Petrovich represents a reflection of his personal underground.

It is remarkable that Petrovich compares the mental asylum to Purgatory: "I wouldn't say that it was Hell, but just a typical decent Purgatory" (417). In Catholicism, Purgatory refers to the afterlife torments of the sinner's soul which purify it and subsequently allow it to enter Heaven.[134] As a hidden reference to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, the mention of Purgatory draws a parallel between Petrovich's journey through various undergrounds and Dante's protagonist's visit to the underworld. It is important, moreover, that Dante visits Purgatory on his way to Paradise after he had already gone through Hell. Petrovich too comes to the mental hospital from the *bomzhatnik*, where he experienced torments similar to that of the sinner in Hell, which is especially evident through the narrator's use of the motif of the burning fire: "My head is on fire. Fever" (332). Moreover, the *bomzhatnik* represents a modification of the *obshchaga* and therefore is akin to the place where Petrovich used to live.[135] Indeed, the depiction of his

[134] See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p123a12.htm.
[135] Aida Khachaturian points out that the motif of hell (*ad* in Russian) is implicitly present in the descriptions of both *obschaga* and the mental hospital through the names of the female characters associated with these places: the old woman Ada Fëdorovna and the nurse Adel' Semënovna, respectively (Khachaturian 64-65).

own *obshchaga* also reminds the reader of the mythological and literary (Dante) visions of the underworld: it has its own "Cerberuses" – the watchmen at the front door, and its own "circles" – the different floors. While the dorm residents embody petty sins (debauchery, adultery, selfishness), the *obshchaga* associates with the narrator's own double mortal sin – the two murders that alienate him from God and humankind. However, for Petrovich, the *obshchaga* embodies his "Heaven" – a place where, as on the subway, he feels most comfortable: he "absorbed" the love of "these dull, stupid, injured, poor people […] just as naturally as one absorbs […] oxygen while breathing air. […] [His] ego took its roots here and thus nourished itself" (301).

Ward number one where Petrovich could have been "purified" through confession followed by legal punishment is indeed similar to Purgatory. However, its "torments" do not purify him: he was able to endure them physically and mentally, but not spiritually: the triumph of his ego becomes the triumph of his unrepentant soul that managed to avoid its punishment, ultimately alienating itself from God and sealing its fate as confinement to a permanent spiritual Hell. It is therefore difficult to agree with the Makanin scholar Aida Khachaturian who argues that "Petrovich who experiences a kind of catharsis is purified through the Word", where "the Word" becomes the phrase of his brother Venedikt "I'll do it myself [*Ia sam*]" (70). While Khachaturian suggests that the last scene of the novel, in which Petrovich hears this phrase, signifies his resurrection as "rehabilitation of his selfhood that releases itself from the fate of his brother" (70), I argue that one cannot speak of his resurrection in the spiritual sense. Makanin's subversion/deconstruction of the binaries that demarcate the cultural concepts of Hell and Purgatory, as well as Heaven and Hell, marks the entire world of the protagonist as an *anti-world*. Makanin's subterranean symbolism also illustrates this idea: "when at a metro station

you're staring at the tunnel's mouth waiting for the train, it seems […] that […] the black tunnel's maw is about to materialize into something […]. But alas. You're staring and see nothing in return. Just a piece of darkness" (214). The subway tunnel with no light at its end, and the Circle line of the Moscow subway – Petrovich's favorite itinerary – both suggest that Makanin's hero is destined to wander endlessly in the circles of the same underworld: the underground of his soul.

The Brothers Petroviches: the Idiot vs. Raskolnikov

Iurodstvo plays an important role in the depiction of the underground in both Dostoevsky and Makanin. Makanin directly stated in an interview that the image of the *iurodivyi* corresponds to the notion of the underground that interests him in the novel (qtd. in Khachaturian 22). Thus, Petrovich postulates a kinship between underground culture and that of holy fools and buffoons who were "not affected by regime change" (509). Yet his philosophy of *udar* embodies primarily one aspect of psychological *iurodstvo* – aggression, while its second component, provocation, defines the behavior of his brother Venia: "Many years ago […] my younger brother Venia could sit at the table in front of the investigator and tease him […]. He teased him *with words* and *with his entire sarcastic appearance*" (89-90; emphasis mine). This distinction is important given the fact that in Makanin's novel, it is Venia and not his older brother who exemplifies the true underground artist.[136] Indeed, he is the only representative of the underground whose genius is never questioned; it is not even addressed ironically. Petrovich explicitly suggests that he sees himself as just an imperfect copy of his brother: "I was nature's first try; three years later, it yielded Venia. […] I was given less of his keen mind, and just a half of his talent" (135).

[136] Critics have pointed out that Makanin's choice of the name Venedikt is intended to evoke associations with Venedikt Erofeev, the "archetypal" writer of the Russian underground. For parallels between Makanin's novel and Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* see Kravchenkova 121-25, Khachaturian 17.

Moreover, unlike that of Petrovich, Venia's status as an underground artist is affirmed in the novel by the fact that at least one of his pictures survived.

The importance of the Dostoevskian intertext in the novel allows us to view Venia through its prism. Thus, Venia who turns into a "silent idiot" reminds one of Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin, while the "underground" pride[137] and *vyverts* of young Venia – the mockery and buffoonery he displays toward a KGB officer – evoke associations with the underground man. The notion of the duel, important in the discourse of Petrovich, helps us better understand Makanin's parallels between Venia and these two Dostoevsky characters. Like his murder of the Caucasian, Petrovich compares the conflict between Venia and a KGB investigator to a duel: "It was not a struggle, or a duel of a man of genius with the *sistema* [system. i.e. the State], but just a [verbal] skirmish with a petty, ambitious investigator"– it was a "sitting duel" (92, 114). The narrator points out that Venia's conflict lacks the substantial component of the true duel, one that becomes so important for Petrovich, – *udar*, i.e. aggression. He encourages Venia to slap (*udarit'*) the investigator's face in order to "turn the plot [*povernut' siuzhet*]": "let them put you in detention for a week or two, […] let them yell and cry, denounce you in the Dean's office, expel you from the University […], anything but this lingering, sticky investigation" (91). But Venia refuses. The quasi-paradoxical combination of Venia's excessive pride with his refusal to slap can be better understood through his comparison with Dostoevsky's underground man.

As we recall, the underground man maintains that he prefers to accept slaps rather than to give them, and his failure as a duelist supports his statement. According to Reyfman, "[the underground man] does not openly discuss an aversion to violence, yet that is what he most probably feels. […] [H]is morbid preoccupation with the idea of the slap and its violent nature anticipates the importance of this issue for Dostoevsky's later characters: Myshkin, Stavrogin,

[137] As the narrator points out, Venia was caught "in the trap of the feeling of superior to people" (92).

and the elder Zosima" (9). Although Petrovich suspects that his brother's arrogance is inseparable from his genius, Venia's verbally provocative behavior, understood as *vyvert* similar to that undertaken by Dostoevsky's characters, reveals its performance-like nature: it is related to Venia's outward image rather than to his inner self. As a clue to understanding Venia's inner nature, Makanin emphasizes his role as a victim, who, unlike his brother, chose not to protect his physical and mental integrity by means of *udar*: "The urgent meeting of doctors immediately labeled him as displaying the kind of aggression and insanity that's treated with a series of injections," but "Venia was not attacking anyone *any longer* by then" (110; emphasis mine); "the intellect of an adult was *forcefully plunged into childhood*" (111).

Explaining Prince Myshkin's refusal to chellenge Gania Ivolgin to a duel in response to a slap, Reyfman points out that "Christian doctrine […] does not value bodily integrity and private space" (216). Seen from the Christian point of view, a slap in the other's face (*litso*), which in Dostoevsky is often synonymous with personality/individuality (*lichnost'*), "is injurious […] to his very humanity. The symbolic gesture directed outward, toward the other, becomes an inward-directed gesture" (231). It is important to note that Venia's only attempt to act in accordance with the principles of the duel agrees with Reyfman's interpretation of the duel in Dostoevsky. In the chapter "*Sluchai na vtorom kurse*,"[138] in response to Venia's provocation, a policeman hits him in the groin. Venia replies by spitting in his face, and as a result the policemen smash Venia's own face. The hidden symbolism of this episode[139] sheds light on Venia's refusal to slap the investigator's face, which otherwise is not quite clear. Indeed, why does not clever Venia hear his brother's solid arguments about *udar* as a means of escape? He learns from his experience that offence (aggression) against someone else's face turns against the offender's own

[138] "A Second Year Incident."
[139] The scene takes place when Venia is being escorted to the investigator.

face, and it is not for psychological reasons (he would not be afraid of being beaten again) but rather for philosophical ones that he does not want to repeat it. Renouncing the *udar* philosophy becomes his "existential choice," a Christian gesture that attempts to break the circle of violence. Reyfman argues that Myshkin can ignore the duel code because of his status as a "sacrificial lamb" and an idiot "in the original sense of the word; *idiotes*, that is a person who is strange, peculiar, an original" (238,237). The same may be said of Venia, even though in the novel's present time he represents an idiot not in the metaphorical but in the literal sense. Yet he embodies the martyr and *iurodivyi* of unofficial culture – a "sign" that "awakens in us this keen ability to sympathize and love; to love, but also not to allow ourselves cripple each other" (100) – a status that he acquired at the expense of the integrity of his mind.

Thus, making their "existential" choices at "the existential crossroad of the artist" (92): aggression akin to that of *sistema* in one case, and self-destructive submissiveness of the Christian martyr in another, the "underground brothers" Petroviches follow the paths of two opposite Dostoevsky characters: Raskolnikov and Prince Myshkin, respectively. Through the juxtaposition of the two brothers, Makanin emphasizes the true underground culture's deeper connection with Christianity, which corresponds with the actual religious orientation of a large part of the Russian underground (see Chapter 5). In the example of Petrovich, Makanin postulates that a break with the Christian ideal signifies a break with the cultural underground and leads one to construct one's personal underground of egocentricity and moral relativism.

Conclusion

In his portrayal of a representative of the Russian unofficial culture, Makanin draws on the Dostoevskian tradition of depicting the underground as a complex phenomenon that brings together philosophy, psychology, and the literary imagination. Referring to primarily negative

connotations of Dostoevsky's underground (moral relativism; aggression out of resentment; the underground as Hell), Makanin constructs the image of a "hero of our time" who embodies the "vices of [his] entire generation in their full development"[140] and looks more like an unrepentant Raskolnikov rather than the underground man. Petrovich develops his quasi-philosophy of *udar* to assert his selfhood in his own underground world where neither religion nor literature serve him as an authority to establish moral values. Only Petrovich's brother – the mentally ill *iurodivyi* Vendikt – inherits the positive potential of Dostoevsky's underground as an indirect reference to the Christian ideal. Venia seems to be the underground man transformed into Prince Myshkin. However, both Makanin's characters illustrate the tragedy of the underground: Venia's non-acceptance of the *udar* philosophy results in his not being able to protect his self against the *sistema*, while Petrovich's *udar*, allowing him to preserve his ego, makes him a criminal and signifies both his non-belonging to the underground as "high (counter)culture" and his spiritual failure.

In developing his underground imagery, Makanin includes a symbolic episode: travelling on the Circle line of the Moscow subway while drunk, Petrovich does not notice the moment when the train is sent into a dead-end tunnel. Similarly, since Makanin dooms his two heroes Petrovich and Venia to wander endlessly in the circles of their personal undergrounds (egocentricity and mental illness, respectively), the novel points out a dead-end in the development of the concept of the underground in Russian literature and culture.

[140]Makanin includes these words from the author's preface to Lermontov's novel *A Hero of Our Time* in the epigraph to his *Andegraund*: "The hero…a portrait, but not of just one person: it's a portrait composed of all the vices of our whole generation in their full development" (5).

Chapter 7

"*Iz kreizovoi blagodati da v* undergraund":[141]

Dostoevsky's Underground and Siberian Punk

> This is a song from under the floorboards,
> This is a song from where the wall is cracked.
> My force of habit, I am an insect;
> I have to confess I'm proud as hell of that fact.
>
> Howard Devoto (post-punk band Magazine), 1980.[142]

In his *Underground, or A Hero of Our Time*, Vladimir Makanin offers an insight into the transformations of Russia's unofficial culture in late Soviet and early post-Soviet time. His narrator distinguishes between two kinds of underground. The first is the "ephemeral" underground which easily transforms into the mainstream if the political situation changes: this underground "belongs to those who suffered from the Communists and now [i.e. in the 1990s – V.I.] want to get their gingerbread cookie and a glass of milk" (Makanin, *Andegraund* 71). The second is the genuine underground, or the "existential underground," which represents Russia's cultural "subconscious" and never "ascends" to "the surface." The status of Russian rock music during and after Perestroika serves as a particularly good example of Makanin hero's argument. While such formerly underground rock bands as *Akvarium*, *Alisa*, or *Kino* acquired official status and took the path of commercial success, there were others who remained underground. Such was the Siberian punk rock movement, and first of all, its leader Egor (Igor') Letov (1964-2008) and his band *Grazhdanskaia oborona* (Civil Defense). Closely associated with the political opposition to the Soviet regime in the 1980s, Siberian punk managed to maintain its rebellious,

[141] "From the bliss of the madhouse to the underground" (E. Letov, *Stikhi* 208). Hereafter, Egor Letov's song lyrics and poetry are quoted from *Stikhi* with page numbers in parentheses, unless indicated otherwise. All translations from Letov are mine.
[142] Magazine, "Song."

genuinely underground appeal after the collapse of the USSR. Far from solved is the problem of what kind of philosophical, psychological, and artistic features the genuine underground possesses that allows it to keep its true (counter)cultural nature? In this chapter, I argue that Egor Letov's artistic personality and his lyrical subject share the characteristics of the "underground consciousness" embodied by Dostoevsky's underground characters, and first and foremost, the main character of *Notes from Underground*, the underground man. I find manifestations of "underground consciousness" in Letov's interviews, articles, and poetry and maintain that Dostoevsky's concept of the underground informs Letov's discourse of protest, which bears primarily existential and metaphysical, rather than political, significance, allowing him to construct the mythological image of the genuine punk rocker throughout the 1980s-90s.

Rock and the Underground in Russia

In the 1970s-80s, music, especially rock-n-roll, represented a significant branch of the Russian artistic underground, in addition to the literary "second culture" discussed in Chapter 5. In fact, it is precisely in the realm of rock music that the foreign term *andegraund*/*andeRgraund* (the Russian spellings of underground) adopted from the Anglo-American discourse on counterculture was especially popular as a self-denomination (Savitskii 32). The conceptualization of rock as an underground movement in the Soviet Union began in the late 1960s, when amateur rock-n-roll musicians started to move from imitating and reproducing songs by famous Western rock bands (the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Deep Purple, etc.) toward "developing their own poetic, which was closer to indigenous traditions of guitar poetry[143] and less overtly mimetic of Western ideas" (Cushman 53). This allowed them to reflect "local concerns in a language which could be understood," and ultimately made the poetical quality of

[143] The term "guitar poetry" was introduced by Gerald Smith to refer to the cultural production of the so-called "bard poets" – Bulat Okudzhava, Vladimir Vysotskii, Aleksandr Galich and others. See Smith, *Songs*.

lyrics "a key aspect of [Russian rock's] identity" (ibid. 52, 104). From that point on, the Soviet authorities treated rock music both as a heavily influential cultural medium and a potentially serious ideological threat, thus subjecting rock-n-roll to strict control and censorship.

While some rock-oriented young bands submitted to the State by accepting the "rules of the game" and acquired the official status of *VIA*[144] (for instance, *Golubye gitary*, *Ariel'*, and *Samotsvety*), others – among them *Akvarium*, *Kapital'nyi remont*, *DK*, *Avtomaticheskie udovletvoriteli* – remained underground: they played at unofficial venues, such as apartments, and recorded their music using non-professional recording equipment, disseminating it through underground networks; often they were persecuted by the authorities.[145] However, during the 1980s, the majority of underground rock bands moved toward legalization by joining state-run (reportedly established by the KGB)[146] organizations such as the Leningrad Rock Club, Moscow Rock Laboratory, Sverdlovsk Rock Club and others of the kind. This allowed rock bands to record and perform their music, as well as get paid for it officially, but only if their texts passed the censorship clearance procedure referred to as *litovka*.

It is therefore in the early to mid-1980s that we find the origins of the distinction between the underground rock that sought its way to the "surface," and the true, uncompromised underground that evaded the temptation of achieving success through partial alliance with the powers that be. As one prominent underground Leningrad rock musician remembers, "I was fighting with the Rock Club, arguing that there is no need for any organizations, especially for rockers. Rock in and of itself emerged as an alternative to the whole Soviet way of life. […]

[144] An abbreviation for *vokal'no-instrumental'nyi ansambl'* ("vocal and instrumental band").
[145] For example, in 1984, the Moscow Department of Culture prohibited playing numerous Western and Soviet rock bands in public places within Moscow city limits.
[146] See, for example, Gostev, et al.

[A]nd right away they start gathering everyone into bunches, making their own organizations, their own parties"[147] (Cushman 28).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the elimination of the boundary between official and unofficial cultures, allowing Russian rock bands to deliver their productions to the masses, uncensored and in accordance with free market economic conditions. This situation jeopardized the (counter)cultural identity of Russian rock and led to attempts to redefine the genuine "undergroundness" that shaped the rock community's discourse on the pages of major rock samizdat periodicals, such as *URLait* and *Kontr Kul't URa*. The compromised nature of the very concept of "rock music" formed the leitmotif of the first issue of *Kontr Kul't URa* (1989-90). For example, it featured an interview with Sergei Letov (Egor Letov's brother), a prominent avant-garde jazz musician who argued that "rock could not endure the test of exiting from the underground, and now it was agonizing and turning into pop-music" ("Sergei" 26). The editorial board's introduction to this issue proclaimed that when "many former 'staunch fighters against the regime' ended up fighting for their own well-being," "the underground that formerly represented an antithesis to the *sovok*, […] transforms into an antithesis to society as a whole," a "universal counterculture" ("Ot redaktsii," *Kontr Kul't URa* 3). At the same time, it became obvious that the main heroes of this "universal underground" were representatives of the Russian punk rock movement that originated in Siberia (in rock samizdat discourse, Siberian punk has also been referred to as "existential punk"): Egor Letov and his band *Grazhdanskaia oborona* (Civil Defense; Omsk), Yanka Diagileva (Novosibirsk), Roman Neumoev and his band *Instruktsiia po vyzhivaniiu* (Guide to Survival; Tyumen) and Nik

[147] In his book about Leningrad/St. Petersburg rock, Thomas Cushman refers to the rock musicians with whom he conducted interviews just by their first names. However, the reader familiar with the Leningrad/Petersburg rock scene easily recognizes in the author of the quoted words the famous underground multi-instrumentalist and sound producer Yuri Morozov (1948-2006).

Rok-n-Roll (Nikolai Kuntsevich; Tyumen). The most influential figure of Siberian punk was Egor Letov who in the early 1980s founded his first band *Posev*. This laid a cornerstone for numerous musical projects that would form on the premises of Letov's home studio "GrOb Records"[148] (*Kommunizm*, *Chërnyi Lukich*, *Kuzia Uo*, *Armiia Vlasova* and others).

Although there exists no scientifically precise definition of punk rock (Gololobov et al.; Henry 7), which reflects the nature of the phenomenon whose most consistent characteristic has been precisely resistance to any formulaic approaches,[149] several previous studies have mentioned that the application of the pre-established notion of punk to the Siberian punk movement is particularly problematic (Gololobov and Steinholt; Kukulin; Steinholt). In this chapter, I use the term Siberian punk in accordance with the established convention and because punk rock was the self-denomination of Egor Letov and his associates. However, as Il'ia Kukulin has pointed out, "they were not punks in the traditional sense: 'Siberian punk' was created by intellectuals, and for them 'punk' […] was a definition of style or a symbolic concept rather than a sign of their belonging to the subculture." In this case, punk in the traditional sense is understood as a subculture of underprivileged youth, which emerged in Great Britain and the USA in the 1970s.[150] It expressed the Western youth's rebellion against capitalist society, which left them with "no future," and manifested itself in all possible forms of anti-aesthetics and anti-

[148]An abbreviation for *Grazhadanskaia oborona*, *GrOb* is at the same time the Russian word for coffin. Since Letov's home studio can be perceived as a spatial center of the Siberian rock underground, its name connects it with the motifs of the underground as the grave discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation.

[149]Egor Letov posits in a 1998 interview that punk is difficult to define, and for him punk is the "breaking of certain rules and canons." In the same interview, he both calls *Grazhdanskaia oborona* the only punk band in Russia and says that he does not identify himself with punk because "if something is real, one cannot discuss it for it doesn't fit any canons. As soon as it starts to fit any frame, […] it becomes dead" ("Interv'iu"). On the one hand, Letov's use of the term "punk" reflects the "loophole" mechanism discussed later in this chapter. On the other hand, it is remarkable that in 2011, the founder of the British punk band Crass Penny Rimbaud expressed the same idea in almost the same words. According to Rimbaud, punk is "a quest for an authentic voice. […] I think, the overview of authenticity is a difficult problem to deal with as well, because by the very nature of authenticity […] [i]t is beyond definition. The moment it is defined then it ceases to be. That has been the case of all great cultural movements. Define them and they are dead" (qtd. in Steinholt 268).

[150] Punk as a subculture in 1970s Britain is thoroughly analyzed by Dick Hebdige.

behavior: ugly and offensive fashion, subversive art, provocative performance (Henry 1-8). An important philosophical idea underlying the punk subculture was its claim to authenticity (Moore). In a more narrow sense, punk refers to punk rock as a musical style of the punk subculture and is characterized by short fast-paced compositions based on simple guitar chords, primitive and abrasive sound, aggressive performance, and critical references to contemporary political and economic issues. The seminal pioneering representatives of punk rock bands were: in the US, The Ramones and The New York Dolls; in the UK, The Sex Pistols and The Clash.

The definition of Siberian punk's musical style as punk rock is also controversial. Ivan Gololobov and Yngvar Steinholt have correctly pointed that,

> Letov's music was not punk in a narrow sense. He negotiated the aesthetics of punk, post-punk, reggae and ska […].The songs combined the melodiousness of guitar poetry and Soviet *estrada* with punk delivery, primal vocal expression, and lyrics in a rich poetic vernacular, littered with swearwords and verbal provocation. […] Punk in its Western guise was not powerful enough to express the desperation of Siberian punk; […] what Western punk gave the Siberian punk wave was not the language itself, but a green light to use all locally available languages without being associated with any of them." (30, 32)

The device of using different languages "without being associated with any of them" finds its theoretic formulation in Bakhtin's theory of "double-voiced discourse:"

> Someone else's words introduced into our own speech inevitably assume a new (our own) interpretation and become subject to our evaluation of them; that is, they become double-voiced. All that can vary is the interrelationship between these two voices. […] [W]ith some of them we completely merge our own voice; […] others, which we take as authoritative, we use to reinforce our own words; still others, finally, we populate with our own aspirations, alien or hostile to them. (*PDP* 195)

The relationships of Egor Letov and other participants of his projects with someone else's discourse are complex and demonstrate multiple varieties, which could be a topic of a separate

research project. For the purposes of this study I distinguish between two of these, considering their principal differences: 1. the sympathetic appropriation of, and references to Dostoevsky's underground discourse and its later receptions by Leonid Andreyev and existentialist philosophers; and 2. the openly or implicitly hostile attitude towards politically, culturally, and aesthetically dominant discourses, such as Soviet and post-Soviet rhetoric and pop culture. Following Bakhtin's trajectory, I focus on two specific manifestations of the hostility towards someone else's discourse that demonstrate punk's affinity for Dostoevsky – the word with a "loophole" (Bakhtin) and absurdist irony.

I will start, however, with a short explanation of the importance of geographical space for the emergence and self-consciousness of Siberian punk.

The Underground and Siberia

It seems to be no coincidence that the "most underground" form of Russian rock emerged in Siberia, a semiotically marked borderland geographical space opposed to both the center (Moscow and Leningrad) and the provinces.[151] In Russian (counter)cultural discourse, Siberia became strongly associated with the "true" underground. A peculiar combination of factors seems to have contributed to this.

On the one hand, the spatial remoteness of Siberia from the political and cultural centers of the country, Moscow and Leningrad, determined the temporal retardation of the region in terms of political liberalization. In Siberia, the authorities maintained a more militant attitude toward unofficial culture than in the center or even in less remote regions, such as the Urals. For example, in Leningrad, Boris Grebenshchikov was expelled from the Komsomol organization

[151]Anne Lounsbery has correctly defined the concept of the provinces in Russian geo-cultural imagination: "by 'the provinces' I mean the nonexotic, nonborderland spaces of European Russia – as both indecipherable (devoid of clear meaning) and fundamentally equivalent to one another". She opposes the provinces to both the center (the capitals) and "non- and semi-Russian borderlands like Siberia, Ukraine, and the Caucasus" (215).

and fired from his job after an extravagant performance by his band *Akvarium* at a rock festival in Tbilisi in 1980. At the same time, in Omsk in 1985-86 (already under Gorbachev), Egor Letov and his bandmate Konstantin Riabinov suffered from much more severe prosecution just for recording their music at home. Thus, Letov was forcibly confined to a mental hospital and treated with strong neuroleptics, while Riabinov was forced to serve in the army even though his health condition did not satisfy the recruitment standards. As Sergei Letov points out, "[i]n Siberia, Perestroika commenced much later than here [in Moscow], and the tsars remained in power there for a long time" ("Sergei" 28). Accordingly, the attitude of the authorities generated a more direct and aggressive response from unofficial musicians.

On the other hand, the "undergroundness" of Siberia was informed by its historically being the space of migration and exile, in many cases coercive, although in some voluntary. As such, Siberia had accumulated a diverse population of nonconformists (from the Decembrists in the nineteenth century to political dissidents in the twentieth century) who were forced to leave the center but maintained multiple dialogical connections with it. Moreover, in the context of Russia's expansion in the East, Siberia held the connotations of progress and future endeavors (S. Frank, "Russkaia i evropeiskaia topografiia" 168-69). All together, this endowed Siberia with a special semiotic status, which opposed the region to both the official center and the periphery and demonstrated the potential of an alternative center. In particular, in 1957 this led to the construction of Akademgorodok ("Academic City") – a neighborhood of the city of Novosibirsk, intended to host numerous scientific institutions. As Paul Josephson points out,

> In Akademgorodok a kind of glasnost, or openness, reigned that presaged that which developed under Gorbachev decades later. The roots of this openness were the city's geographical and psychological distance from Moscow and the culture of informal

> exchange of ideas explicitly intended by Akademgorodok's founders to foster the creative impulse among researchers. (xiv)

Emphasizing Akademgorodok's semiotic role as "center," Josephson compares it with St. Petersburg, the first planned city in Russia, whose construction coincided with "the founding of the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences in that city in 1725" (xiii-xiv).

In the 1960s, many scholars came to Akademgorodok "in order to be far from the Soviet capital" and found "a level of intellectual freedom that was unthinkable in any other corner of the country during this period" (Moskalenko). In a sense, Akademgorodok represented the "underground" of the Russian scholarly community. Sergei Letov, who played an important role in the intellectual and musical education of his younger brother, went to an elite high-school for physics and mathematics (known nowadays under the abbreviation "*SUNTS NGU*") established as a branch of Novosibirsk State University in Akademgorodok. According to Egor Letov's widow Natalia Chumakova, the atmosphere in this high school "was quite dissident," and samizdat publications and prohibited musical records freely circulated among students. Sergei shared the (counter)cultural and intellectual experience that he gained in Akademgorodok with his brother. It is first and foremost through his older brother that Egor discovered and developed a taste for rock-n-roll, progressive and psychedelic rock of the 1960-70s (Love, Shocking Blue, Velvet Underground, Genesis, Syd Barrett, and so on) which, of all Western music, had had the most influence on him. This Siberian intellectual background led to Sergei's moving to Moscow in the 1970s to continue his education at universities there; Egor joined him there a few years later. Sergei introduced Egor to the rock community of Moscow and Leningrad, helped him buy his first guitar and start to play rock. However, Egor left Moscow and came back to Omsk because he "apparently decided to play an absolutely different kind of music" (S. Letov, "Deviat' dnei") and thus wanted to free himself from his older brother's influence. Thus, Siberia enabled

Egor Letov to be in close dialogical (in the Bakhtinian sense) contact with the capitals and their progressive trends, and yet, as a place with which he apparently identified himself, it helped the musician develop a distinct artistic personality and language, one that from 1984 onwards would define the Siberian underground musical scene. In Letov's life, this geographical pattern – the alternation of centripetal and centrifugal forces – repeated through the 1980s (Egor would often come back to Moscow as a hitch-hiker and, later, to perform with *Grazhdanskaia oborona*) and epitomized in 1989 when *Grazhdanskaia oborona* joined the Leningrad Rock Club while its members continued to live in Siberia. Letov lived and recorded his music in Omsk until his untimely death in 2008. In the end, Siberia became for him (and probably for other Siberian rockers from Letov's circle) a retreat that was associated with remaining underground in geographical terms.

The imaginative potential of Siberia also played a significant role for the distinction of Siberian rock as the "genuine underground" from the rock-n-roll tradition that formed in Leningrad and Moscow. As a region infamous for its forced settlements, prisons and labor camps, Siberia represents a distinct chronotope in Russian dissident discourse, and specifically in its anti-totalitarian texts, from *The Life of Protopope Avvakum* (17th century) to the gulag writings of Varlam Shalamov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Russian punk, which from the beginning made anti-totalitarianism one of its main topics, appears as an organic part of this tradition,[152] and its geography made punk literally and literary terms closer to the setting of seminal anti-totalitarian texts. Thus, for example, in his song[153] "*Solzhenitsyn pisal o sovsem*

[152] Remarkable in this respect is the fact that Egor Letov's first band was called *Posev*, named so after the famous émigré journal that published dissidents' writings.

[153] Most of Letov's poetic texts represent the lyrics for the songs that he performed with *Grazhdanskaia oborona*, solo, or in the context of his other projects. However, these texts are referred to as *stikhi* (poems) in the volumes under the same titles published in 2003 and 2011, by which Letov emphasized their independent literary value. Hereafter, by song I will refer to Letov's song lyrics, distinguishing them from poetry that was never sung, which I call poems. Some of the poems were recited by the author on his musical albums.

drugom" ("Solzhenitsyn wrote on a totally different matter," 1987),[154] Letov alludes to Solzhenitsyn's short story "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" (1969), one of the first realistic accounts of everyday life in a gulag labor camp.[155] The role of Siberia-related motifs in the imagery of Egor Letov will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Letov's Underground Discourse: Politics, Loopholes, and Tracks in the Snow

In the 1980s-90s, Egor Letov was associated not just with the aesthetic underground but with political protest as well. Like a canonical dissident, he went through different circles of the Soviet repressive hell: he was persecuted by the KGB, fired from his job (for a few months he worked as a graphic designer at a factory, making communist propaganda posters), was sent to a mental hospital, had to flee from his hometown of Omsk and spent some time wandering from one city to another. His songs were considered anti-Soviet and disseminated in the form of *magnitizdat*, i.e. musical albums that he recorded at his home. The lyrics he wrote in the 1980s, indeed often included subversive and ironical references to communist ideology and Soviet concepts and symbols – "communist nonsense," to quote him. This is exemplified by arguably his best-known song, "*Vsë idët po planu*" ("Everything Is Going According to Plan," 1988):

А при коммунизме всё будет заебись
Он наступит скоро – надо только подождать
Там всё будет бесплатно – там всё будет в кайф
Там наверное вощще не надо будет умирать.
When communism comes, everything will be fucking great.

[154]The song under this title which concludes with a similar line is found on *Grazhdanskaia oborona*'s album *Toshnota* (*Nausea*, 1989). In *Stikhi*, this text is entitled "*V kladbishchenskoi kontore vypekali grob…*" ("A coffin was being baked at the cemetery office") and makes no mention of Solzhenitsyn. The problem of differences between Letov's published texts and those performed as songs live and on his albums is addressed by Anatalolii Korchinskii who argues that "different versions of a song as a synthetic text [i.e. a text whose message relies on extra-verbal components such as music, gesture, venue, occasion, etc.] actualize in the contexts of different media without becoming autonomous works" (178).

[155] Mark Yoffe finds numerous similarities between the artistic personalities of Letov and Solzhenitsyn (*Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn*). However, he does not mention Letov's song directly referring to Solzhenitsyn.

It will come soon – we just have to wait.
There everything will be free, everything will be fun,
And, perhaps, there, one will not even have to die. (197)

In another 1980s song, Letov proclaimed "*Ia vsegda budu protiv*" ("I will always be against"; "Protiv"). He kept his word when, soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he changed his ideological stance from anti-communist to pro-communist, leaving many of his fans perplexed and disappointed. In 1993, Letov formed the "National Communist Rock Movement 'Russian Breakthrough'" ("*Russkii proryv*"), and in 1994, he joined the National Bolshevist Party led by Edward Limonov that represented a radical opposition to Boris Yeltsin's government. In the 1980s Letov argued against the political interpretation of his texts, saying that the political language in them refers not to politics but to "certain attitudes towards the whole of creation" ("Kontsert"). However, in a 1994 interview he insisted that "originally, the purest creativity is political" (Bondarenko et al.), and a song can only be called art if it is political. In an anthem-like song "*Rodina*" ("Motherland," 1993), Letov symptomatically used elevated patriotic phraseology devoid of any irony. The song concluded with the line: "I can hear my Soviet Motherland sing" (351). "My motherland is not just Russia," he argued in another interview, "[m]y motherland is the USSR!" "In 1917 our country took the first step on the road to the truth – may it not be the last one!" ("Oni ne proidut!"). The set list of Letov's 1994 concert included the Soviet hit "*I vnov' prodolzhaetsia boi"* ("And the battle goes on again") by Aleksandra Pakhmutova and Nikolai Dobronravov, which features the line: "*I Lenin – takoi molodoi! I iunyi Oktiabr' vperedi*" ("And Lenin is so young! And youthful October is yet to come").

Reinterpreting or, rather, correcting the audience's former perception of his political attitude, Letov defined himself and his band as "genuine Russian Communists" who were "against the false embodiment of Communism during the last years of Brezhnev's rule"

(Bondarenko et al.). These statements clearly contradict the content of his 1980s songs, such as "*Kharakiri*" ("Harakiri," 1987) in which he presents the Bolshevik "October" Revolution as a disaster comparable to the Golden Horde invasion of Rus' in the Middle Ages: "*Vsë to, chto ne dodelal Mamai / Oktiabr' dodelal, dovël do kontsa*" ("What Mamai[156] didn't accomplish, October did"; "Kharakiri").

Letov's ideological turn seems unpredictable and counterintuitive. Undoubtedly, he was part of the oppositional force that contributed to the fall of the Soviet system; in this context his direct glorification of the system sounds almost absurd. However, when seen from the point of view of Dostoevsky's notion of the underground, Letov is consistent in following his philosophy of art. Like the message of Dostoevsky's underground man in Bakhtin's reading, Letov's message, beyond all his actions and words, remains unchanged: "man is free, and can therefore violate any regulating norms which might be thrust upon him" (*PDP* 59).

One easily recognizes Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* as a proto-text of the song by the prominent British punk musician Howard Devoto "A Song from Under the Floorboards" appearing on his band Magazine's album *The Correct Use of Soap* (1980). The song starts with the line that almost precisely imitates the beginning of *Notes* ("I am angry, I am ill…") and then goes on to reiterate the main points of Dostoevsky's hero confession. It is most likely that Letov, a devoted collector of rock music records, was familiar with this punk appropriation of Dostoevsky.[157] In addition, just as for many representatives of the Russian artistic underground, existentialism was an important component of Letov's philosophical and literary self-

[156] Mamai was a military and political leader of the Golden Horde famously defeated by Prince Dmitrii Donskoi at the Battle of Kulikovo (1380). Mamai's name lives on in the popular Russian idiom *kak Mamai proshël* ("As if Mamai has gone through") used to describe mess and devastation.

[157] A track of Devoto's first band Buzzcocks was used by Letov in the context of his project *Kommunizm*'s album *Rodina slyshit* (*The Motherland Can Hear*, 1989).

education.[158] The writings of the existentialists Sartre and Camus, rich with references to Dostoevsky, quite likely brought to his attention the rebellious philosophy of Dostoevsky's underground characters. However, one should not overlook Dostoevsky as a direct influence because Letov referred to Dostoevsky as his favorite writer.

Letov's texts not only include multiple references to Dostoevsky but, in some respect, he models his discourse in general on that of Dostoevsky's underground heroes. Regarding Letov's 1990s texts critic Aleksei Fomin writes: "Letov plays a really dirty trick on those who are for and on those who are against […]. He publishes several materials and interviews, […] every moment contradicting himself and yet each time staying extremely honest" (32). This description points out the similarity between Letov's discourse and that of Dostoevsky's underground man as analyzed by Bakhtin, who uses the concept of the loophole (*lazeika*) to define it. According to Bakhtin, "[a] loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words […] The loophole makes all the heroes' self-definitions unstable, the word in them has no hard and fast meaning, and at any moment, like a chameleon, it is ready to change its tone and its ultimate meaning" (*PDP* 233). Indeed, a Bakhtinian reading of Letov's texts in the 1990s shows that for him, Communism and the Soviet system apparently become "words with a loophole." Formerly referring to authoritative discourse, these same words now stand for the opposite, even for the National Bolsheviks, a form of a political (counter)culture. In some respect, Communism for Letov in the 90s was synonymous with the underground, just as punk rock itself was in the 80s and 90s.

One of the most remarkable examples of Letov's "loophole" discourse is found in his "*Kharakiri*," where Letov imagines a building, which appears to be a close "relative" of

[158] Letov acknowledged the great influence of existentialism: "Camus and Sartre influenced me a lot when I was younger. […] As did existentialism in general, both as a philosophy and a life attitude" ("Otvety").

Dostoevsky's underground man's crystal palace, as well as of Ivan Karamazov's "edifice" of future harmony. While the original 1987 version ironically "encourages" listeners to "kill, rape, slander and betray for the sake of the bright edifice of the *Juche* ideas [*radi svetlogo zdaniia idei Chuchkhe*]," in the 1990s Letov changes this line so that the building turns into "*svetlyi khram demokratii*" ("the bright temple of democracy").[159] Moreover, the original line mentioning October as a metonymy of the Revolution of 1917 is transformed into a perfect "word with a loophole": in the 1990s it could also be interpreted as a reference to the constitutional crisis of 1993 and its peak events – the October storming of the rebellious Russian White House by troops supporting Yeltsin.

For Dostoevsky's underground man, the "loophole" serves as a discursive mechanism that allows him to be constantly at odds with someone else's consciousness. The existential goal of such polemics is to avoid the possibility of being "finalized," that is, in Bakhtin's terms, to be defined, explained and appropriated by the "mighty Other." This is the only way for Dostoevsky's underground hero to preserve the elusive freedom of his personality. As Bakhtin points out, "Dostoevsky's [underground] hero always seeks to destroy that framework *of other people's* words about him that might finalize and deaden him" (*PDP* 59). Similarly, in the construction of his punk mythology, Letov prioritized the threat of being "finalized." In particular, Letov postulates the elusive and indefinable nature of his lyrical subject through the motif of tracks in the snow. He declares in one song:

> Свои подумали, что я – чужой
> Чужие заподозрили, что я ебанулся
> И все они решили, что я опасен
> Ведь я не оставляю следов на свежем снегу.
> My own guys think I'm an outsider;

[159] See grob-hroniki.org/texts/go/t_el_h/harakiri.html.

Outsiders suspect that I'm fucked up.
And all of them have decided I'm dangerous.
Hey, I don't leave tracks in the fresh snow. (179)

Interestingly enough, the motif of the absence of tracks in the fresh snow not only illustrates the "loophole" philosophy but also brings out the typical elements of Siberian imaginative topography, described by Susanne Frank as the indefinable, elusive nature of Siberia [*neopredelënnost'*], and the related motif of white color associated with both snow and boundless space. On the level of spatial and weather imagery, the motif of fresh white snow in Letov's texts reveals his specific Siberian "undergroundness," which stands in stark opposition to the Petersburg connotations of Dostoevsky's underground. While snow also plays an important role in *Notes from Underground* (the novella's second part is even written "apropos the wet snow" as its title indicates), the snow in Dostoevsky is yellow and muddy (*mutnyi*); together with fog, rain, and swampy ground it represents the existential landscape of the Petersburg underground. It is not often that one gets to see fresh white snow in Petersburg, which therefore serves as a marker of another, in some respects more Russian, landscape.

Yet in Dostoevsky's life and his writings, Siberia is also related to the underground. Susanne Frank has pointed out that Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead* contains a criticism of utopia, which reveals itself through the parallels between the Siberian prison (*ostrog*) and the beautiful palace encircled by the fence ("Dostoevskij" 39). Thus, here Dostoevsky anticipates the soon-to be-written *Notes from Underground* with its anti-utopian message. In turn, the underground man's anti-utopian conception of the crystal palace influenced "[s]ubsequent literary representations of totalitarianism" (Young 184). Accordingly, both Siberian topography and Dostoevskian underground discourse affect Letov's anti-totalitarian rhetoric. The above-quoted song concludes with the line: "*Menia davno by uzh nashli po sledu /*

No ia ne ostavliaiu sledov na svezhem snegu" ("They would have tracked me down long ago, / but I don't leave tracks in the fresh snow"; 179). On the one hand, this line evokes an association with a Siberian prison from which one cannot escape since it is surrounded by boundless empty space covered with snow. On the other hand, due to his unique underground qualities Letov's hero represents an exception, someone who escapes, who finds a "loophole" and "leaves the zoo," to quote his other song.[160]

For Letov the artist to be "finalized" by the mainstream culture in the 1990s means to make use of his reputation as a rock legend and, like many of his fellow artists, to merge with pop culture, losing his underground status. And this is what he passionately defies. In a 1990 "interview" (in fact, a manifesto-like dialogue with himself entitled "*Priiatnogo appetita!*" ["Bon appétit!"]) Letov says: "The Master is cunning. […] If he can't […] destroy you right away, he tries to eat you up, to make you part of him, just to pervert you – through pop culture [*pops*] and full recognition. Therefore, each time you must invent a new audacity" (69). Letov's supporting of Communist and National-Bolshevist ideology was precisely such a "new audacity," one that eventually lost its relevance. By the early 2000s Letov broke with Limonov, renounced his former political views and became essentially apolitical. The texts he wrote in the 2000s had almost no political allusions and appeared to be primarily existentialist, surrealistic, and psychedelic in their philosophical content and poetics.

Against "the World Infected by Logic": Letov's Underground Philosophy

Besides the organization of his discourse in accordance with the "loophole" principle that resists "finalization" by the other's consciousness, Letov's texts reveal deeper connections between his artistic philosophy and poetics with Dostoevsky's concept of the underground. In a

[160]Susanne Frank makes similar observations in the Austrian playwright Feliks Mitterer's play *Siberia* (1989). See S. Frank, "Russkaia i evropeiskaia topografiia" 172-73.

1988 interview Letov gives his definition of rock (counter)culture with a reference to Dostoevsky. He mentions Herman Hesse's article "The Brothers Karamazov, or The Downfall of Europe" (1919). In Letov's account, Hesse argues that "Dostoevsky is a new prophet of the movement, […] according to which mankind is divided into two types – potential suicides (men whose self-will comes first and foremost in their lives and who are not afraid of death – 'nonhumans') and everyone else" ("Egor" 4). Interestingly enough, one does not find in Hesse's article anything even approximately resembling Letov's summary. It is difficult to say whether Letov purposely mystified his interviewer or just confused Hesse's conclusions with someone else's or even with his own. More important though, is the fact that Letov, apparently, refers to two major Dostoevskian heroes, the ideologues who share traits of "underground consciousness": Kirilov and Raskolnikov. It is Kirilov, the prophet of the man-god who kills himself in order to "manifest self-will [*zaiavit' svoevolie*]" and "to prove […] a new terrible freedom" (*PSS* 10: 470, 472).[161] And it is Raskolnikov who invents the theory of two kinds of people: those who are "trembling creatures" in his own words, and those, like himself who "have the right" to go beyond law. The genealogy of both Raskolnikov and Kirilov can be traced back to the underground man. The grandiose self-will of Kirilov grew out of the underground man's praise of man's "volition" and "caprice"; in fact, the underground man uses the same word *svoevolie* (self-will). By bringing chaos to life, these two qualities undermine all rationalist conceptions of building a just and harmonious world. The hero of *Notes from Underground* as an "acutely conscious man" opposes himself to the "normal man," who unconditionally accepts "the laws of nature" and the equation that "twice two makes four." Consequently, the underground

[161] In the "*Priiatnogo appetita!*" interview, Letov says that the punk rocker "allows himself the impudence of being as good as Kirilov" (70).

man speaks of his nonhuman-like qualities, from which there is but one step to Raskolnikov's superman ambitions.

In his definition of the rock underground, Letov elaborates on a similar idea. He says that "the human being is vested with a logical consciousness," but punk rock is a form of "divesting oneself of" human traits (Gur'ev 4). Just like mathematics for the underground man, everyday rationalist logic is a major enemy for Letov's hero. He exists "beyond the frame of human conceptions" ("*za ramkoi liudskikh predstavlenii*"; 265) surrounded by a "world infected by logic" ("*sredi zarazhënnogo logikoi mira*"; 194). A counter-logical principle defines the poetics of Letov's lyrics on different levels, from ideas to grammar. He uses oxymoronic images: "*Leto proshlo – nakonets-to rastaial sneg*" ("Summer has gone – the snow has finally melted"; 219); makes paradoxical statements: "*Kogda ia umer / Ne bylo nikogo / Kto by eto oproverg*" ("When I died, there was no one around me who would disprove it"; 239); often he uses unusual grammar: "*A ryzhuiu koshku* ***smotrelo*** *v podval*" ("A marmalade cat was seen to look into the cellar"; 113; emphasis mine).

Both the underground man's and the punk rocker's rage at the "normal man" is not misanthropy *per se* but a reaction to the "normal man"'s acceptance and maintenance of the unjust world around himself, the world whose order is based on totalitarianism, both in human relations and in nature itself. Both Dostoevsky's underground man and the rock hero in Letov's conception acknowledge the pointlessness of their revolt against the condition of human existence. Yet they both postulate the highest existential value of this revolt because it is counter-logical. Both use the metaphor of beating one's head against a stone wall.[162] "Of course I cannot break through the wall with my head," the underground man famously exclaims, "but I am not going to submit to it simply because it is a stone wall and I don't have the strength" (*PSS* 5: 105-

[162] For example, in Letov's song "*V stenu golovoi*" ("Against a wall with your head"; 1987).

06). Compare with Letov's statement: "I, of course, haven't changed anything in this world but instead I made […] a good mess that can be seen […] as a precedent of revolt and freedom triumphing over the steadfast laws […] of totalitarian existence. In this sense, I acted as a soldier of the crazed and audacious front of the offended, the down-and-outers, and the freaks" ("Priiatnogo" 65).

"*Vsego dva vykhoda dlia chestnykh rebiat*"[163]: *Ressentiment*, *Vyverts,* and *Nadryvs* in the Discourse and Poetics of Siberian Punk

Letov's speaking for the "offended, down-and-outers, and freaks" reveals the punk rocker's psychological affinities to Dostoevsky's underground hero. Endowing the insulted and humiliated with moral superiority over everyone else, Letov's statement implies the mechanism of *ressentiment* essential for manifestations of underground psychology both in Dostoevsky and in subsequent literary constructions of the underground that I explored above (Leonid Andreyev, Viktor Krivulin and Leningrad unofficial poets, and Makanin's hero). In both Dostoevsky and Letov, the confrontation of the underground hero and the authoritarian laws of the universe predetermine the hero's failure. Letov's lyrical subject is "doomed to complete failure" ("*zaranee obrechënnyi na polneishii proval*"; 215), to quote his song "*Gosudarstvo*" ("The State"; 1987). The motif of defeat accompanies the lyrical subject of Letov's songs and his poetry: "*Plastmassovyi mir pobedil / Likuet kartonnyi nabat*" ("The plastic world overcame us; the cardboard tocsin gloats";[164] 241); "*Nas razrezhut na chasti – i namazhut na khleb*" ("They will cut us into pieces and spread us on a piece of bread";[165] 204); "*My budem umirat', a vy – nabliudat'*" ("We will be dying but you will watch"[166]). However, in both Dostoevsky and

[163] "There are just two options left for honest guys" ("Kharakiri").
[164] From the 1988 song "*Moia oborona*" ("My Defense").
[165] From the 1987 song "*Priiatnogo appetita!*" ("Bon Appétit!").
[166] From the 1990 song of the same title.

Letov, *ressentiment* only enhances the hero's righteousness in his own eyes. Thus, in the article "*Kontseptualiz'm vnutri*" ("Conceptualism Is Inside," 1989), Letov and his bandmate Konstantin "Kuzia Uo" Riabinov compare the "honest man" (a synonym of the genuine underground rocker) with Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin. The authors argue that the honest man, "like Dostoevsky's Idiot," has two alternatives of how to react to the unjust world around him: either physical death "from shame and sorrow" or "internal death" that compels him to fight for his "nonexistent" values and "never existing" justice (33). Reading Myshkin, commonly understood as Dostoevsky's ideal hero, as an example of underground *ressentiment*, was advanced by René Girard: "The entire spiritual life of Myshkin, which is tied to epilepsy and his passion for humility, may be only the supreme form of that voluptuousness which makes the inhabitants of the underground relish humiliation" (83). Girard's observations help us understand the deeper psychological reasons for Riabinov's and Letov's choice of Myshkin as a figure akin to the punk rocker.

Mentioning Myshkin in this context is even more remarkable if we take into the account the similarities between the "Christ-like Prince" and the holy fool (*iurodivyi*)[167] whose behavioral patterns are also found in Dostoevsky's underground characters and their descendants in the twentieth century. Scholars have discussed the genealogical kinship between the cultural tradition of holy foolishness and rock culture in Russia.[168] As mentioned earlier, the main behavioral patterns of Dostoevsky's underground characters were conceptualized by Innokentii Annenskii as *vyvert* (eccentricity, twist) and *nadryv* (anguish), and they fall under the umbrella

[167] See Murav 88-98.

[168] Il'ia Kukulin points out that "[o]ne of the main ideas of 'Siberian punk' […] is the continuation of the aesthetics of post-pagan clowning [*skomoroshestvo*] and Christian holy foolishness [*iurodstvo*] in new social and cultural coordinates but […] with similar passion for reproaching of the sinful world." Mark Yoffe analyzes Russian rock's kinship with holy foolishness in the context of a specific discursive practice referred to in Russian as *stiob* (a mixture of mockery, buffoonery, and camp). See Yoffe, *Stiob*.

of psychological *iurodstvo* (holy foolishness). In Chapter 2, I established that *nadryv* refers to one's sincere reaction to the world's flaws, which causes his or her psychological breakdown in one form or another; as such, *nadryv* represents an inward, self-destructive impulse. Conversely, *vyvert* directs one's dissatisfaction with the world outwards and manifests itself as provocation and aggression. The two alternatives formulated by Letov and Riabinov perfectly correspond with this model of underground psychology. This becomes even more obvious in Letov's song "*Kharakiri*," which connects with "*Kontseptualiz'm vnutri*" through the motif of the "honest person." Here, Letov defines the two alternatives in an even more radical and direct way:

> Всего два выхода для честных ребят
> Схватить автомат и убивать всех подряд
> Или покончить с собой […]
> Если всерьёз воспринимать этот мир...
> There are just two options left for honest guys –
> To take a machine-gun and kill everyone,
> Or to kill oneself […]
> If we are to take this world seriously.

"Metaphysical rebellion" against an unjust world that leads to such extreme variations of *nadryv* and *vyvert* is essentially a Dostoevskian theme. Suicide or homicide – this is exactly how Dostoevsky defines the existential alternative left for someone alienated from God and the universe and facing the world's absurdity; the most paradigmatic examples are the doubles Svidrigailov and Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*.

Death and suicide play an extremely significant role in rock mythology, functioning as a marker of one's true belonging to the rock underground.[169] Letov repeatedly defines rock as a

[169] See also Grigorii, "Smert'"; Grogorii, "Kak platil". In Russian cultural mythology of rock, rock musicians who died before their time, and especially those who committed suicide are endowed with the mythological aura of possessing higher knowledge and thus serve as exemplary representatives of rock (counter)culture. Such are Aleksandr Bashlachëv, Yanka Diagileva, Dmitrii Sellivanov, and Viktor Tsoi, to name a few.

"religion of self-destruction" ("Kontsert"). Suicide as a means of overcoming the world's absurdity constitutes an important theme in Letov's writings. He alignes this theme with Dostoevsky's underground characters, specifically, Kirilov and Svidrigailov,[170] as well as with the "suicide driven by boredom" (or the "logical suicide"), a character described in Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary*, whose meditations on the key motifs of the underground man's philosophy (non-acceptance of the laws of nature, consciousness as a cause of suffering, and so on) are easily recognizable to the informed reader. A reference to the main postulate of this character is found in Letov's "*Russkoe pole eksperimentov*" ("Russian Field of Experiments," 1988): "POKONCHIT' S SOBOIU – UNICHTOZHIT' VES' MIR!!" ("To commit suicide is to destroy the whole world"; 248, all caps in the original). In Dostoevsky, the "suicide" proclaims: "Whereas […] I […] find this comedy utterly absurd on Nature's part and even humiliating on my part; […] I condemn this Nature, which has so brazenly and unceremoniously inflicted this suffering, to annihilation along with me" (655-56). Camus has pointed out that the ruminations of the "logical suicide" are based on *ressentiment*: "This suicide kills himself because, on the metaphysical plane, he is *vexed.* In a certain sense he is taking his revenge" (*Myth* 105). This makes it even more apparent that basic categories of the underground rocker's self-dramatization are similar to those of the "underground consciousness" in Dostoevsky.

It is important to note that Letov might have perceived the patterns of *vyvert* and *nadryv* not just directly from Dostoevsky, but also indirectly from Leonid Andreyev, another favorite writer of his. The character of Judas occupies an important place in Letov's artistic mythology, as exemplified by the songs "*Iuda budet v raiu*" ("Judas Will Go to Paradise," 1987) and

[170]Letov's poem "*Sto let odinochestva*" ("One Hundred Years of Solitude," 1990) includes the line "*Razvesëlyi anekdotets pro to kak Svidrigailov / sobiralsia v Ameriku*" ("A funny joke about how Svidrigailov / was planning to go on a trip to America"; 295). It paraphrases Svidrigailov's suicide in the way it was defined by Svidrigailov himself ("a trip to America"), focusing on Svidrigailov's absurdist irony in his treatment of such existential matters as life and death.

"*Evangelie*" ("Gospel," 1990). According to Letov, the song "*Iuda budet v raiu*" was influenced by Andreyev's "Judas Iscariot." In Innokentii Annenskii's reading, Judas in Andreyev's story is designed as alternation of *vyverts* and *nadryvs*. In Chapter 4, I showed several ways in which Andreyev's Judas inherits the philosophy and psychology of Dostoevsky characters. Accordingly, like Dostoevsky's underground heroes, Judas embodies for Letov what he considers to be the essential characteristics of the underground rocker: the existential "borderline" condition that allows him to gain some higher knowledge, both the desire and the inability to convey this knowledge to common people, and the readiness to kill himself because of this contradiction. In Judas Letov most of all values his ultimate *nadryv*, i.e. his courage to commit suicide, for which, according to Letov, Judas deserves heaven: "It's really difficult to commit suicide […]. One needs to have done lots of work, truly spiritual work. […] This means that this person should go to paradise" ("Kontsert"). Letov finds that Judas's revelations as they were depicted in Andreyev reaffirm the existential meaning of his own "borderline" experience. He argues that when Christ died, Judas understood a universal truth, which proved to him that the world around him "is not worth a damn," as did Letov himself during his "imprisonment" at the mental hospital (ibid.).

Thus, in Letov's conception, the *nadryv* that leads to suicide represents the most natural outcome for the true rocker. But as long as the rocker is not ready to take his own life, he is destined to pursue the second path, the path of *vyvert*: "dying inside, [the honest man] is forced to perform […] various '*fu-fu*,' '*gyr-gyr*,' and '*sa-sa-sa*'" (Uo and Letov 33). In this phrase, the senseless sounds as the object of the verb "perform" (*prodelyvat'*) suggest that the second option implies deviation from the norm both in discourse and behavior, a meaning contained in the inner form of the word *vyvert* (from the verb *vyvorachivat'* – to turn inside out). In essence,

vyvert here becomes synonymous with true underground rock as activity: "It seems that this is what the genuine rock of the cheerful future epoch looks like" (ibid.).

As we have already seen, this path is associated in Letov with fighting and thus presents the image of the rocker as a soldier: "An abstract, lost war on the invisible, hidden battlefront" (ibid.). Yet, even though Letov includes the aforementioned statement about killing others in his song "*Kharakiri*," in his interviews and songs he almost never relates punk rock to direct physical aggression. Instead, we are inclined to think that Letov understands fighting primarily as a metaphor of the provocative, subversive rock aesthetic. Like the underground man, he practices *vyvert* mostly as provocation, buffoonery, and self-dramatization, not so much in his actions as in his discourse behavior and poetics.[171] In this sense, Letov's use of obscene vocabulary (*mat*) and the use of the deliberately "dirty" sound in the 1980s were *vyverts*, as were the changes in his political views in the 1990s (intended to provoke those who associated him with anti-Soviet activity) as well as the heartfelt performance of Soviet popular songs in the 2000s: thus he provoked those who simplistically perceived him just in the frame of punk rock aesthetics.

As I demonstrated earlier, Dostoevsky's characters exhibit *vyvert* in their underground behavior and discourse as a reaction to the absurdity they feel in the world. In particular, they declare the absence or loss of meaning of fundamental concepts that human beings invent to orient themselves in the universe (eternity, justice, God). Accordingly, Conceptualism and *sotsart* as stylistic trends that point to the void nature of socialist ideological constructs[172]

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[171] A vivid example of Letov's provocative discourse behavior – his "preface" to his performance at a concert commemorating Bashlachëv – is analyzed by Korchinskii.

[172] In Russian literature and visual and performing arts, these stylistic trends have been developed by representatives of the school of Moscow Conceptualism: Dmitrii Prigov, Il'ia Kabakov, Vladimir Sorokin, and the art group "*Mukhomory*." These trends are also found in the poetics of the early writings by Viktor Pelevin. For a detailed analysis of the kinship between Siberian punk and Moscow Conceptualism see Zhogov.

(*kommunizm* [communism], *partiia* [the party], *and sovetskii chelovek* [the Soviet man]) may also be defined as *vyvert*: a perversion of these constructs, a profanation of the sacred. These stylistic trends play a major role in Siberian punk poetics. In fact, Riabinov's and Letov's article "*Kontseptualiz'm vnutri*" serves as a manifesto of their conceptualist musical project "*Kommunizm*" ("Communism"): "No artist (not even someone like Dostoevsky) can express the absurdity, dreadfulness, and playfulness (which necessarily accompanies the first two components) of the reality around us more adequately […] than reality ITSELF, its objects and manifestations. The band *Kommunizm* emerges on these premises." (33). Consequently, Riabinov and Letov perceive the quasi-realism of Soviet texts as the most avant-garde form of absurdist art, a rich source of material. The *Kommunizm* albums include Letov, Riabinov, and Oleg "Manager" Sudakov performing the classics of Soviet socialist realism – poetry and songs – accompanied by surrealist sounds and noise, alongside purely avant-garde compositions of their own creation. Such a combination gave birth to the absurdist irony defined in Chapter 1 as the use of sacral concepts in a discourse that reveal their absurdity. It is no coincidence that in the *Kommunizm* album *Chudo-muzyka* (*Wonderful Music*, 1989), Letov quotes Svidrigailov's contemplations on the topic of eternity accompanied by indecent sounds of a visit to the toilet in the background. Paradoxically, eternity was a fundamental concept in the Soviet materialist utopian discourse.[173] This corresponds to the underground man's vision of the "crystal building that can never be destroyed [*khrustal'noe zdanie, naveki nerushimoie*]" (*PSS* 5:120). In his

[173]Aexei Yurchak begins his study of late Socialist culture with a reference to the famous Russian rock musician Andrei Makarevich's memoirs, where he states that before Perestroika "he had always felt that he lived in an eternal state (*vechnoie gosudarstvo*)" (1). Similarly, the main protagonist of Viktor Pelevin's novel *Generation П* (1999) Vavilen Tatarsky notices that eternity disappears with the collapse of the USSR: "he realized [that…] the eternity he used to believe in could only exist on state subsidies, or else – which is just the same thing – as something forbidden by the state. Worse even than that, it could only exist in the form of the semi-conscious reminiscences of some girl called Maggie from the shoe shop" (*Homo Zapiens* 5). Remarkable also is the fact that Pelevin's hero composes a poem which is based on the lyrics of the Russian rock band DDT's hit "*Osen*'" ("Autumn"). Vavilen modifies the song, partly replacing its original lines with Svidrigailov's thoughts on eternity. (Curiously, this paragraph is absent in the English translation.)

various texts, Letov points out the absurd and existentially frightening persistence of eternity motifs in Soviet discourse.[174] In "*Russkoe pole eksperimentov*," he virtually paraphrases Svidrigailov, attributing to eternity a purely materialistic, degrading characteristic – the smell of oil.[175]

The ultimate goal of the *Kommunizm* project was to de-familiarize and deconstruct the hackneyed components of the official Soviet discourse to lay bare its hidden existential and metaphysical "traces" that are inconsistent with materialistic doctrines. As such, *Kommunizm* performed a function similar to that of the underground man who criticized socialist-utopian conceptions in a "proto-deconstructionist" way.[176] For example, in the context of *Kommunizm*, the motif of meaningfulness of both life and death in official Soviet discourse appears as an obsession that reflects the suppressed existential anxieties of the common Soviet person facing the absurdity around him/herself. This applies to both the thematic structure of the project and its poetics of sound. Thus, the glorification of the Soviet way of life in the canonic Soviet texts reproduced on the album *Na sovetskoi skorosti* (*At Soviet Speed*, 1988) is juxtaposed with the experience of serving in the Soviet army, presented as a borderline existential situation in which soldiers die even during peacetime. This is the subject of the album *Soldatskii son* (*A Soldier's Dream*, 1989), which includes the authentic, i.e. written by soldiers, texts of army folklore.

At the auditory level, the absurdity of the Soviet utopia is illustrated in *Kommunizm* by its psychedelic, surrealistic, and dissonant sound component, as well as by the buffoonery of the

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[174] One such remarkable text is the song "*Zdorovo i vechno*" ("Wonderful and Everlasting," 1988). For its analysis see Domanskii.

[175] Letov himself explained the origins of his phrase "*vechnost' pakhnet neft'iu*" (248) as a reference to Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* ("Solnechnyi put'"), where Russell attributes the phrase "[a] smell of petroleum prevails throughout" to William James (Russell 145). However, one cannot ignore the obvious parallels with Svidrigailov, an important figure in Letov's intertextual space, especially since the word "eternity" is not present in Russell – neither in the original English, nor in the Russian translation.

[176] As Malcolm Jones suggests, "*Notes from Underground* exemplifies […] a characteristic of writing which is close to the hearts of the deconstructionist critics: the tendency of any holistic ('logocentric') text, or ideology, to contain the seeds of its own undoing and reversal" (63).

performers' voices. In this sense, the project itself was a provocation – aesthetic, as well as psychological – directed at Soviet official discourse itself.

"*Iama kak printsip dvizheniia k solntsu*"[177]: The Underground and Higher Reality

In addition to their being a means of "expressing the absurdity of the reality around us" and the rebellious attitude towards it, *vyverts* in Siberian punk discourse and poetics acquire the same philosophical, even religious meaning as they do for Dostoevsky's underground characters – they indicate the rebellious consciousness's deep metaphysical longing for higher truth and harmony. This constitutes the most profound kinship between Dostoevsky's idea of the underground and that of Letov and his associates.

In *Notes from Underground*, sticking out his tongue at the imagined crystal palace is the underground man's quintessential expression of *vyvert.* Dostoevsky's hero does not accept the absurd world in which he finds himself, and he does not accept the possibility of the world's improvement through reason offered by socialist thinkers. Furthermore, he is dissatisfied with his underground existence even though he prefers it to the life of "normal men." Instead, he expresses what might even be called a religious utopian idea – the demand for a completely different reality where "one could not put out one's tongue" (*PSS* 5:120). The same is true for Letov who speaks of a perfect, yet undefined, existence, calling it either a "rock revolution," or "true anarchy," while at the same time acknowledging that neither is possible. Thus, for him being in the underground also potentially serves as a path toward a different reality, one that might be "more just and comforting" (Dostoevsky, *Crime* 290). Like Andreyev and the Leningrad unofficial poets before him, Letov draws on the Dostoevskian antinomy of the underground: associated with decay, destruction, and death (the motifs manifested in rock as self-destruction), it may also represent a higher form of existence.

[177] "The pit as a principle of moving toward the sun" (Letov, *Stikhi* 250).

Just as those who addressed the concept of the underground before him, Letov employs subterranean imagery and related images of dark enclosed spaces (cellar, pit, burrow, bunker, and images of the "material bodily lower stratum" [Bakhtin]) as a literalized metaphor of the underground. For example, in the song "*Gosudarstvo*," the lyrical subject compares his freedom with a rusty bunker, proclaiming his voluntarily retreat into a cellar (215). In another song, Letov offers a much more vulgar image, stating that "we are in deep shit" ("*my v glubokoi zhope*," literally "deep in the ass"), destined "to crawl up to the surface like a blind helminth" ("*polzti naruzhu slepym glistom*"; 236). This imagery shows that the underground for Letov is not just a concept associated with outsiders such as punk rockers but also a metaphor for all of human existence – a cesspit or even worse.

Yet the same spatial imagery helps Letov postulate that being underground can lead one to achieve some new spiritual condition. Inhabiting a pit makes one move towards the sun, Letov argues in "*Russkoe pole eksperimentov*." He expresses a similar idea in an interview in the form of a parable he attributes to the dissident author Nikolai Volkov ("Panki").[178] The parable tells of people locked in a trunk by an evil spirit who eventually forget that there may be a different world beyond their dark, stuffy, and damp dwelling. One day the trunk lock breaks, letting the light and fresh air inside, which at first shocks the trunk dwellers but then makes them want to see more of the world outside. And while the evil spirit tries to close the trunk's lid, people continue to stick their elbows and heads out, in spite of the risk of injury or death. "I think that this is exactly what our [i.e. Siberian – V.I.] rockers and punks do," concludes Letov (ibid.). This narrative shows that, unlike Dostoevsky, Letov sees release from the underground of this false, distorted world, not as a resurrection but rather as a revelation – a direct contact with the true

[178] So far, I have not been able to find out whether the dissident writer Nikolai Volkov existed, or relate Letov's summary to any other proto-text.

realm of being, which constitutes a consistent motif in Letov's texts. It is this contact that makes the genuine rocker a medium capable of sharing his knowledge of the true reality with those who may still be unaware of it. Accordingly, the archetypal model that informs Letov's metaphysical conception is not that of the dying-and-rising god, but rather the one found in ancient Greek philosophy, namely in Plato's allegories of the cave and the sun introduced in his *The Republic*.[179] Plato imagines the life of most people ("normal men," to use the underground man's language) as a dark cave where prisoners watch the shadows on its walls and take them for the only true reality. When one prisoner is released and is forced to ascend to the surface, he sees the sun and, even though initially blinded by its light, eventually realizes it to be the truth. The parable of the trunk narrated by Letov shares a number of motifs with Plato's people in a cave allegory: a dark, cramped, underground-like space misperceived by its inhabitants as the whole world; their sudden revelation about the real world outside; their unpreparedness to see the light; and finally the eagerness of some to get outside. Significantly, in the same interview, Letov brings up an image of a punk rocker reading Plato as an example of the intellectual nature of Russian punk rock.

Letov's song "*On uvidel solntse*" ("He Saw the Sun," 1986) introduces the motifs that also link this text with Plato's cave. These include the prison and prisoners (the cross on the back ["*krest na spine*"] may refer to a prison tattoo or a target painted on the prisoner's uniform), the world as an unshapely object on the wall (a snot), blindness, underground/enclosed space ("blind trenches" ["*slepye transhei*"][180] and "blind gut" ["*slepaia kishka*"]), artificial light, and, finally, the sun that the lyrical subject gets to see in opposition to all of these. Indeed, the sun in Letov's

[179] Quite likely, Letov's reception of Plato's cave allegory was mediated by Bertrand Russell who discusses it immediately after his reference to William James's phrase adopted by Letov in his "*Russkoe pole eksperimentov*" (See Russell 145-48).

[180] In my opinion, this image is related to the mining term *slepoi stvol* (blind shaft) – a mine shaft that does not have an exit to the surface.

creative mythology functions as a symbol of higher metaphysical reality, as exemplified in several of his texts, including "*Na nashikh glazakh*" ("Before Our Eyes," 1985), "*Sistema*" ("System," 1987), "*Moia oborona*," "*Rodina*," and "*Solntse nespiashchikh*" ("The Sun of the Sleepless," 2003).

The existentialist philosopher Lev Shestov explained the relevance of Plato's cave allegory to Dostoevsky's notion of the underground, distinguishing between the underground of Dostoevsky's hero and the "cave" of "normal men'"s existence: "The underworld is not at all the miserable place in which Dostoevsky had made his hero live, nor is it […] solitude […]. On the contrary, […] Dostoevsky sought solitude in order to save himself, or try to save himself, from this underground place (Plato's 'cave') where 'everyone' has to live, which everyone regards as the only real world, the only possible world, that is to say, the one world justified by reason"[181] (*In Job's Balances*). Shestov observations apply to Letov as well, which further proves both the platonic subtext of Letov's underground imagery and his perception of the ambivalent, multi-faceted nature of Dostoevsky's underground. The latter helps us understand how Letov's poetics are consistent with his philosophical views.

Conclusion

From the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, the Siberian punk rock movement in general and Egor Letov in particular were perceived as belonging to the (counter)culture of political opposition. However, comparing Letov's texts with Dostoevsky's representation of the underground reveals the predominantly existentialist nature of the punk rocker's protest. That is, unlike specifically political expressions, such as, for instance, those of Pussy Riot, Letov exploits political signs as part of a discourse of rebellion against the totalitarianism of human

[181] Oleg "Manager" Sudakov refers to Shestov's ideas in a 1992 interview, which means that the Siberian punks were familiar with Shestov's writings.

consciousness and the imperfect world in general. Letov's existentialist mindset manifests itself in his discourse and poetics through the "words with a loophole," expression of *ressentiment*, psychological patterns of provocation/aggression (*vyvert*) and anguish (*nadryv*), and the use of ambivalent motifs of underground space. All these constitute the links between Letov's narrative identity and Dostoevsky's portrayal of the underground as a multi-dimensional phenomenon revealing itself on the levels of philosophy, psychology, and poetic imagery. The deliberate design of his narrative identity in accordance with the principles of underground consciousness allowed Letov to remain underground despite manifold changes of the political and cultural context.

Conclusion

In his *Notes from Underground* and subsequent works Dostoevsky developed the notion of the underground which holds primarily philosophical and psychological significance. Starting from the late nineteenth century, the underground becomes an important concept in Russian literary and (counter)cultural discourse; however, the contexts in which it re-appears – revolutionary activity, unofficial literature and art, and rock (counter)culture – at first glance, do not suggest any direct association with Dostoevsky. Nevertheless, my examination of the underground both in Dostoevsky and subsequent texts shows that Dostoevsky laid the foundation for the representation of the underground in Russian literature and (counter)culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The concepts of the absurd, the existential leap, metaphysical rebellion, and angst established in existentialism help us reveal the proto-existentialist philosophical stance of Dostoevsky's underground characters. Their sensitivity to the absurd and their longing for a more meaningful existence, coupled with a sense of exclusivity deriving from an "excess" of consciousness, manifest themselves in their behavior as the typical patterns of underground psychology: *iurodstvo* and *ressentiment*, *vyvert* and *nadryv*, provocation and aggression, buffoonery and duality. It is also important that in Dostoevsky's texts, the theme of the metaphorical underground as a philosophical attitude or psychological state is often accompanied by the motif of subterranean spaces: mouse holes, basements, cellars, graves, and so on. The ambivalent mythological symbolism of the subterranean space (the grave vs. the soil in which a seed may grow) both illustrates the spiritual tragedy of the Dostoevsky hero and conceals the positive potential of the underground, which leads the characters of Dostoevsky's later works (Raskolnikov, the ridiculous man, Dmitry Karamazov) to a spiritual transformation and/or resurrection.

In the early twentieth century, the philosophical, psychological, and imaginative aspects of Dostoevsky's underground allowed Leonid Andreyev to demythologize the political underground. In "Darkness," plunging the political terrorist into the dark abyss of the "living life," Andreyev made him realize the bookish nature of his revolutionary ideals, revealing *ressentiment* behind his self-sacrifice. Andreyev's "Judas Iscariot" draws upon the Dostoevskian motifs of underground provocation and buffoonery as linked to the absurd and metaphysical rebellion. The Dostoevskian plane made "Judas" both a philosophical parable that addresses the eternal questions of faith and betrayal and a politically prophetical message about provocation as a force that undermines the high ideals of the Russian revolutionary movement.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the underground functions as a self-denomination of Russian unofficial literary and artistic (counter)culture. In his essays, articles, and poetry, the Leningrad unofficial poet Viktor Krivulin articulates the similarities between Dostoevsky's underground and the underground of unofficial culture. Influenced by the writings of existentialist philosophers, unofficial writers, artists, and musicians partly shared the worldview of Dostoevsky's underground characters, both noticing the absurdity of life and resisting it with their "spirituality" and religious quest. Yet, in his revisiting of Dostoevsky's concept of the underground, Krivulin emphasizes its ethical rather than "proto-existentialist" meaning. At the same time, Krivulin demonstrates that the psychological condition of being culturally underground made many representatives of unofficial culture think and behave like the man of *ressentiment* or even the *iurodivyi* – the psychological counterparts of Dostoevsky's underground heroes.

Vladimir Makanin's novel *Underground, or A Hero of Our Time* was intended by its author to be a comprehensive portrait of an underground writer. However, it is through the

references to Dostoevsky that the reader of Makanin's novel realizes that its hero Petrovich represents the psychological and spiritual, rather than (counter)cultural underground. Petrovich who reminds us of an unrepentant Raskolnikov is juxtaposed with his brother Venia, a mentally ill man who seems to be the underground man transformed into Prince Myshkin. Both of these characters represent the tragedy of the underground: while Petrovich is unable to overcome the destructive forces within himself, Venia cannot protect his personality against oppression by the state.

In the late 1980s-2000s, the question of how to remain culturally underground when the boundary between the mainstream and (counter)culture becomes more and more blurred preoccupies the minds of Russian rock musicians. The answer to this question is found in the poetry, interviews, manifestos, and conceptual projects of the Siberian punk rock community, especially its leader Egor Letov. Explicitly declaring Dostoevsky to be his "spiritual mentor," Letov constructs his narrative identity in accordance with the principles of "underground consciousness" in Dostoevsky. He employs the discursive mechanism of the "loophole" (Bakhtin), expresses existentialist protest against the "laws of nature," and demonstrates the psychological patterns of provocation/aggression (*vyvert*) and anguish (*nadryv*).

All the authors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries studied in this dissertation follow Dostoevsky in their use of the underground as a literalized metaphor, employing subterranean motifs in their poetics of space. Thus, examining the underground in various discourses from Dostoevsky's writings to punk rock reveals uniform patterns, which allows us to formulate a general definition of the underground as a discursive model. The underground is 1. a philosophical attitude that questions the human condition and suggests rebellion against an imperfect universe; 2. a psychological pattern based on *ressentiment* that manifests itself as, or

transforms into provocation, aggression, buffoonery, and anguish; and 3. a literalized metaphor, i.e. the symbolic subterranean space imbued with the mythological connotations of the underworld or the Platonic cave and associated with both chaos/death/decay and resurrection/salvation/revelation. The persistence of this three-fold model of the underground throughout various discourses on being in opposition to the mainstream philosophically, politically, and culturally suggests its usefulness for further studies of this phenomenon – not just in the Russian context, but in other literatures and (counter)cultures.

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