

REPRESENTATIONS OF REVOLUTION AND REVOLUTIONARIES IN EARLY
TWENTIETH CENTURY RUSSIAN LITERATURE

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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The representation of Revolution and revolutionaries develops as one of the main themes in Russian literary texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It would not be an overstatement to say that most active writers during this time referred to these themes in their works. These themes developed in consort with the historical and political developments occurring within the country. The literature of the twentieth century led to a culmination in the understanding of this complex topic. This thesis will present an analysis of several types of Revolutionary characters and their concepts of what Revolution is and should be. It will overview Revolution's origin and development as a background of early twentieth century Russian literary works. The close reading of the selected twentieth century works will be discussed within the body of this thesis. In particular we will review Alexander Blok's poem *The Twelve*, Isaac Babel's collection of stories *Red Cavalry*, Vladimir Zazubrin's *The Chip: A Story About a Chip and About Her*, Boris Savinkov's *The Pale Horse*.

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I dedicate this work to my friend, partner and wife Anastasia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will study representations of Revolution and revolutionaries in early twentieth century Russian literature. This topic sustained its importance in prose and poetry through the nineteenth century. It was developed by the major Russian authors reflecting popular engagement with the revolutionary activities, themes, ideas and personalities since the times of the French Revolution and through the later historical events in Russia and the Western World. As Vladimir Nabokov ironically and bitterly noticed through his character, the writer in “The Luzhin Defense”:

... these war years turned out to be an exasperating obstacle; they seemed an encroachment upon creative freedom, for in every book describing the gradual development of a given human personality one had somehow to mention the war, and even the hero's dying in his youth could not provide a way out of this situation. [...] With the revolution it was even worse. The general opinion was that it had influenced the course of every Russian's life; an author could not have his hero go through it without getting scorched, and to dodge it was impossible. This amounted to a genuine violation of the writer's free will.¹

... это было какое-то посягательство на свободу творчества, ибо во всякой книге, где описывалось постепенное развитие определённой человеческой личности, следовало как-нибудь упомянуть о войне... С революцией было и того хуже. По общему мнению, она повлияла на ход жизни всякого русского; через неё нельзя было пропустить героя, не

¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense*. Trans. Michael Scammell. London. Vintage 1990. 55-56.

обжигая его, избежать её было невозможно. Это уже было подлинное
насилие над волей писателя.

From the time of the Decembrists' uprising up to the First Russian Revolution of 1905 a great number of writers pondered this theme and explored it from various perspectives. Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Nikolay Nekrasov, Ivan Turgenev, Nikolay Chernyshevsky, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Andrei Bely and many others expanded and developed the "Revolutionary Meta-text" in Russian literature.

The image of the Revolution and the image of the Revolutionary underwent dramatic changes in this time period. The early twentieth century texts selected for this thesis could be considered key sources for the understanding of the culmination of revolutionary matters and events reflected in Russian literature. Their outstanding value could be found not only in the fictional qualities, but also in their merits as witnesses' accounts adapted by the participants and observers of those historical events.

The evolution of those images could be followed through the development of art, literary styles and philosophical concepts, from the Romanticism of the Decembrist era to Critical Realism, to the revival of Romanticism in Symbolism and Decadence of the *Fin de Siècle*, and to twentieth-century Modernism and Realism. This paper will focus on the novel *The Pale Horse* (1909) by Boris Savinkov, the poem *The Twelve* (1918) by Alexander Blok and stories representing post-revolutionary events - *The Chip: A Story About a Chip and About Her* (1923) by Vladimir Zazubrin and *Red Cavalry* (Russian: *Конармия*), a cycle of stories, written between 1922-1937 (the majority of them - before 1925) by Isaak Babel. As was noticed earlier, the authors of these fictional works were also witnesses and participants of the events described.

The subjects of this paper's study could be categorized by two types: individuals, who were usually representatives of the intelligentsia and sometimes of the aristocratic origins, and cohorts. The members of the second category were developing certain group-identities and acted united by ideologies, circumstances, duties or missions, for example, the terrorist brigade, Bolsheviks' patrol, executioners from the Cheka (ЧК – *чрезвычайная комиссия - chrezvychaynaya komissiya*), brotherhood or *fellow soldiers' camaraderie* of the Red Cavalry. Both categories will be analyzed in relation to the gender, ethical and social categories, and particularly in relation to the shifting of these categories in a process of developing new identities and a "revolutionary mentality". We will look at the cases when revolution is perceived not simply as a change of a regime but as an "ultimate goal". It could be understood as a new faith - a new "religion", or as a new "deity" – *вера в Революцию* equals *вера в Бога*. The Feminine gender of the noun *революция* in the Russian language relates to a phenomenon of a personified *Feminine force*, replacing other "feminine" entities. It demands absolute devotion and causes dramatic deviations and adaptation to a different morality, ethics and laws. Considering various oppositions, such as masculine-feminine, national-international or cosmopolitan, high-low, individual-collective, pragmatic-idealistic, we will outline those changes which the Revolution imposes on *Her* "servants" affecting their judgments, identity and values - human values versus values of a revolutionary. This abstract *Feminine* replaces or modifies females' role and status in the life of a Revolutionary, in the era of Revolution. Masculine characteristics, such as husband, father or son, become secondary or vanish, when a person becomes "married" to the Revolution. The Defense of the *Motherland* is

substituted with the struggle for more abstract ideas of International, Future and World Freedom – as *Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité* – a slogan from the French Revolution.

The works, selected for this thesis, will help us to understand a series of questions related to the revolutionary themes. Conceptualization of the Revolution is revealed through the narrators' comments. Two of the texts are written from the first person. Individuals or groups express their beliefs, visions and utopian ideas. They share their feelings and reasons for going into revolutionary activities. Especially interesting would be the question which George, the leader of the terrorist brigade in *Pale Horse* was asking: why this or that person came to the Revolution. What caused his or her self-separation from his or her previous life? Was it a feeling of guilt or religious motivation or new belief obtained from the Revolution, or was it a desire to kill and seek power? Answering these questions might be linked to the philosophical questions raised the nineteenth century literature, especially by Feodor Dostoevsky's works, - for instance - the right to commit a crime "for the greater good". Another line which could be traced from the nineteenth century, starting from the Decembrists and following to the populist movement, describes the desire for social change, which pushed many young representatives of the intelligentsia to experience profound guilt and sacrifice themselves by going into terror organizations. From this category appeared the type that could be called the "professional revolutionary".

In his work *Discourse in the Novel* M. Bakhtin wrote: "A special variant on the novel of trial would be the Russian novel testing the fitness and worth of an intellectual in society (the theme of the "superfluous man"), which in turn breaks down into a series of

subcategories (from Pushkin up to the testing of intellectuals in the Revolution)".² This theme of "trial" - *испытание интеллигента* - was explored in multiple variations in the works of the early 20th century Russian literature, particularly in relation to the image of the Revolution. We will look at the relation between *интеллигенция и революция* in several texts. *The Chip*, *The Twelve*, *Cynics* by Anatoliy Mariyengof and many other Russian literary works add an innovative insight to this problem. Alexander Blok wrote an essay with the same title. His oeuvre of the earlier period develops an image of "The Beautiful Lady," which undergoes metamorphosis in revolutionary times. This paper will review the representations of the Revolution in parallel with the transformation of concepts of "The Eternal Feminine" (*Вечная Женственность*), "The Beautiful Lady", Divine Sophia and the hypostatic Feminine of Russia, as Mother, Lover, Goddess, and the Revolution. This hypostasis leads to complicated imagery like "The She" in Vladimir Zazubrin's *The Chip: a Story about a Chip and about Her*.

The four selected authors will allow for the study of the image of the Revolutionary in parallel with major historical events. Boris Savinkov's novel *The Pale Horse* deals with the activities of Revolutionary terrorist organizations in the first decade of the twentieth century. Alexander Blok's poem *The Twelve* contemplates the immediate time surrounding the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1918. The events in *Konarmia* (*Red Cavalry*) are active battlefield events in an external war and the defending or spreading of revolution on Russia's frontier. *The Chip* is concerned with the activities of the Cheka and its treatment of "counterrevolutionaries" during the Red Terror and Civil War. These

² M.M. Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination*, "Discourse in the Novel". Austin: University of Texas Press 1981. 390.

four texts allow us to look at the revolution and revolutionaries in a historical frame while probing the psychological depth of characters.

CHAPTER II

DECEMBRISTS' UPRISING: THE ROLE, PSYCHOLOGICAL PORTRAIT AND REFLECTION IN LITERATURE OF THE ROMANTIC EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY ARISTOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARY

The early prototypes of later Revolutionary characters can be found in the so called Movement of the Decembrists, which chronologically coincided with Romanticism in Russian culture and literature. From this era one may trace a tedious linear trajectory of an idea, namely Revolution in Russia, from an origin and distinguish a character type in an outdated social structure, as well as a philosophical basis for defining individual and group behavior and identity. The uprising on the 14th of December 1825 provides an interesting sample of individual behavior within a group and a historical event that nevertheless is considered by many researchers to be the beginning of a New Era. For example, Yury Lotman in his analysis of the individual in a group allows a philosophical basis for interpretation of such behavior:

However, group behavior as such does not exist in reality. Just as the norms of language are realized and at the same time inevitably broken into thousands of individual utterances, so group behavior is formed from innumerable enactments and violations of it within the system of individual behavior of the numerous members of a collective.³

In other words, people including revolutionaries act for selfish reasons regardless of the platform of their group, its stated objectives and so forth. It is the work of the

³ Yuri Lotman. "The Decembrist in Everyday Life: Everyday Behavior as a Historical – Psychological Category." *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*. Ann Arbor, Michigan Slavic Contributions. 1984, 71.

selected authors for this paper's analysis to explain or represent the motivations, aims and goals of revolutionaries within the frame of the characters' groups and historical events those characters operate in. A revolutionary may be trying to operate with the stated goals of the revolution, to carry out tasks and to espouse the tenets of the revolution or to quote Lenin, for example, but individuals carry this out with variety. We can identify revolutionaries by their use of revolutionary language and self-identification as such.

The nobleman revolutionary, *dvoryanskiy revolyutsioner*, could have a special social position, status and title with hereditary service bound estates or a hereditary boyar ancestry. From the literature of the time we can gather the evidence that makes it possible for us to talk about the Decembrists not only as the bearers of a particular political program, but "also as a specific cultural-historical and psychological type".⁴ This type in the Decembrists' era was a person of action with additional determinants like landlord, European, patriot, officer etc. As "men of action" this type's main theoretical concern consisted of determining a course of action. Decembrists were interested in theory in order to determine a course of action. They were also members of a gentry's class in a society that relied on a landowner economy and lower classes upon service employment to them. These so called Decembrists could be identified by their concern for the lower classes in their conversations. For the majority in the early nineteenth century "the norm of the landowner economy and service employment, those real life conditions fell outside interpretation."⁵

⁴ Lotman 73.

⁵ Lotman 77.

About a century before the October revolution, the Russian aristocracy initiated processes which led to its destruction. “Failure to study the historical-psychological mechanisms of human acts will inevitably leave us in the grip of extremely schematic conceptions.”⁶ An early Russian economist and political theoretician, Nikolay Turgenev (1789–1871), a relative of the novelist Ivan Turgenev, gained renown for his *Essay on the Theory of Taxation* (1818) and *Russia and the Russians* (1847) and co-founded several reformist societies, notably “The Northern Society” of the Decembrists. One of the first goals of this era’s revolutionaries was the establishment of a constitution. Among the advocates of this state reform was Prince Sergey Trubetskoy (1790 –1860) - his “Union of Salvation” (1816) and the “Union of Prosperity” (1819) had as a goal a Constitutional Monarchy and the later abolition of Serfdom. Pyotr Kakhovsky (1797 – 1826), Russian officer and Decembrist, was given the duty of killing Nicolas I. Colonel Pavel Pestel (1793 – 1826) was one of the most radical ideologues of the Decembrists. Pestel’s views were demanding emancipation of the Russian serfs with their land, the ending of class privileges, more rights to young males and regicide and the creation of a Republic. In most cases the spectrum of revolutionary thought sought reform albeit regicide was radical; there was no talk or writing from them about rights for women or the alteration of society other than abolition of serfdom. The revolution was to be carried out by the upper class and mostly the untitled upper-class for their own advancement based upon the reigning in of the Tsar, his family and other titled ranks. These individuals trusted members of their own class and family. This type of revolutionary could be outlined as “sectarian”, “intellectual” and “masculine”.

⁶ Lotman, 74.

The following poem by Alexander Pushkin, addressed - “To Chadaev”, expresses the high, emotional, idealistic and utopian expectation of the coming revolution, which he refers to as the Star of Captivating Happiness (feminine noun *Zvezda*), which will end the autocracy. He appeals to a Comrade – implying a person of revolution, and claims that the names of those, who prepared this coming event, will not be forgotten.

Comrade, believe: she will ascend,
The Star of Captivating Happiness,
Russia will rise from sleep,
And on the ruins of despotism
Our names will be written!⁷

Товарищ, верь: взойдет она,
Звезда пленительного счастья,
Россия вспрянет ото сна,
И на обломках самовластья
Напишут наши имена!

⁷ A. S. Pushkin, “To Chaadaev” translation by A. N. Matyatina.

CHAPTER III

“RAZNOCHINYSTY” AND NEW TYPES OF REVOLUTIONARIES AND THEIR LITERARY PORTRAITS

On the Russian cultural ground, in people’s minds, real historical figures were paradoxically mingled with literary characters: heroes of the books were perceived as important as living persons. There is an interesting speculation that Pushkin’s character Eugene Onegin could have become a Revolutionary. For example, Andrey Chernov in his article "*Eugene Onegin. The Burned Chapter*" quotes a memoir of Decembrist M.V.Yuzefovich, who in 1829 met Pushkin in the Caucasus. According to him, Pushkin was planning two possible fates for his character, Eugene Onegin: to perish in the Caucasus War or to join the Decembrists.⁸ Literary fiction was an important part of the everyday reality of the educated part of Russia’s society. As we see Revolution was created and unleashed by the *Intelligentsia* and carried away by the masses, and then in its turn it carried the masses away into a mass destruction of the population, the collapse of the monarchy, the empire and Russian traditional culture as a whole.

After the Decembrists’ defeat, people from different backgrounds, *Raznochintsy*, entered the revolutionary movement. In his novel *Fathers and Sons*, Ivan Turgenev introduced a new type of intellectual revolutionary, Eugene Bazarov, who was describing himself as a Nihilist, who wanted to educate people. Nihilists tend to be associated with violence, revolution, and terrorist acts. The assassination of Czar Alexander II by the “Will of the People” (Народная Воля) group shook the society and the event was

⁸ Andrey Chernov. “Eugene Onegin. The Burned Chapter” <http://chernov-trezin.narod.ru/Onegin.htm> May 2009.

reflected in arts. We may think of the painting “Student-Nihilist” (1883) by Ilya Repin. Although violent acts get recorded in the history books, often the lasting impact is carried through non-violent ideas and identities. The Russian Nihilists were intriguing in this regard, for their history is like that of an iceberg – only a small portion of their total character is readily visible. Indeed, much of the violent acts associated with the attempted overthrow of the monarchy occurred under the auspices of other groups such as Anarchists, Marxists and *narodnichestvo* populists in the 1870s, rather than those directly associated with the Nihilists themselves who were much more complex than the oversimplified “terrorist” label attached to them by autocratic authorities.

For the ‘New People’ of Russia more influential than philosophy, or political texts was literature. Turgenev’s expression of the tension between ‘fathers and sons’, associated with the rejection of the romantic and idealistic postures, imposed on characters like Bazarov an iconic position for the contemporary generation. This was even though Turgenev’s intention was to portray the ‘New People’ in a less than flattering light. The publication of Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* (1863), which was written in prison, became the guiding light for the movement. Within its pages was a vision of the socialist values of the Nihilist, an exposition of how to live with radical values intact, and how to practice Nihilist non-monogamy. The power of literature on the movement is ironic because, of course, most of our modern understanding of the Nihilist movement comes from the novels of Turgenev or Dostoyevsky. Turgenev was non-judgmental in his depiction of the ‘New People’, and respected by the Nihilists, though Dostoyevsky was in violent reaction to them. While Dostoyevsky was involved in radical

activity against the Tsar in the 1840's, during his exile in Siberia he became an Orthodox Christian.

The theme of revolution and revolutionaries became almost unavoidable – hardly were there writers who haven't touch it in some way. As a result of this growing concern a phenomenon which could be classified as Professional Revolutionary appeared. Lenin, Trotsky, Savinkov could be named among the “brightest” representatives of this “new class.” All of them showed a significant talent in writing “fiction” of sorts. The leader of the brigade from *The Pale Horse* objectifies the cynicism: propagation of terror for terror's sake followed the same logic as art for art's sake. "Art for art's sake" expresses a philosophy that the intrinsic value of art, and the only "true" art, is divorced from any didactic, moral or utilitarian function. Such works are sometimes described as "autotelic", from the Greek “*autoteles*” - “complete in itself”, a concept that has been expanded to embrace "inner-directed" or "self-motivated" human beings.⁹ These characteristics could be imposed on George, Ropshin-Savinkov's character, whose concentration was on perfecting “the artistry of terror”, which is not to say that terror is art, but for the reverence of that autotelic ideal.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_for_art%27s_sake

CHAPTER IV

“THE PROFESSIONAL REVOLUTIONARY” OF THE LATE NINETEENTH – EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Screening the “Revolutionary Meta-text” reveals multiple “faces” and controversial attributes of the Revolution, represented in Russian literature. It obtained an array of epithets and definitions. It could be viewed as positive, “purifying”, ongoing and a never-ending movement or force, romantic and noble, as was perceived by Futurists’ utopias, or discussed in Yevgeny Zamyatin’s essay *Revolution and entropy*. In contrast it can be described as catastrophic and Apocalyptic, a destructive “riot, senseless and merciless”¹⁰ (as Pushkin wrote in *The Captain's Daughter*: “ Не приведи Бог видеть русский бунт - бессмысленный и беспощадный”). All these diverse representations accept violence as an immanent and necessary component of Revolution with executions and terrorist acts. Young and noble terrorists of the nineteenth century were perceived almost as new martyrs. This perception changed dramatically with the development of mass terror. Later the ‘legalization’ of terror and mass executions became a means of class struggle (*klassovaya bor'ba*) and seizure of state power.

Understanding of the specifics of the terror as “revolutionary men” and “poeticizing” of terrorists, like Savinkov’s *Battle Organization (Boevaia Organizatsiia)* will require us to look at the roots and representations of terror in Russia and Russian literature, starting from the effect of the French Revolution on Russian intelligentsia, and following up to the appearance and development of terrorist movements in the late 19th century. The diverse phases or “faces” of terror in this era will be reviewed: from the

¹⁰ Alexander Pushkin. *The Captain's Daughter* CreateSpace Independent Publishing 2011. 136.

“*myth of terror*” as a means to political change to “terror as an end in itself” - a phenomenon of the Russian *Silver Age*, an “age of doom and indulgence”. This “Age” was filled with premonitions, the symbolism of blood and sacrifice, and apocalyptic “prophecy.” Criminality throughout the empire was prevalent. According to statistics presented by Anna Geifman ,who studied terror in Russia from 1894 – 1917 in her book *Thou Shalt Kill*, close to seventeen thousand are thought to have been killed by revolutionary terror in Russia until 1916.¹¹ This number speaks for the expanded scope of terror in the fall of the Empire. The *Silver Age* (1890-1922) had a figure like Boris Savinkov acting as the predicted one, a modern messiah, an embodied “angel of death,” criminal superhero and an almost mystical figure. An attempt to sort through these concepts and understand this phenomenon of glorifying such personalities and criminality will be undertaken in this paper.

Since the late 1980s newly opened formerly secret archives and materials in the Soviet Union invigorated interest and research in Boris Savinkov’s personality, literary works and his role in connection with major issues of modern Russia’s history: where to search for the roots of totalitarian tradition in Russia, how political terrorism evolved from individual terrorist acts to state-wide terror as a method, why part of the anti-Bolshevik intelligentsia in the 1920s agreed to cooperate with the Bolsheviks’ regime. Amazingly, Savinkov’s writings, actions, personality and fate are constantly referred to and analyzed in relation to all these historical questions in modern research literature since the late 1980s. The debates around Savinkov and his role and methods intensified after the Bolsheviks revolution, during the Civil War, in the 1920s, and trials against the

¹¹ Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill. Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993 21.

Social-Revolutionary Party (below: SR) and other political opponents, and during the White Army and Russian political immigration's active resistance.¹² This chapter will deal with the time depicted in Savinkov's memoirs and novel: *Memoirs of the Terrorist* (1902-1909) and *Pale Horse* published in 1909. The questions - who was Savinkov - hero or criminal, leader or just one articulate artist who passed on to readers the "poetry of death" that prevailed in late Imperial Russia's *Silver Age* – were raised in discussions and publications of this time, during his trials and after his death. He was known well in the SR party and in secular and elite literary circles including most famously, Russian immigrants' journals like *Russkaya Mysl'*, etc.. The writer Andrei Bely was believed to have used Savinkov as a model or inspiration for his character Aleksandr Dudkin in the novel *Petersburg*.¹³ Savinkov got entangled in becoming an almost symbolic and mythical figure, but he himself seemed to overcome all illusions of his time and stick to Terror as an end, his reason, purpose, sense and goal of existence. Terror in itself is embodied in Boris Savinkov. The SR's, specifically Mikhail Rafailovitch Gotz and Yevno Azef (1869-1918), financed his terror. Zinaida Gippius (1869-1945) and her husband Dmitriy S. Merezhkovsky, were close to the SR party and "blessed" and supported Savinkov's artistic literary endeavors.¹⁴ Savinkov was acknowledged and praised as a man of Letters, a man of Action, a man of Terror.

Many in the crowd in late imperial Russia (1894-1917), especially young people from students groups, aristocrats and "raznochintsy" were willing to take up the banner of

¹² A. L. Litvin, *Boris Savinkov na Lubianke: dokumenty*. Moscow 2001, 36-37.

¹³ Richard B. Spence, *Boris Savinkov Renegade on the Left*. Boulder: East European Monographs 1991, 52.

¹⁴ Dimitrii Zhukov.. "Savinkov i Ropshin. Terrorist i Pisatel," *To, chego ne bilo*. Moskva: Sovremennik, 1992, 4.

Revolution and die for the cause - overthrowing tyranny. It was Savinkov who would be so unaware as to incarnate a fictional character from F. Dostoyevski's (1821-1881) *Possessed* (published in 1872) embodying incongruous elements such as art and death and indulging in glamour. Could he be considered a lucky son of this epoch, the chosen of his generation? The *Silver Age* in Russia gave fecund ground for people with a terrorist mentality and was dominated by the intelligentsia's self-accusations, psychoanalysis, fate, doom and indulgence.

Boris Savinkov's *Memoir of a Terrorist* immerses readers into acts of terror, the lives of terrorists and "the How?" of terrorism, but his description of war against the autocratic regime does not give orderly analysis or answers to the questions *What is terrorism?* and *Why?* To avoid simply redefining terror, let's remember Galileo Galilei's wisdom as we look at the acts of Savinkov and his comrades: "For names and attributes must be accommodated to the essence of things, and not the essence to the names, since things come first and names afterwards."¹⁵ Terrorism is war whether it is led by a *lone wolf* or small battle organizations or "cells" conducting the terror that is individual or mass murder. It carries on one very important component in addition to elimination or assassination of a target – spreading fear, horror and demoralization which are equally or even more important than killing. This paper will not argue that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Terrorists need no pretense of justification and feel themselves free to proclaim "one man's leader is another man's tyrant."

Trying to understand the mind of a terrorist is quite a tricky task. Was Savinkov attempting to do such research by himself? We know that he collected and kept the last

¹⁵ Galileo Galilei. *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*. Massachusetts: Anchor Press, 1957, 92.

notes, sayings and letters of those comrades who were facing death. The hero of his novel *The Pale Horse* constantly asks the same question: “Why did you come to terror?” We will attempt to seek answers in the writings of ideologists who influenced generations of Russians. Since Catherine II’s decree in 1796, histories of the French Revolution were censored because of the horror of regicide. For generations strict censorship and control were established over available literature and publications. Information which was percolating through these barriers had a mostly a-historical, romantic and idealistic character, creating more myths than critical and objective presentations. *Raznochintsy* (commoners), who were lacking knowledge of French or other foreign languages and were attending university, were very susceptible to believing the “truth” of these myths. Many were excluded from Institutions of higher learning for political activities and satisfied themselves with self-education and the “profession” of a Revolutionary. These active radicals were not necessarily interested in the objective information and trustworthy sources. They were inspired and agitated by populists’ slogans and poetry such as, *Marseillaise* and *International*, myths of the inevitable revolution that would precede the Great Future and Socialism. This mentality, saturated with myths, is expressed in a letter from the Executive Committee of the *People’s Will* to Tsar Alexander III, dated March 10 (23) 1881 (six days after the assassination of his father). It implied that the party’s actions put Alexander III on the throne, and God’s will did not. This letter stated that revolution was inevitable, “by the course of natural selection there developed still harder forms” of revolutionaries and terrorists, replacing those who died with ‘calmness of martyrs’, and the revolutionary movement “is a function of the

national organism.”¹⁶ This quote reveals ideas or notions about natural selection which in the late nineteenth century, it can be said, were not understood by many. Social-Darwinism became an offshoot of Darwin’s theory just as “nature is red in tooth and claw” and “survival of the fittest” entered the parlance of the “educated”. Around the same time in the mid nineteenth century, Darwin and Marx proposed “scientific” theories which dramatically affected their time. These theories could be considered myth in the sense that the ‘story’ or ‘notion’ of them dramatically affected a revolutionist who was not interested in their verification.

...an understanding of the past (and often an understanding of the present and future) depends on the degree to which intellectuals are involved in the political process. It is customary to assume that a highly politicized presentation of the past, especially if it is presented in the form of art rather than as scholarly work, is nothing but a myth. Although it is recognized that myth might be worthy of study as the important modus operandi of a nation, for particular social groups or individuals, the scientific validity of the myth (that is, its ability to provide a real insight into the past) is denied. In any case, it is regarded as scientifically inferior to scientific work on the subject.¹⁷

A more detailed analysis of this topic, as well as of Russian radical thought, is presented in the monograph by D. Shlapentokh’s *The French Revolution in Russian Intellectual Life, 1865-1905*. Here we will focus on persons and statements which are crucial to understanding the development of terrorism and could resemble and possibly have

¹⁶ Vera Figner, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991, 308.

¹⁷ Dmitry Shlapentokh, *The French Revolution in Russian Intellectual Life 1865-1905*. Westport: Praeger, 1996 150-151.

influenced the mentality and perceptions of this chapter's main character's. This sketchy overview could be summarized by the assumptions of *People's Will* (Narodnaia Volia, NV) members and various leftist radical publicists such as P. N. Tkachev: "in regard to revolutionary terror, all conventional, moral limitations should be lifted since the revolution itself was the paramount goal, and the blissful state of all mankind (including Russia) after a revolutionary victory would justify all excesses."¹⁸ It was in absolute conformity with B. Savinkov's actions that he got promoted in 1903 to the Combat Organization leader and by 1917 to his governmental career position. His memoirs may not show deep reflections over the "moral controversies" of using terror, but those were central for the members of the *People's Will*, whom he considered his forefathers, his spiritual cradle. This party broke off from the *Land and Liberty* (*Zemlia ii Volya*) in 1879 and proceeded with terrorism as a method of change, developed tactics and new methods of conspiracy and assassination. Those were picked up and perfected twenty four years later by 24 year old B. Savinkov and his Organization. Unequivocally, *Catechism of a Revolutionist*, published in 1869 by Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and Sergey Nechayev (1847-1882) had a significant meaning for all terrorists. It starts with:

The Revolutionist is a doomed man. He has no private interests, no affairs, sentiments, ties, property nor even a name of his own. His entire being is devoured by one purpose, one thought, one passion - the revolution. Heart and soul, not merely by word but by deed, he has severed every link with the social order and with the entire civilized world; with the laws, good manners,

¹⁸ Shlapentokh, 125.

conventions, and morality of that world. He is its merciless enemy and continues to inhabit it with only one purpose - to destroy it.¹⁹

This statement describes Savinkov's *Ethos and Pathos*, yet he does not quote or refer to Nechayev in his own works.

Political assassinations, which included tsars, princes, members of the ruling families, even infants, were not at all unusual to Russia since the earliest times. Their purpose was normally very concrete: eliminate a competitor, replace a ruler, switch control from one hand to another but not to change a regime, not to exterminate absolutism. From this perspective we should agree that the 19th century was the time when political terrorism was engrained and got a new theoretical and practical boost on Russian soil. The primacy of the practical application of the old idea "to kill the tsar" in a "modern" and at that point in time "unprecedented" way²⁰ belongs to Dmitry Karakozov (1840-1866). C. Verhoeven argues that his attempt to kill the Tsar on April 4th, 1866 gave impulse and "modern" meaning to terrorism as "not simply a strategy, not a means towards this or that particular political end, but rather a paradigmatic way of becoming a modern political subject, and that its genesis can be understood only when analyzed in the material context of modernity." Karakozov's trial case records that "when Alexander II asked his assassin what he wanted, the latter's answer consisted of a single word: "Nothing."²¹ This absolute statement and radical attitude brings together and relates Karakozov and Savinkov's character: this "nothing" means "everything", "a vision of

¹⁹ Sergei Nechaev, and Michael Bakunin. www.uoregon.edu/~kimball/Nqv.catechism.thm.htm

²⁰ Verhoeven, Claudia. *The Odd Man Karakozov*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009 5.

²¹ Verhoeven, 178.

power's void," the *Wheel of Fortune* is launched, "the act will have happened, and the world will not be the same."²² Since that act of "factual propaganda," not just the tsar but the tsarist regime was condemned. A Systematic, carefully planned and organized approach towards regicide was chosen by the *People's Will*: it was led by its Executive Committee and succeeded in assassination of Alexander II in March 1881. With "improved" tactics and methods for terrorist acts, a new faction, which included Alexander Ulyanov (V. Lenin's brother), planned an attempt on the life of Alexander III.

When after many years of prison and exile this party's members were released, these veteran revolutionaries helped to form the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR). We must acknowledge that Boris Savinkov was "born" and invigorated by this movement. His Organization absorbed its methods. Savinkov himself at early stages of his "career" shared ideas of the former *Narodniki - Populists*, including "peasant revolution" and terror. Though we also must admit that at its founding the *People's Will's* and even SR's motives and means were quite practical and principally different from Savinkov's and Karakozov's. According to the memoirs of Vera Figner (1852 – 1925), a member of *The People's Will*, "Terror for its own sake was never the aim of the party. It was a weapon of protection, of self-defense, regarded as a powerful instrument for agitation and employed only for the purpose of attaining the ends for which the Party was working."²³ Later, certain assassinations by the *People's Will's* members clearly expressed revenge for persecuted revolutionaries: for example Vera Zasulich shot General Feodor F. Trepov in St. Petersburg in 1887, saying "For Bogolubov", "I could not find any better means to

²² Verhoeven, 7.

²³ Figner, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 75.

direct attention” to the abuse of power and rights of prisoners.²⁴ The letter of the Executive committee of the Will of the People to tsar Alexander III (March 1881) has an appeal to the tsar’s feelings and his sense of dignity and duty before the nation. It is full of powerful emotions, even pain for the necessity to sacrifice lives of great numbers of talented, self-denying people in the fight against injustice and absolutism: “how sad is the perishing of so much talent, such energy, in a labor of destruction, in bloody conflicts, when under different conditions, these forces might be directly applied to creative work, to the progress of the people, the development of their minds, and the well-being of their national life.”²⁵ They see their function as messianic as “the death of the Savior on the cross, to save the corrupt, ancient world with the triumph of reforming Christianity.”²⁶

Similar to these populist reflections and beliefs we observe in Savinkov-Ropshin’s “portraits” of his comrades, for example, the character of the Christian-terrorist Vanya from *The Pale Horse*. Savinkov himself or the main hero of his novel George doesn’t share these feelings, or have any regrets and sorrow. He is not seeking justifications for his murders, unlike terrorists of the *People’s Will* who wrote to the tsar that to interpret their terrorist acts “as being the evil plots of separate individuals, or even a band of criminals, would be possible only to a man who was quite incapable of analyzing the life of nations.”²⁷ The cited letter of the Executive Committee claims that

²⁴ Verhoeven, 175.

²⁵ Figner, 309.

²⁶ Figner, 308.

²⁷ Figner, 306.

the criminal is rather the tsarist regime not the terrorists, who are the rightful judges and persecutors, seeking justice.

Savinkov neither in his memoirs nor in his novel makes attempts to explain and justify the choice of a specific target of his acts of terror. He is truly engaged and excited by the process of hunting and accomplishing the task, and feels frustration only if attempts fail. At the same time, Savinkov and his main fictional character both are attentive to the Organization members' personal motives: this can be love, hate, vengeance, faith or other. "I know the reasons that have brought others into it. Heinrich is convinced that it is our duty. Fedor joined us because his wife had been murdered. Erna says she is ashamed to live, Vania wants to lay down his soul for his friends."²⁸ Savinkov "investigates" the recruits and slowly "works on" these motives to lead them to the extremes, to a culmination, to the complete readiness to kill and to die without hesitance. Would these "methods" not be called in modern language the "brain-washing" and creating "zombies"? Was it not the main talent of Boris Savinkov, his most valuable recruiter's gift or skill?

Many terrorists and populists actually came through attempts to work with and for the abused and miserable-peasants and workers (Vera Figner worked with peasants in the villages). This experience, foreign to Savinkov, was not in the sphere of his interests. Instead, he worked with the souls of the young devotees. The *People's Will's* assassination of Alexander II was in a way a symbolic attack on the Holy Father of the Nation, and other assassinations were revenging "brothers and sisters", martyrs of

²⁸ Boris Savinkov, *To chevo ni bilo*. Mockva: Sovremenik, 1992, 60.

revolution, serving justice and punishing abusers of power, etc. - which is humanly understandable, though of course not excusable. Savinkov seemed almost disgusted by the bringing of revenge or any other natural human element into terror as if they could destroy the purity of its purpose. His organization was patiently trained not to raise these questions, and it seems its main motive and satisfaction was getting higher credit for the higher target. Sometimes against his SR party's wish, Savinkov initiated a selection of his targets, and proudly acknowledged any direct and indirect connections to the most famous terrorist acts, expanding the list of his criminal achievements.

In many cases the qualification "criminal" depends on circumstances: murder in an Organization differs from murder of passion or planned murder. These differentiations could be and should be analyzed and understood. This paper argues that Savinkov's terror is a product of criminal mentality. These acts should be differentiated from political terrorist acts of movements and parties in the 19th-20th century Russia, though George (*Pale Horse*) wouldn't agree with us: "Why murder is justified in one case and not in another, people do find reasons but I don't... I cannot understand why to kill in the name of this or that is right, while to kill in the name of something else is wrong"²⁹ How faint is the line between criminal by mentality and criminal by all other reasons? This line of differentiation may seem shaky, but we could attempt to summarize specifics of criminal mentality as killing without conscience and any remorse. It is not just breaking legal or moral laws but disregarding their existence, which often comes from the condition of dissatisfaction and heteronomy in the perpetrator. This understanding puts within the same "line" the nature of Boris Savinkov and Evno Azef.

²⁹ Boris Savinkov, *The Pale Horse*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1919, 7.

Azef served as a double-agent- devotedly for both revolutionary forces and their enemies – the secret police, *Okhrana*, betraying and destroying everyone who from both sides could endanger his personal aims, ambitions and well-being. His protégé Savinkov was not a double-agent or traitor, but similarly played a double game, living a double life as terrorist and writers. He enjoyed conspiracy-masquerade and role of the *Tempter* and *Provocateur* of minds and souls. Both these people gained top respect and a unique Image in the revolutionary movement. Their “approach” for many brothers-in-revolution seemed iron-cold, realistic, higher than that of M.R. Gotz or G.A.Gershuni, who created the SR Battle Organization. The latter completely trusted and appointed Azef as his successor and was betrayed by him, and pushed out of play. Gershuni was arrested in May 1903.

Savinkov quickly learned from his patron his methods and “mechanics” of recruiting neophytes: he replaced inspiring and romantic enthusiasm, attempted “to dissuade the candidate from his intention, emphasized all the hardships of terrorists work, and tried to induce him or her to take up some other form of party work. [...] Azef seemed to be consciously trying to put off a candidate, and the more emotion the latter displayed, the less desire Azef had to admit him into the Organization. He had no faith in enthusiastic professions.”³⁰ From Savinkov’s writings we gather, that a big part of his “job” was to present candidates for Azef’s personal approval, as was required by the terrorists’ chief. Savinkov was the perfect pupil of his teacher. In 1904-1906, after the assassination of Von Plehve (July 1904), Savinkov and the Organization (Brigade) felt in full power, beyond control and orders of the SR Party, successful and financially stable

³⁰ Boris Nikolaejewsky, *Azef The Spy, Russian terrorist and Police Stool*. Academic International, Hattiesburg, Mississippi ,1934 99.

and supported. The necessity of conspiracy supported further isolation from any other attachments than terrorist “work”. The members developed the feeling of their superiority and discipline of not questioning the orders of their leaders. The discipline and selection were so strict and strong that among its members there were no traitors³¹ or members being “broken” after imprisonment. The exception was its leader Azef, who was the master-manipulator, balancing and benefiting from both extreme enemies: imperial state police and terrorist Brigade of the SR Party. Neither Azef nor Savinkov (after 1903) had much interest in Socialism/Marxism theories, which were shared by most revolutionary movements, and had no interest in masses – peasants’ and workers’ appraisals, or other “common illusions” of this time. Azef’s reasons were very practical and cynically realistic. The younger Savinkov was an individualist – he found his nature in revolutionary militarism, artistic self-realization in terrorism and conspiracy. Contemporaries from all social layers and circles admired and feared him. He pretended the terrorist was the only true revolutionary whose conspiratorial abilities and actions were of highest value. He valued fame and talent in “scripting”, “rehearsing” and “performing” assassinations and terror acts more than any other deeds.

It is known that V. Lenin was quite interested in Savinkov and was following publications about his personality and experience. These two big figures of the Revolution, most extreme opponents in the fight for power, were close in their criminal mentality and in justifying their methods. Lenin, a very talented actor-conspirator himself, respected Savinkov’s “school” and experience, but Lenin used conspiracy only

³¹ Nikolajewsky, 18.

as a tool and for Savinkov it had intrinsic value.³² Lenin applied methods developed by Azef's/Savinkov's organization succeeded Savinkov and one by one destroyed all his political opponents after the Bolsheviks' coup, in the times of Red Terror. And in particular with Savinkov's chances for the leadership in 1917, Lenin was wiser in manipulating the "masses", coordinating and using mass-uprising, the role of which Savinkov critically underestimated.

At the turn of the century in Russia there was a time when violence, extremism and criminality were spreading. Terrorists were learning from the police and the police from terrorists. The more the government reacted the more terrorists responded in a "feedback loop". At the same time multiple strikes, uprisings, revolts and pogroms were breaking out across the country. This period of the late empire and revolutions in Russian history was one of the most dramatic and cruel especially in relation between the regime and the populous. Can the spreading of criminality and terrorism be justified because of the reactionary regime and its executives, as many intellectuals were trying to point out?

In 1905 there was a terrible event which points to incompetence of the government. Its affect was tremendous on Russian literature and poetry. It signified the spread and development of dystopian and apocalyptic motifs which sooner or later affected the majority of Russian authors. On January 9th 1905 a peaceful demonstration of workers and their families led by the priest Griogory Gapon (1870-1906) marched towards the Winter Palace with their petition to the Tsar. The group's demands were merely concerning workers' socio-economic conditions. The crowd was unaware that the Tsar was absent. The crowd was infiltrated with armed provocateurs, who got engaged

³² Spence, 19.

in shooting with the police and Cossacks. Over one hundred were killed by the Tsar's troops and hundreds more injured. Gapon escaped (later he was recognized as an *Okhrana* informant and executed at the decision of the SR party). The order to shoot at this demonstration was a decision of the ministers, but not the Tsar. Nicolas II preferred to hide behind the official report which ends:

The fanatical preaching of the priest Gapon, forgetful of the sanctity of his calling, and the criminal agitation of persons of evil intent excited the workers to such an extent that on January 9th they began heading in great throngs toward the center of the city. In some places bloody clashes took place between them and the troops, in consequence of the stubborn refusal of the crowd to obey the command to disperse, and sometimes even in consequence of attacks upon the troops.³³

The autocratic state tried to justify this murder by saying that it was protecting itself from the "fanatical" "criminal" "agitation" and "evil" elements which attacked the troops and did not obey a "command." This hard line treatment of petitioners was a great inspiration to terrorists. Revolutionists throughout Russia were pleased at the violence and guilt of the regime thinking its demise was near. A glorious revolution was approaching.

Savinkov writes: "I was still under the enchantment of January 9th, and in "Bloody Sunday" was the dawn of the Russian Revolution."³⁴ Praising Gapon, Savinkov admits that he did not see the double agent in him as Azef did. Savinkov questions the "maturity of the masses" in relation to the coming revolution. Savinkov proved to be unaware of

³³ George Vernadsky, *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917 Volumes II & III*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1972, 744.

³⁴ Boris Savinkov, *Memoirs of a Terrorist*. New York: Albert & Charles Boni 1931, 123.

the conspirator's incognito game, the grand revolutionary play. Savinkov was a "true believer". Revolution was created and unleashed by the *intelligentsia* and politicians, and expanded into mass destruction and the nation's genocide.

CHAPTER V

REVOLUTIONARY PORTRAITS AND SUPERMAN ASPIRATIONS

IN *BALAGANCHIK* AND *THE PALE HORSE*

The image of the Pale Horse comes from *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* which are described in the last book of the New Testament of the Bible, called *The Book of Revelation of Jesus Christ to Saint John the Evangelist* in 6:1-8. The Christian apocalyptic vision is that The Four Horsemen are to set a divine Apocalypse upon the world as harbingers of the Last Judgment.³⁵ The fourth and final horseman is named Death, known as "The Pale Rider".

When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

— Revelation 6:7-8 NASB

Removing the Fourth Seal and the emergence of the pale horse with rider, whose name is Death, is a manifestation of the wrath of God in revenge for sinners. Boris Savinkov's book *The Pale Horse*, though based on real events, including the murder by Kaliaev (led by Savinkov) of the Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, is given a strong apocalyptic coloring. It conducted a psychological analysis of the generalized type of terrorist, close to the "strong man" (Nietzsche), but poisoned with reflection. The book is composed in the modernist stylistic of the time.

³⁵ Columba Graham Flegg, *An introduction to reading the Apocalypse*. St Vladimir's Seminary Press. 1999, 90.

It has been well established that Boris Savinkov had based the novel on his personal experience. It is written in the form of a diary documenting events and reminiscing thoughts and conversations of the participants while preparing a terrorist attack. The narration begins with the arrival of the main character, to the city N. “I arrived last night at N. It is the same as I last saw it. The crosses glitter on the churches.”³⁶ Similar to this “appearance” was his author’s outstanding dramatic appearance in 1903 almost from nowhere, from the crowd of ordinary people into the political and literary arena. This ambitious young man in a very short time arose to one of the most famous, scandalous, dangerous and powerful figures. In 1917 he was holding important governmental and military positions and probably could have become the most serious competitor to V. Lenin’s authority and power if his comrades would have been as dedicated and cruel as he was. He was considered by many to be the realization of the *Urbmensch* with his campaign of terror in the first decade of the 20th century.³⁷

At this point it would be appropriate to highlight the landmarks of Savinkov’s early biography. Savinkov was born in 1879 (in Kharkov (Ukrainian: Харків), the second-largest city of the north-east of Ukraine.), to a noble Russian family. In the 1860s his father was forced to sell off the family estate after emancipation of the serfs. Such an event could have contributed to a grudge against the tsar, indeed the noble class had been in conflict with the tsarist system for centuries. Savinkov’s father served as a military judge in Warsaw, while Boris and his elder brother were in gymnasium. Their mother encouraged them to learn Polish. She was a talented writer and educated woman. Family

³⁶ Savinkov *The Pale Horse*, 1.

³⁷ Spence, 189.

liberal views were contradicted by the reactionary politics of the gymnasium in Warsaw. Later Boris was studying law at the University and his elder brother attended *Gorny* Institute in St. Petersburg where both were arrested in 1897 for involvement in protests against the erecting of a monument to a reactionary figure Count M. N. Muraviev in Warsaw.³⁸ Such was the environment of youth in Russia at the time and of Savinkov's early adulthood: a spectrum of political ideas from the reactionary to radical. This exposure to radical revolutionary ideas and ancient noble anti-tsarist sentiments and his tragic inability to reconcile these extremes could have led to Savinkov's twisted character. For his activism Boris was beaten and imprisoned in *Peter and Paul* fortress, never again to be the effete intellectual from a noble family, his façade continued to portray but a hardened revolutionary. In 1899 he married Vera Glebovna Uspenskaia, the daughter of a well-known writer. Despite the eventual birth of a son, there was no great family life. Before the marriage Boris was well experienced in his sex-life and continued to pursue women of various ages for his unfulfilled needs. He also experimented with drugs including morphine and cocaine. All in all Boris was a concoction of a womanizing gambler of great courage and elegance, eventually a terrorist and hardworking writer and journalist. When one of the extremes was not pronounced, he exaggerated the *façade* of the other. He was sentenced to Vologda in 1901 where he met Y.B. Breshkovskaya and later he escaped with the determination to "Take part in Terror". Russia's government "on the whole, paid very dearly for the severity with which it had repressed what was originally a purely academic movement."³⁹ The majority of

³⁸ Spence, 13-14.

³⁹ Spence, 11.

revolutionary party members including terrorists were recruited from former participants of these students movements 1899-1902; young terrorists “had no particular experience of such work; but this was compensated by their enthusiasm, devotion, and readiness to sacrifice their lives. Experience came only later, bringing with it the poison of skepticism.”⁴⁰

Boris Savinkov came from this generation. Savinkov always lived comfortably as a result of significant funding. Perhaps he thought he was entitled to live this way. Perhaps he found in the terrorist organization more than a role but boldness, inventiveness, autonomy and togetherness. Whatever the organization fulfilled in his life, he believed that loyalty to the organization was worth risking his life for. Savinkov and others in the organization were primarily adventurers and were not concerned with ideology. This lack of concern, shown in the *Memoir of a Terrorist* by neglect, leads the reader to this conclusion; yet true motivations may be unknown or confused to a terrorist or extremist himself. “Where mass movements are in violent competition with each other, there are not infrequent instances of converts - even the most zealous-shifting their allegiance from one to the other.”⁴¹ This wisdom from a much later time points that a True Believer looks to a movement for fulfillment in his life and truth in the movement is of little importance. His passion and confusion is represented in the text of Pale Horse:

Vania says: “There is no way out for me, none whatever. I am out to kill, yet I believe in the Word, I adore Christ. Oh, the agony of it!”⁴²

⁴⁰ Nikolaejewsky, 70-71.

⁴¹ Eric Hoffer, Eric. *The True Believer; thoughts on the nature of mass movements*. New York: Harper and Row, 1951, 17.

⁴² Savinkov, *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, 17.

Most comrades in the terrorist Organization were young. Some, unlike Savinkov, believed in suicide rather than capture. Kaliayev was one such individual we read about in the memoir.

“I would rather finish it all in Japanese style...” - “What do you mean?”

“The Japanese do not surrender in Organization.” - “Well?” - “They commit hara-kiri.” Such was Kaliayev’s frame of mind on the eve of the assassination of the Grand Duke Sergius.⁴³

Suicide is something Savinkov would not consider.

The mentality of the terrorist was often influenced by firm conviction. Many had studied science, or technical trades. M. I. Zilberberg was a mathematician. Schwietzer was a chemist. Technical training combined with a desire for “heroic” deeds seem to be key elements in the terrorist calling. Savinkov describes Schweitzer:

He was constantly at work and gave promise of becoming an outstanding terrorist leader. He interested himself much in scientific and technical problems: chemistry, mechanics, electro-techniques. He not only read much on social problems, but in his leisure hours studied the sciences he loved so much.⁴⁴

Many terrorists, including Savinkov, studied chemistry for the application to bomb making.

Savinkov’s description of the new recruit Nazarov’s character in his memoir identifies another temperament: “His words and actions glowed with hatred for the well-fed and oppressors rather than with love for the hungry and the injured. By temperament

⁴³ Savinkov, *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, 97.

⁴⁴ Savinkov, *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, 34.

he was an anarchist and far removed from acceptance of any party program. From his experience he developed an original philosophy of his own, in the spirit of individualist anarchism.”⁴⁵ Savinkov shows little tangible love for the hungry in his memoir. Without tact or principle Savinkov proclaimed his priority: “differences of principle and program should not stand in the way - that we terrorists cannot quarrel over the question of socialization of plants and factories.”⁴⁶ Savinkov was a specialized technical terrorist.

Savinkov writes: “Kaliayev, Moiseyenko, Dulebov, Borishansky and Brilliant were also ‘Anarchists’ like myself. We all agreed that the parliamentary struggle could not be of use to the working classes and favored direct action.”⁴⁷ The reader of *Pale Horse* is led not into ‘pure’ ideology but into a tormented criminal mind when the narrator says: “I don’t understand why a person should not kill.”⁴⁸ There are no references to works of anarchists such as Kropotkin, Nechayev, or Bakunin.

Savinkov attempted to continue his terrorist career after 1917. He organized and headed *Narodny Soiuz Zashchity Rodiny i Svobody* in 1918 – “Peoples Union for Protection of Motherland and Freedom”- its targets were the leaders of Bolsheviks,⁴⁹ and ironically, later, when Bolsheviks got Savinkov in custody, their leaders were considering employing his ‘professional’ experience and connections to organize terrorist acts against the unfavorable members of their own party and government. The idea that for Savinkov

⁴⁵ Savinkov, *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, 198.

⁴⁶ Savinkov, *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, 204.

⁴⁷ Savinkov, *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, 77.

⁴⁸ Savinkov, *The Pale Horse*, 7.

⁴⁹ Litvin, Savinkov na Lubianke: dokumenty, 38.

terror was a universal law is plausible. We doubt that he cared much about the violation of Kant's categorical imperative while writing: "We have to kill in order that no one should kill after that; that men should live forever according to the divine law, and that love should forever brighten men's lot."⁵⁰ The goal was revolution. What happened afterward was not in the terrorist's plan.

Was the Story of the terrorist a tragedy? Could there be an apology? As was pointed out earlier, those impetuous and troubled years caused common 'gaps' in thought processes among young revolutionaries. As R. Spence notes, Savinkov was not well educated in natural science.⁵¹ But we can assume that he could not escape the general notion of Social Darwinism. It permeated the era as did misconceptions about other new scientific discoveries. For example the idea *Uniformitarianism*, developed in the 18th century, influenced Darwin. *Uniformitarianism* states: Laws of Nature are the same today as they were at the formation of the earth. Yet Darwin himself violated *Uniformitarianism*. He proposed a theory for natural selection without a theory for the 'Origin' of life, therefore something was different in the 'primordial soup' to initiate life. Arguments in theology counter *Uniformitarianism* but reveal a similar gap as in Darwin's thinking. "They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless."⁵² The revolutionary looks forward to the miracle. Such is the human condition with human limitations. That is why we need political consensus. Savinkov did not discover consensus or the political life. He

⁵⁰ Savinkov, *The Pale Horse*, 37.

⁵¹ Spence, 53.

⁵² William Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well* ii. iii. 1.

was trapped in the tautology: Love is Death and Death is Love, “But I did not feel in me the strength to live for the sake of love, and I understood that I could and ought to die for the sake of it”⁵³ He did not possess the understanding to realize that he was trapped in a dangerous nihilistic game of “catch me if you can” with the Secret Police, Okhrana, and fighting a System which deviously used his own work to justify further repression. Christ was a figure to emulate in death or to watch his comrades emulate but not the One whose words were worth following. Like Hamlet, he was guided to the very end when he realized he was a monster. He spent his life crafting the “character” of the “superman” of the revolution, who could bring down autocracy with either pen or bomb. He deserted his son, wife, parents, and country. He killed himself in Lubyanka prison in May 1925.

In the novel “The Pale Horse” the revolutionaries are constantly changing identities, locations and disguises as they plot and carry out terrorist acts. Shape-shifting, carnivalesque, masquerade, mystery and love triangles are all the elements of a Modernist theatrical play, which also includes actors, marionettes, the narrator and the master-puppeteer.

“Bravo! The gallery and the stalls are pleased. The actors have done their jobs. They are being dragged by their three-cornered hats, by their cock-feathers, and thrown into a box. The strings get entangled which is the admiral Rinaldo, which the enamored Pierrot? He can make head or tail of it? Good-night until tomorrow. To-day I am on the stage with Vania, Fedor, and the governor. Blood is flowing. To-morrow I will be dragged on again. Crabineers are on the scene. Blood is

⁵³ Savinkov, *The Pale Horse*, 60.

flowing. In a week it will be again the admiral, Pierrette, Pierrot. Blood is flowing – that is, cranberry juice.⁵⁴

“Сегодня на сцене я, Фёдор, Ваня, генерал-губернатор. Льётся кровь. Завтра ташат меня. На сцене карабинеры. Льётся кровь. Через неделю опять: адмирал, Пьеретта, Пьеро. И льётся кровь - клюквенный сок.”

The novel reveals multiple references to the imagery of Alexander Blok’s *Balaganchik* (1906), created as a result of a deep crisis in his mind of abstract and lofty ideals of "the Beautiful Lady" and "the Eternal Feminine.”:

Пьеро: И вот, стою я, бледен лицом,	Here stand I, pale face,
Но вам надо мной смеяться грешно.	But for you to laugh at me – is sinful.
Что делать! Она упала ничком...	What can be done! She fell face down...
Мне очень грустно. А вам смешно? ⁵⁵	I am very sad. And you're laughing?

Characters in *The Pale Horse* represent certain types – almost stereotypes. An “offspring” of the common folk, *narod* - Fyodor is the only representative of the non-intelligentsia; a former blacksmith from Presnya in Moscow. He joined the brigade, as he says, because he wants revenge for the murder of his wife. She was a bystander in a Cossack raid. Feodor is not very clear about the mission and goals of this particular brigade. He just wants to kill the rich because they have the power to kill the poor, as he believes. Once he is disguised in the costly officer’s uniform. The brigade was well sponsored by the party that used their services. He expresses resentment at the expensive

⁵⁴ Savinkov, *The Pale Horse* 174.

⁵⁵ Blok, *Balaganchik*

outfit of one aristocratic lady - so much money is spent on dresses. His bitter speech reveals his class identity.

“There is no justice in life. [...] ‘We toil all day in the factories, our mothers weep, our sisters walk the streets...And these creatures...To hundred rubles! ... Oh, they ought to be wiped out, all of them [...] There was a look of hate in his eyes. ‘They all ought to be wiped out – no doubt about that!’ Feodor leaned on the table in silence. There was hatred in his eyes.⁵⁶

“Что рабочие люди как мухи мрут. [...] ... Вот за этот костюм плочено двести рублей, а дети копеечку просят. Это как? [...] Эх, нету правды на свете. Мы день-деньской на заводе, матери воют, сестры по улицам шляются ... А эти ... двести рублей . . . Эх ... Бомбой бы их всех, безусловно.” [...] Федор облокотился о стол и молчит. В его глазах злоба.

He wants to kill all the rich with bombs. In his conversation with George, Feodor rejects the idea of using a lawyer if he is captured and put on trial.

Feodor says thoughtfully, in what mansions bastards live. Sweetly sleep, sweetly eat damn aristocrats... oh well you wait. Your dirge is coming.⁵⁷

“Федор задумчиво говорит: - В каких хоромах, мерзавцы, живут. Сладко спят, сладко едят ... Баре проклятые ... Ну да ладно: гляди, - служи панихиду.

Fyodor, despite his wish to bring terror to the wider circles of the upper class, accepts George’s instructions to follow a particular target without questioning, like a good

⁵⁶ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 72 – 73

⁵⁷ Translated by RM

soldier. He is the one in this novel who throws the bomb first but is not successful in killing the governor. He dies as a soldier when chased by police. He does not surrender and is shot. He represents those people from *Narod*, who started to join revolutionary missions, organized by the *intelligentsia*, and were used and killed. The only regret George has after Fyodor's death is the loss of a good and devoted comrade in revolution. In the newspaper report we learn that he was about 26 years old, and died unidentified – unknown and soon to be completely forgotten. This character starts an array of a new type of hero developed in the twentieth century literature; a representative of the millions of “unknown soldiers” who died during the revolution.

Heinrich and Erna are representatives of the young generation, who share idealistic beliefs in freedom, socialism and equality. They had to put aside “normal desires” of youth – love, family, education, career, etc.. Heinrich loves Erna, but believes that terror is his duty and priority. The text gives us his portrait, reflecting the accepted negligence to external appearance and adjustment to his new identity the revolutionary-terrorist.

Henrich is just twenty-two. As a student he used to speak at meetings. In those days he wore glasses and long hair. Now, he has become rather coarse, like Vania: he is lean and usually unshaven.⁵⁸

Генриху 22 года. Он бывший студент. Ещё недавно он ораторствовал на сходках, носил пенсне и длинные волосы. Теперь, как Ваня, он огрубел, похудел и оброс небритой щетиной.

⁵⁸ Savinkov, *The Pale horse* 16

He is unshaven, wears glasses, is a former student-activist, and is twenty two years old. He strives to become one with *narod* and is trying very hard to look, act and speak like “common folk”, though his knowledge of French and political situation is revealed in a story he shares with comrades after he was disguised as a coachman. Henry is excited that he was taken for a member of the *narod* and shares a story he finds almost humorous.

‘I had another adventure quite lately. I was engaged as a driver by an old gentleman and his wife. They seemed to be decent people of the better class [...] I darted across the rails. The old gentleman in the sledge jumped to his feet and kicked me violently on the back of my neck. “You villain!” [...] ‘What do you mean by driving like a madman, you dog!’ I said, your Highness need not be alarmed.’ Then I heard the woman say to him in French. ‘I wish Jean, you didn’t get into such fits of rage. [...] a driver is after all a human being. [...] ‘you ought to be ashamed to speak like that.’ ‘Then I felt him tapping my shoulder. ‘I am sorry my friend,’ he said [...] and he gave me a tip of twenty kopecks... they must have been liberals...’⁵⁹

Вот тоже на днях барин один с барыней порянулись. Старички. Будто из благородных. Выехал я на Долгоруковскую, а там трамвай электрический у остановки стоит. Ну, я не глядя: Господи благослови, - через рельсы. Как барин-то вскочит и давай меня по шее тuzить: ты, говорит, негодяй, что же? Задавить нас желаешь? Куда, говорит, прёшь, сукин сын? А я и говорю: не извольте, говорю, ваше сиятельство себя беспокоить, так что трамвай

⁵⁹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 17-18.

у остановки стоит, проедем. Тут слышу барыня по-французски заговорила: Жан, говорит, не волнуйся, во-первых тебе это вредно, а кроме того и извозчик, говорит, человек. Ей-Богу, вот так и сказала: извозчик, мол, человек. А он ей по-русски: сам знаю, что человек, да ведь какая скотина... А она: фи, говорит, что ты право, стыдись ... Тут он, слышу, за плечо меня тронул: прости, говорит, голубчик, и на чай двугривенный подаёт ... Не иначе: кадеты ... Н-но, милая, выручай!.. - Генрих стегает свою лошаdенку.

Henrich wants to look tough, but is shy as a result of his “intelligent’s nature,” as we know, when he asks Erna, if she is used to “the work”. Heinrich believes in “setting men free and in giving them all food.”⁶⁰ His socialist beliefs are higher than his commitment to terror itself. George sees his feelings as weakness:

Heinrich loves Erna, and will love her, only her, all his life. But his love does not make him happy. On the contrary, it makes him miserable, while my love is all joy.⁶¹

Heinrich’s nervousness and anxiety comes not from the fear of death, at least not his death, but from longing for a faster coming of the New Future, and to some degree from his worry and concern about Erna. He is anxious to be the first to throw the bomb and even die, because of his passion and commitment to Revolution.

After the terrorist act Heinrich reads about it in the newspaper. George is indifferent, but Heinrich is impressed and satisfied that their act is acknowledged in the press. He even argues with George about it. He says with excitement, that this article

⁶⁰ Savinkov The Pale Horse 43.

⁶¹ Savinkov The Pale Horse 61.

states the importance of this murder not just for Moscow but all Russia. This act was the breakthrough after which, he believes, his party will win. George is still not impressed, but Heinrich says that the word of the press is important, the article is propaganda which is the only way to tell the masses about their fight. Their work will now spread to the working class and to the villages, he believes.

As for Heinrich, he does not trouble about riddles. The world to him is simple as an alphabet. There are slaves on one side, masters on the other. The slaves revolt against the masters. It is right that a slave should kill. It is wrong that a slave should be killed. A day will come when the slaves shall conquer. Then there will be a paradise on earth. All men will be equal; all will be well fed, and all will be free.⁶²

George has a dramatically different perception than Heinrich's idealistic vision of the future. George states:

I don't believe in a paradise on earth, and don't believe in a paradise in heaven. I don't want to be a slave, not even a free slave. All my life has been a clash. I can't exist without it. But what is the purpose of my clashing? That I don't know. Such is my desire. I drink my wine undiluted.⁶³

Despite his harshness, Heinrich shares his concerns about people he loves – Erna and Vanya. His dialog with George before the terrorist operation clearly reveals this:

Is Vanya going to do it? [...] that means he is lost. [...] I can't stand that ... he is going to his death. [...] It is much better that I should perish – not he [...] Can

⁶² Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 169.

⁶³ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 9.

you imagine Vanya gone. We calmly decide a thing, and it means the certain death of Vanya [...] The certainty of it is so ghastly. No, for God's sake, No! ⁶⁴

Он говорит быстро: - Лучше я первый пойду. Я погибну. Как же так, если его повесят? Ведь повесят? Повесят? [...] - Ну, так я не могу. Как будем жить, если он умрет? Пусть лучше повесят меня. [...] - Нет, Жорж, слушайте, нет... Неужели его не будет? Вот мы спокойно решили, а от нашего решения Ваня наверное погибнет. Главное, что наверное. Нет, Бога ради, нет ... Он щиплет бородку. Руки его дрожат. Я говорю: - Вот что, Генрих, одно из двух: или так, или этак. Или террор, и тогда оставьте все эти скучные разговоры, или разговаривайте и уйдите назад, в университет.

George's response is entirely ironic and straight forward:

It must be one or the other. Either you stick to it, or in that case stop your tedious discussions, or else go on discussing; go back to your University. ⁶⁵

Heinrich's failure to carry out a successful killing the Governor-General drove by unnoticed by him) caused Fyodor's anger. Heinrich is sick with shame:

He covered his face with his hands. "What a shame ... shame! He had not slept that night. He had blue shadows under his eyes and red spots on his cheeks. ⁶⁶

Какой позор ... Какой стыд ... Он не спал всю ночь напролет. Под глазами у него синяя тень и на щеках багровые пятна.

On a broader scale it could be understood as a general unfitness of this type of personality for the terrorist job – he is too much an *Intelligent*.

⁶⁴ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 66.

⁶⁵ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 67.

⁶⁶ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 100.

Erna seems to be the most tragic character in the novel. She could be a type of Turgenev's girl – devoted, tender, self-sacrificial heroine. In the hard times of the revolutionary movement she becomes the victim of her endowments, all her feminine values are wasted, and she is doomed to die. She will never realize her nature as beloved sweetheart, wife and mother. For George she is nothing more than a bomb-making appliance. Erna is a young chemist – she makes bombs for the brigade. Her devotion to terror and Revolution seems dependent upon her meek love to George, despite his obvious coldness toward her. She is willing to serve the Revolution and sacrifice herself at his order. She disregards Heinrich's sincere feelings toward her. She is very unhappy and confused, except in the rare moments when she is with George. She is educated as a Chemist and came to revolution probably through meeting George, being “prepared” by romantic readings to meet her hero. Her job is extremely dangerous; any moment she could be crippled for life or killed by an explosion. She is in terror, as George writes, because she is ashamed to live in the world which she sees as a world of slavery and unjustness.

Reminding us of Pushkin's Tatyana, she confides to George her dream:

-I feel as if I had lived only in order to meet you. I saw you in my dreams. All my prayers were for you. - You forget our cause, Erna. - We shall die together for it. .

. . Oh, my love, when I am with you, I feel like a little girl, like a child. ... I know

I have nothing to offer you. . . . Nothing but my love. Take it. . . ⁶⁷

- Мне кажется, я жила только для того, чтобы встретить тебя. Ты

виделся мне во сне. Я о тебе молилась. - Эрна, а революция? - Мы вместе

⁶⁷ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 41-42.

умрём ... Слушай, милый, когда я с тобой, мне кажется, что я маленькая девочка, ещё ребёнок. Я знаю: я ничего не могу дать тебе. Но у меня есть любовь. Возьми же её.

Erna is a representative of many young people who felt that things were wrong in society, because of their idealism. She was seeking romantic love, but instead her sincere feelings and education turned her into a tool of the cynic George. Her mind is raptured by contradictions: she is ashamed to live and do nothing in the world of injustice and goes to terror, at the same time she is tormented and complains:

When will it all end, [...] I can't live for murder.⁶⁸

- Когда же это все кончится, Жорж? . . . Когда?.. [...] - Я не могу жить убийством. Я не могу ... Надо кончить. Да, поскорее кончить ...

Only Heinrich is concerned with the danger of her work: “- George, is not there some danger of accidents in the preparation of explosives? - Of course there is. Accidents do happen now and then. - Then Erna might be blown up?” George thinks of Erna as the oblation for the Divine Terror and tells of what happened to one of his comrades and the same fate could lie ahead of Erna:

His corpse, or rather, pieces of it, was found in the room: the splashed brains, the blood-covered chest, the lacerated legs and arms. All this was heaped into a cart and carried away to the police station. Erna runs the same risk. What if she should actually be blown up? If, instead of flaxen hair and wondering blue eyes, there

⁶⁸ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 101.

should remain only a red heap of flesh? ... Then Vania would have to do the work in her place. He is also a chemist, and can do the work well.⁶⁹

Один мой товарищ уже погиб на такой работе. В комнате нашли его труп, клочки его трупа: разбрызганный мозг, окровавленную грудь, разорванные ноги и руки. Навалили все это на телегу и повезли в участок. Эрнэ рискует тем же. Ну, а если её в самом деле взорвёт? Если вместо льняных волос и голубых удивлённых глаз, будет красное мясо?

After such a gruesome depiction of a comrade's fate, anyone would expect an expression of some feelings and regret. But George coolly continues: Then Vanya will prepare the bombs."⁷⁰ Abandoned, Erna was tracked down by police and committed suicide.

Vanya is one of the most complicated characters in the novel. Prior to meeting George, Vanya was involved in revolutionary activities and was arrested and sent into exile, where he discovered for himself God. Vanya is in constant dialog and arguing with George. He is a true believer, a "holy person" – which is what the members of the brigade think of him. His participation in terror is deeply connected to his missionary servitude and belief in Jesus Christ – he all the time thinks of him – the God-Man – “*О Богочеловеке Христе*”. He paradoxically is ready to kill and through terrorist acts in the name of love show his sacrifice for the People. When he is going to kill, his soul is suffering, but he “cannot not kill” because he loves:

Here I come to kill and my soul suffers agonies but I cannot not kill because I love. If the cross is heavy - take it, if the sin is great - accept it.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 104.

⁷⁰ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 104.

Вот я иду убивать, и душа моя скорбит смертельно. Но я не могу не убить, ибо люблю. Если крест тяжёл, - возьми его. Если грех велик, - прими его.

He believes that the heavier the Cross, meaning personal trial or challenge, the more important to pick it up and carry it. The worse the sin the more important it is to give in to it. Vanya is critical of people, including his comrades. For example, about Heinrich he says:

We are corroded by that poison from our childhood. Take Henrich. He can never call a flower simply a flower: He must always add – a flower of this or that family, such and such species, with such petals, such corolla; these petty details make him overlook the flower itself. And that’s how we lose the sight of God because of worthless futilities. It’s all mathematics and reason with us.⁷²

Вот Генрих, не скажет: цветок, говорит: семьи такой-то, вида такого-то, лепестки такие-то, венчик такой-то. За этим сором он цветка не увидел. Так и Бога за сором не видим. Все по арифметике, да по разуму.

The whole book is full of biblical motifs. Another strong line in it is refers to Dostoevsky.

Tell me, if there is love in a man’s heart – I mean real, deep love – could he kill or not? [...] Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” And he must lay down more than his life - his soul. He must ascend his own calvary and take no decision unless it is urged by love – by love alone. Any other motive would bring him back to Smerdiakov.⁷³

⁷¹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 12.

⁷² Savinkov *The Pale Horse*. 88, 89.

⁷³ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 10-11.

...если любишь, много, по-настоящему любишь, то и убить тогда можно... [...] - убить - тяжкий грех. Но вспомни: нет больше той любви, как если за други своя положить душу свою. Не жизнь, а душу. Пойми: нужно крестную муку принять, нужно из любви, для любви на все решиться. Но непременно, непременно из любви и для любви. Иначе, - опять Смердяков, то есть путь к Смердякову.

George notices:

Raskolnikov killed an old woman and was himself choked by her blood. Yet Vania goes out to kill, and he will be happy and blessed. Will he, I wonder? He does it for the sake of love, he says.⁷⁴

Раскольников убил старушонку и сам захлебнулся в ее крови. А вот Ваня идёт убивать и, убив, будет счастлив и свят. Он говорит: во имя любви.

Discussions of Dostoevsky's characters, which George and Vanya are having during their meetings, bring up the notion of what is permissible for men. These contemplations connect those characters to the self-questioning Srubov, the character from *The Chip*.

Vanya says:

I have come to the conclusion that only two ways are open to men, no more than two. One is to believe that everything is permissible. Please, understand me - everything, without exception. Now that leads to the making of such a character as Dostoyevsky's Smerdiakov, provided a man has a mind to dare and not to shrink at any consideration. After all, there is logic in such an attitude: since God

⁷⁴ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 26.

does not exist, since Christ is but a man, there is no love as well; there is nothing whatever to stop you.⁷⁵

This mentality developed under the influence of Dostoevsky and later Nietzsche. Vania believes that if he commits the worst possible sin and loses his soul “in the name of love of all people” for their better future, he will be forgiven by Christ and his sacrifice will be accepted. This reminds us of the twisted logic of the Witch in Zinaida Gippius’s *Sacred Blood*. The Witch symbolizes the sophisticated intellectuals, who were corrupting and mind twisting innocent souls of the young generation. Thus the Witch teaches the Mermaid that people have immortal souls because the holy blood of Christ was spilled for them. In the end, to obtain the soul, the Mermaid spills the dearest blood of the one she loves. She was willing to accept death and suffering to feel the possession of a soul even through losing it. We know that Savinkov knew Gippius and was aware of her works and her interest in Christian themes. One may come to the conclusion that characters like Vanya or the Witch are more dangerous or “devilish” for the innocent souls, because they can turn children into soldiers. They can do more harm than simple and straight forward Feodor, the blacksmith in *The Pale Horse*, who wants to kill just because he hates the rich.

It is interesting that in the novel the “holy man” Vanya is the one, who succeeded with the act of murdering the Governor and survived the bombing himself. Savinkov, the author, intentionally chooses Vanya as the one to carry out a successful assassination. That choice points to the type of “revolutionary sophists” as the most “productive” in achieving the “final goal” – death. After Vanya was arrested, he was put on trial and

⁷⁵ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 10.

executed and had to go through his own Golgotha. We read his last letter in which he says he has no regrets.

Vania's vision of Revolution is related to neo-Christian utopias. Europe gave the world the words "freedom" and "socialism" he says, but it is not enough.

Europe has given the world two great words and has sealed them with her suffering. The first one is freedom, the second is socialism. But what word have we given the world ? Much blood has been shed in the name of freedom.⁷⁶

He regrets that Love has been forgotten. Socialism is no heaven on earth, yet many have died for it as have done so for freedom. There is more than children being fed and free men and women. That is Love - and he discusses the need to die for Love.

Did any one of us ever dare to say : It is not enough that men should be free, that children should not starve, that mothers should not cry out their eyes ? Even more than this, they have need, great need, to love one another. God must be with them, and in their hearts.⁷⁷

His concept of Revolution is formed from a twisted amalgam of socialism and Christianity. Those like him wouldn't stop fighting until they achieve this utopia:

And our children's grandchildren shall love God. They shall live in God and rejoice in Christ.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 44.

⁷⁷ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 44.

⁷⁸ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 45.

Like a character in *The Chip*, Vanya talks about the “great cause” which is being fought now. He predicts the coming of the great peasant and Christian Revolution which will be fought for the sake of Love. It will unite men as one.

Our faith is small and we are weak like children that is why we take up the sword. Not because of our strength do we wield the sword but because of our weakness and our fear. But wait for those who will come tomorrow: they will be pure they shall not need the sword, they will be strong. Yet before they come we shall perish.⁷⁹

Слушай, я верю: вот идет революция крестьянская, христианская, Христова. Вот идет революция во имя Бога, во имя любви, и будут люди свободны и сыты, и в любви будут жить. Верю: наш народ, народ Божий, в нем любовь, с ним Христос. Наше слово -- воскресшее слово: ей, гряди, Господи!.. Маловеры мы и слабы, как дети, и поэтому поднимаем меч. Не от силы своей поднимаем, а от страха и слабости. Подожди, завтра придут другие, чистые. Меч не для них, ибо будут сильны. Но раньше, чем придут, мы погибнем. А внуки детей будут Бога любить, в Боге жить, Христу радоваться. Мир им откроется вновь, и узрят в нем то, чего мы не видим.

His ideas carry similarities to the idea of a linear history and evolution towards perfectibility.

At one critical moment Vanya opposes George, stating that he won't agree to go to the Governor's palace with the bomb, because the Governor's children might be killed

⁷⁹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 38.

too. The narrator, George, comments that for him at certain points Vanya's image is almost laughable: "if it wasn't Vania, I would laugh."⁸⁰ George notes, that Vanya is the type that appears in Pushkin's *The Prophet*, whose heart was taken out by the Seraph, and burning charcoal was put in instead. George quotes the poem, saying that when Vania dies so will the Charcoal. He brings to the Revolution his individualistic philosophy. In his farewell letter from prison Vanya writes to his comrades:

I have done my duty. I am waiting for the trial and shall meet the sentence calmly. I think that even if I had managed to escape I should not, in any case, be able to go on living after what I have done. I embrace you, my dear friends and companions, and I thank you with all my heart for your love and your friendship.⁸¹

Я исполнил свой долг, -- долг революционера. Я жду суда над собой и спокойно встречу свой приговор. Я думаю, что если бы я и бежал, я бы все равно не мог жить после того, что сделал. Я обнимаю вас, милые друзья и товарищи. От всего сердца благодарен вам за вашу любовь и дружбу. Я верю в грядущую революцию и умираю с горделивым сознанием ее победного торжества. Прощаясь, я бы хотел напомнить вам простые слова: "Любовь познали мы в том, что Он положил за нас душу свою: и мы должны полагать души свои за братьев.

George summarizes his opinion about Vanya, stating that he is no better than any other killer:

⁸⁰ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 38.

⁸¹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 129.

Vania believes in Christ. I don't. Yet what difference does it make? I lie, I spy, and I kill. Vania also lied, spied, and killed. We all live by deceit and blood.⁸²

Ваня верил в Христа, я не верю. В чем же разница между нами? Я лгу, шпионю и убиваю. Ваня лгал, шпионил и убивал. Мы все живем обманом и кровью.

He insists that Vanya's motivations for terror do not make him rightful and holy:

Vania will die. He will cease to exist. 'The coal aflame with fire' will become extinguished. And I ask myself: Is there a difference between him and say, Fedor? Both will kill. Both will die. Both will be forgotten. The difference is not in their actions, but in their words. And when I think like that, I laugh.⁸³

Ваня умрет. Его не будет. С ним погаснет и "уголь, пылающий огнем". А я спрашиваю себя: в чем же разница между ним и, например, Федором? Оба убьют. Обоих повесят. Обоих забудут. Разница не в делах, а в словах. И когда я думаю так, то смеюсь.

The next important character is Andrey Petrovich. Among his historical prototypes was Azef. This accumulated image represents "revolutionary politicians." Andrey Petrovich also leads a double life, appears several times and secretly meets with George, discussing the role of terror for the political changes. The narrator describes him as an elderly man with sad eyes and small grey beard, who had a long revolutionary past and went through a Siberian labor camp. At the meetings he tries to be unnoticeable, he has a standard look of a Petersburg intelligent, a loner without woman's care and an old-

⁸² Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 144.

⁸³ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 109.

fashioned dirty coat and a cheap cigar in his mouth. Now he is a member of The Committee, which, as he believes, controls and directs the activities of George's terrorist Brigade.

His face was a lemon yellow, and there were wrinkles round his eyes. He surely lived in poor suburban lodgings, subsisted on tea prepared on a spirit lamp, or a thin overcoat all the winter, and spent all his time in planning and discussing. He was 'making the revolution.'⁸⁴

У него лимонного цвета лицо, морщинки у глаз. Он наверное живёт в нищей каморке, где-нибудь на Выборгской стороне, сам варит себе на спиртовке чай, бегаёт зимою в осеннем пальто и занят по горло всякими планами и делами. Он делает революцию.

He lives in Petersburg and thinks of himself as the true revolutionary who, as a proper member of society (George calls him a judge) and representative of the SR in the Duma, is moving the Revolution to a new level of political struggle, having George and his brigade at his service. He admires George for his talent in organizing terror operations and believes that George is carrying out orders from the Party. We gather that through his and the Committee's support, the Brigade is well sponsored and provided for with documents and other materials for their operations. Andrey Petrovich also brings the Party requests to "eliminate" a particular target or temporarily stop terrorist activities for political reasons.

...there is some talk of suspending the work for some time. What do you think of it? [...] How can our present tactics be reconciled with parliamentary work? We

⁸⁴ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 21.

must take a definite and consistent stand.[...] Parliament, or frankly set up opposition, and then, of course terror.⁸⁵

Вы знаете, Жорж, в комитете поднят вопрос о временном прекращении террора. Что вы об этом думаете? [...] Как совместить террор и парламентскую работу? Или мы её признаем и идём на выборы в Думу, или нет конституции и тогда, конечно, террор. Ну, что вы думаете об этом?

When the party faced difficulty in legal political work, Andrey Petrovich appealed to the terrorist brigade to pursue terrorist acts.

Have you read, George, they dispersed Duma? [...] Well... here is the constitution for you... The Committee agreed to strengthen terror. I say, because of dissolution of the Duma it is decided to intensify terror.⁸⁶

- Читали, Жорж, разогнали Думу? [...] - Да-а... Вот вам и конституция ... На нем чёрный галстук, старомодный грязный сюртук. Грошова сигара в зубах.- Комитет постановил усилить террор. -Я говорю: решено ввиду разгона Думы усилить террор.

George's comments reveal that this politician truly has no control over the terrorism he sponsors. George does not feel obligated to carry on the party's will and commits to terror at his own choice and desire.

Poor old man, poor grown-up child! ... Yet theirs is the kingdom of heaven.⁸⁷

Бедный старик. Бедный взрослый ребёнок. Именно вот таких и есть

Царство Небесное.

⁸⁵ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 20-21.

⁸⁶ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 91-92.

⁸⁷ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 22.

In George's opinion he is a pathetic "holy fool", who will die immersed in his ideals and "higher goals" and with ignorance of the reality. Politicians, like Andrey Petrovich's type, believed that they were continuing the revolutionary traditions started by the Decembrists, although they have not been cautious in choosing methods and are blind to the possible tragic outcomes of unleashing uncontrollable forces like terrorism and civil struggle. Andrei Petrovich shook Georges hand after a successful terrorist act. George points out that the old politician's face was beaming during the handshake. It seemed incongruous to George, and that the politician is blind because he was happy for the killing but did not understand the force he unleashed with the bankrolling of terror. George says that his presence bored him as he heard these words from him:

-Yes George, ' he said, 'we had lost all hope – to tell you the truth. After all those continual failures. And I can tell you' – he stooped and whispered in my ear- ' we even thought of dismissing you. Dismissing me? ... What do you mean? 'It is now a thing of the past, and I don't mind telling you.[...] So we thought: would it not be better to dismiss you altogether? It seemed all so hopeless...Are we not old fools?...Eh? I looked at him in sheer amazement.[...] But tell me, do you really think it possible to dismiss us?⁸⁸

-Снова приехал Андрей Петрович. Он с трудом разыскал меня и теперь долго и весело жмёт мне руку. Его старческое лицо сияет. Он доволен. Морщинки у глаз расплзлись у него в улыбку. - Поздравляю вас, Жорж. [...] Он лукаво щурит глаза, качает лысою головою, - С победой и одолением. Мне скучно с ним и я бы охотно ушёл. Мне скучны его слова, его докучные

⁸⁸ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 140.

поздравления. Но он невинно улыбается мне: -- Да-а, Жорж, правду сказать, мы уже и надежду теряли. [...] И, знаете, -- он наклоняется к моему уху, -- упразднить даже вас хотели. -- Упразднить? ... То есть как? [...] -- И вы . . . вы думаете, можно нас упразднить? [...] Он любовно хлопает меня по плечу. Эх, вы ... Пошутить с вами нельзя... И потом говорит деловито: [...] ... Комитет решил министра юстиции. -- То комитет, а то я... - Ах, Жорж . . . Я смеюсь.

Он долго думает про себя, по-стариковски жуёт губами. [] И снова весело жмёт мне руку. А ловко. Здорово ... Молодцы ... Андрей Петрович -- судья: он хвалит и он же клеймит. Я молчу: он ведь искренно верит, что я рад похвале. Жалкий старик.

Here is a politician who thinks he can buy terror piecemeal, turning it off and on at will. George sees this and as he says he is amazed. The Committee members pay for terror without thinking about the conscience for those who commit the acts. George remarks that Andrei Petrovich:

...acted like a judge: he approved and disapproved.[...] He was so sincerely convinced that I appreciated his approval. Poor old man!⁸⁹

This attitude reveals using people as a means to achieve political power by eliminating opponents while violating all moral and legal codes: "They know not what they do."

As was noted earlier, *The Pale Horse* is filled with literary references to the texts and ideas of the Silver age. It was influenced by philosophical and esthetical views of Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Merezhkovskiy, Gippius and Blok. It gives an interesting "twist"

⁸⁹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 142.

to the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy and the image of *The Beautiful Lady*. George has two main obsessions: Terror and his love for Elena. Her name is chosen for its association with the most beautiful of women - Helen of Troy, for whom one of history's great wars was started. She is the representation of *The Beautiful Lady* who could have power even over the terror and the fate of its victims. Her image in the novel is quite mysterious: the narrator does not know much about her, but is deeply in love even knowing that she is married. He creates an impression reminiscent of Blok's *tainstvennaya neznakomka* – mysterious stranger, black hair, black dress, big shining gray eyes – “в них полуденный свет”, and snowy winter motifs:

The white frost is soft like down. The snow creaks under my feet. I hear the slow strokes of the tower clock. It is ten o'clock. I sit down on the bench and patiently count the minutes. I say to myself: 'I did not meet her yesterday, but I may today.'⁹⁰

По утрам, в свободные дни, я брожу по бульвару, вокруг её дома. Пушится иней, хрустит под ногами снег. Я слышу, как медленно бьют на башне часы. [...] Я сажусь на скамью, терпеливо считаю время. Я говорю себе: я не встретил её вчера, я встречу её сегодня.

Sometimes Elena merges with the image of Sophia. Love to her seems to combine spiritual and sexual attraction. George sleeps with Erna without loving her and tells her about his ideal:

-Look here, Erna,' I said. 'Some women are faithful wives and passionate lovers and devoted friends. Yet they are not to be compared with that superior type of

⁹⁰ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 6-7.

woman – the woman who is a born queen. She does not give her heart to anyone. Her love is a splendid gift she bestows on the elect one.’⁹¹

-Слушай, - говорю я, -- есть женщины верные жены, и страстные любовницы, и тихие друзья. Но все они вместе не стоят одной: женщины-царицы. Она не отдаёт своё сердце. Она дарит любовь.

Beautiful Elena knows that George is a terrorist and kills people, but she does not try to stop him, she just asks, why he lives for the Death: “Живёте чем? Смертью? .. Милый, зачем?”

You, dearest, you don’t know what it is to be happy... Your whole life is centered on death. You are of iron; the sun is not for you... Why think of death? You would do better to live in joy... Don’t you think I am right?⁹²

Умей жить, умей радоваться, умей взять от жизни любовь. Не нужно злобы, не нужно убийства. Мир велик и всем хватит радости и любви. В счастье нету греха. В поцелуях нету обмана ... Так не думай же ни о чем и целуй... [...] Вот ты, милый, не знаешь счастья... Вся твоя жизнь только кровь.

Sometimes she is almost like a dream:

With a swift graceful movement she kissed my lips. It was a long, burning kiss. When I opened my eyes she was gone. Where was she? Or was it not all a dream?⁹³

⁹¹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 48.

⁹² Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 150.

⁹³ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 61.

Вдруг она мягко кладёт мне руки на плечи.- Милый, милый мой Жорж. И быстро, гибким движеньем целует меня прямо в губы. Долго и жарко. Я открываю глаза: её уже нет. Где она? И не сон ли мне снился?

When time of the terrorist act approaches, George writes:

Elena's image appeared before me dimly. I shut my eyes and tried to resurrect it. I knew that she had black eyebrows and slender hands, but I really did not see her. I saw only a dead mask. [...] My life will move in an iron circle as before.⁹⁴

Образ Елены заволокло туманом. Я закрываю глаза, я хочу его воскресить. Я знаю: у неё черные волосы и черные брови, у неё тонкие руки. Но я не вижу её. Я вижу мёртвую маску. И все-таки в душе живёт тайная вера: она опять будет моею. [...] Но я знаю: уйдут короткие дни, и я опять буду мыслью с нею. Жизнь замкнётся в кованный круг.

Speaking about Elena, George uses poetical metaphors, symbolist allegories and high language.

Her eyes become more radiant in the night, her laughter sounds louder, her kisses sting sharper. And the old vision comes back like a spell – the strange southern flower, the blood-red cactus, enchanting and passionate. What do I care for terrorism, the revolution, the gallows and death, since she is with me?⁹⁵

Падает ночь. Ночью глаза ещё ярче, смех ещё звонче, поцелуи больнее. И вот снова, как чары: южный странный цветок, кровавый кактус,

⁹⁴ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 73.

⁹⁵ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 148.

колдующий и влюблённый. Что мне террор, революция, виселица и смерть, если она со мной?

George confides to Elena, that at her word he is willing to abandon terror and revolution and serve only her, because love is as strong as death:

The great waters cannot quench love. [...] nor can the streams drown it: love is strong like death... Say one word, Elena, and I will give up everything to be your slave. 'She looked at me and smiled. Then she said musingly, 'No.'

⁹⁶

Большие воды не могут потушить любви и реки не зальют её, ибо любовь крепка, как смерть. Елена, скажите, и я брошу все. Я уйду из революции, уйду из террора. Я буду вашим слугою. Она смотрит на меня, улыбаясь.

Потом задумчиво говорит: - Нет.

Elena is a duplicitous image, reflecting the crisis of the concept of *The Beautiful Lady* and *Eternal Feminine*. She loves George and she loves another man: "Perhaps she loves only love itself." "Быть может, она любит только любовь." She is free and she is enslaved, she sings of life, but does not attempt to stop death, she is in black or in white, between "forever" and "never" – will love forever, but never be his. She speaks truth, but it feels false:

Why do people put down letters, make words out of letters and laws out of words?

There are libraries full of those laws. Don't live, don't love, don't think. There is a don't for every single day.[...] I felt disturbed. I certainly loved more than one

⁹⁶ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 85-86.

woman, and I never believed in the use of laws. She was repeating my own words. But now I felt they were a lie.⁹⁷

Почему люди пишут разные буквы, из букв слагают слова, из слов - законы? Этих законов библиотеки. Нельзя жить, нельзя любить, нельзя думать. На каждый день есть запрет... Как это смешно и глупо ... Почему я должна любить одного? Скажи, почему? [...] Мне жутко. Да, я любил не одну и я никогда не знал, зачем пишут законы. Она говорит мои же слова. Но теперь я в них чувствую ложь.

Internal crises lead to disenchantment in both love and terror. Caused by love, “normal” male jealousy resulted in an ordinary murder of a contender, his lover’s husband:

I have killed a man ... Earlier I had an excuse: I was killing for the sake of an ideal, for a cause. Those who sank the Japanese reasoned as I did: Russia needed their death. But now I have killed for my own sake. [...] I have walked a hard road. Where is the end? Where is my well-deserved rest? Blood begets blood, and vengeance lives by vengeance...It is not him alone that I have killed.⁹⁸

Я убил человека... До сих пор я имел оправдание: я убиваю во имя террора, для революции. Те, что топили японцев, знали, как я: смерть нужна для России. Но вот я убил для себя. Я захотел и убил. Кто судья? Кто осудит меня? Кто оправдает? Мне смешны мои судьи, смешны их строгие приговоры. Кто придёт ко мне и с верою скажет: убить нельзя, не убий. Кто осмелится бросить камень? Нету грани, нету различия. Почему для

⁹⁷ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 157-158.

⁹⁸ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 165-166.

террора убить - хорошо, для отечества -- нужно, а для себя -- невозможно?
Кто мне ответит? [...] Я прошёл трудный путь. Где конец? Где мой
заслуженный отдых? Кровь родит кровь и месть живёт мезтью. Я убил не
только его. . .

With this murder George killed his love and destroyed a perception of the uniqueness and
exclusiveness of *his* terrorist murder.

My murderous shot seems to have burnt my love out of me.⁹⁹

Во мне нет раскаяния. Да, я убил... [...] Будто мой разбойничий выстрел
выжег любовь. Мне чужда теперь её мука.

What was left to live for?

Now I know: I am tired of life. I am tired of my words, my thoughts, my desires –
tired of all men and their life. [...] There was the desire, and I accomplished my
task. Now the desire is gone. Why should I do anything? For the stage: for the
puppet show? [...] I will say my last word: my revolver is with me.¹⁰⁰

Я понял: я не хочу больше жить. Мне скучны мои слова, мои мысли, мои
желания. Мне скучны люди, их жизнь. [...] Было желание, я был в
терроре. Я не хочу террора теперь. Зачем? Для сцены? Для марионеток?
[...] Я уйду из скучного балагана. [...] Когда звезды зажгутся, упадёт
осенняя ночь, я скажу моё последнее слово: мой револьвер со мною.

How can we summarize the representation of the revolutionary, and outline the portrait,
created in Savinkov's novel? How typical is this character in the revolutionary

⁹⁹Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 166.

¹⁰⁰ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 178-180.

atmosphere of the early twentieth century Russia? George is young, intelligent, educated, he knows Latin, cites the Bible and Paul Verlaine in French, admires Nietzsche and the Greeks. He lost all family ties, crossed legal and moral laws by killing people, and his own political party can not officially accept and acknowledge his existence. He is the professional revolutionary – the loner, who is striving to be in control of his life and beliefs, but becomes a tool in a bigger political game. After losses and disappointments in the cause he has nothing to live for.

Terrorism makes him cynical, though he is trying to acquit himself through cultural and philosophical contemplations. This assumption could be supported by the episode when George reads Homer and the Greeks with great interest and recognizes their simple and plain attitude toward life, love and murder.

I read the ancient classics with great interest. They, in the old days, actually had no conscience ; they did not seek truth. They simply Lived — just as the grass grows and the birds sing. Sacred simplicity - is not that the only way to accept life, and not to revolt against it? They appealed to their gods to protect them . . . and the gods protected them. Ulysses had Pallas to stand by him in the fights against the plunderers of his property.¹⁰¹

George admires this idea of the ancient world, which he reads as having no conscience. For him there was no morality but a simple law of nature, life and death in some fatalist drama. He is confident in his interpretation of the ancient world. If he cannot live in it,

¹⁰¹ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 41.

he won't even try to revive it. He will be a god himself. "I shall be my own god."¹⁰² He chooses to have no guilt, shame or remorse.

There is a strong connection between Blok and Savinkov, Blok's *Balaganchik* and the puppet theatre imagery in *The Pale Horse*. At some point George refers to all the characters from his brigade as puppets in a puppet theatre where he is the one who manipulates.

Or is it not all a puppet show? The curtain is up, we are on the stage. The pale Pierrot loves Pierrette. He swears eternal love to her. Pierrette has a lover. A toy pistol cracks, blood flows - it is only cranberry juice. A street organ squeaks.
Curtain.¹⁰³

The real blood is mixed with "cranberry blood" from the theatre. People who sacrificed their lives are compared to puppets as in *Balaganchik*. *The Beautiful Lady* is gone. Savinkov writes the epitaph to the Revolutionary romanticism of the Silver Age. All that is left is terror and the gun in his pocket, which means suicide. Such is his freedom and limitation. The passing romanticism of the Silver Age comingles play and life, literature and theater, people and actors. George will not cry about Erna any more than for someone he reads in literature.

The story is presented as entries of a diary, giving the reader access into the private thoughts of the narrator George. It is widely thought that this fictional diary had its base in Savinkov's own life and his real diary, and we are aware of this when we read his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*. *The Pale Horse* is filled with Biblical and Classical

¹⁰² Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 41.

¹⁰³ Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 178.

allusions because the character and author are well read, but also because these references give the reader the sense of clinging to foundations of civilization. The sense of doom and cataclysm felt by Savinkov, Blok and others is palpable. The idea that dramatic change was coming was linked to the idea that civilization might undergo a profound transformation. The fear of such events led many well-read people to look to the past for stability, because knowing from whence a culture has come, gives a thinker ideas about where civilization may go and a sense of comfort, when he or she perceives that society is taking a path it had taken before albeit in a different form.

CHAPTER VI

BETWEEN UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA OF THE SILVER AGE AND REVOLUTION:

ALEXANDER BLOK'S *THE TWELVE*

No expectation or descriptions of the coming Revolution could closely predict the real events of 1918 and their aftermath. In his novel *Cynics*, Anatoly Marienhoff, through one of his characters expresses the amusement of the strangeness of these first days after Bolsheviks took power:

What a peculiar revolution! [...] I thought they would put up a Guillotine on *Lobnoe* Place – [...] but instead our commune, or whatever it calls itself, forbids the sale of ice cream!¹⁰⁴

This seemingly innocent notion about control of ice-cream production and distribution reflects the horror of totalitarian control over everyday aspects of people's lives, which came with the Revolution of 1918. The 'Guillotine' was almost immediately implemented but not in the form of public executions. Mass executions of 'class enemies' were carried out in secret in the cellars by the CHEKA, as we will see in *The Chip*, written several years after the "Great October." We argue that the first writer who depicted the reality and horror of the Bolshevik seizure of power was Aleksander Blok. His his poem *The Twelve*, will be closely studied in this chapter.

In his research into the Sophia "Knighthood," S. Cioran brings forth the notions of the 'Demonized Ideal' and the 'Triumph of the Demonic Feminine'. He writes that in the years preceding the October revolution "the theme of the Divine Feminine had reached an impasse <...>. What ensued was the manifestation of her demonic aspect

¹⁰⁴ A. Marienhoff, *Cynics*, Hyperion Press, Inc., Westport, Connecticut, 1973, 16-17.

<...>”.¹⁰⁵ He also notices in regard to A. Blok, that “the harsh power of white becomes stronger and stronger in Blok’s poetry culminating in the blinding and cathartic whiteness of the snowstorms and blizzards of later poems, including *The Twelve*.”¹⁰⁶ As we will discuss later, this poem deals with the complicated relationship between the images of the Revolution, Russia, Feminine, sacrifice, martyrdom, the obscure future and others, crucial to the problems discussed in this paper. In regard to the development of the above mentioned themes in Blok’s poetry we would like to refer to his 1908 poem *Россия*: it combines an image of Russia as a faithless Lover with Her “brigand beauty” and an image of the Poet, which also could be understood widely, as a Russian-intelligent, intelligent-revolutionary, submissive to his ‘Cross’, a fate of exile and sacrifice for Her sake:¹⁰⁷

I am not able to pity You	Тебя жалеть я не умею
And I carry my cross with care...	И крест свой бережно несу...
You may give your brigand beauty	Какому хочешь чародею
To any seducer-charmer you may choose!	Отдай разбойную красу!

Established among the Russian intelligentsia since the 19th century, of the necessity of sacrifice for the sake of Russia, whose image simultaneously merged with the image of the Revolution as a purifying and regenerating force. Following such twisted ‘logic’, serving the Revolution combined with the idea of serving *Mother-Russia Herself*. The

¹⁰⁵ S. Cioran, *Vladimir Solov’ev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 1977, 138.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁰⁷ Cited from – *Russian Poetic Language. Anthology of Russian Poetry* by Y. Kripkov, Eugene, Oregon, 2012, 115.

Revolution was equated with Russia, becoming a sort of monstrous amalgamated 'creature', perceived as both *Divine* and *Demonic*. Since both the Revolution and Russia were usurped by the Bolsheviks, many 'faithful knights' among the Russian intelligentsia as well as representatives of other layers of Russia's society, accepted the fate of serving this distorted motherland. Such cases we find described in many literary works of the post-revolutionary years, for example, in I. Babel's *Red Cavalry* and V. Zazubrin's *The Chip*.

Literature presents the controversial core of the Revolution. Probably the most complicated insight, bound with apocalyptic ideas and belief in Russia's messianic destiny, we find in the poetry and essays of Alexander Blok (1880-1921). Studies on the life and work of Blok create an impression that he perceived himself as a hero and immediate participant of the great historical drama. His understanding of Russia's fate was intertwined with his self-definition as Poet, Master of the Word and the Russian Intellectual. Before we delve into his works, let's turn to the significant events of his biography.

Alexander's life was disrupted early by his father's, a law professor, and mother's separation. An indifferent step-father and a frightening Vvedenskaya Gymnasium in St. Petersburg may have been a factor in the shy boy's embrace of Platonic idealism, which came with its counterpart - disappointing reality. Since youth he immersed himself in the world of literature and became an admirer and serious pupil of Pushkin. He became known as the poet of *The Beautiful Lady* who appears out of the industrial smog, as a poet with prophetic inclinations and a sense of doom. Blok developed a close friendship with Andrei Bely - they both were deeply influenced by Vladimir Solovyov, a

philosopher, who synthesized his studies in Kabbalah and Hellenistic philosophy with Slavophil ideas and belief in *Sobornost'*. He revived the interest in Sophia God's Wisdom, and his teaching had a great impact on Russian Symbolism and mysticism in poetry. Andrei Bely wrote in *Reminiscences* how he had "wandered through the fields with Blok a great deal and had talked about V. Solovyov's poetry and philosophy. He adds joyfully that Blok also believes in the real existence of Sophia the Divine Wisdom and sees a revelation of *Her* countenance in Solovyov's lyrics. For him, too, the old world is collapsing; the dawn of the new era predicted by the philosopher is rising."¹⁰⁸

Blok's predilection for seeing women primarily as inspiration for his lyrics and allowing his wife, Lyubov (Lyuba) Dmitrievna Mendeleeva, whom he married in 1903, to be a "living icon," was not a recipe for domestic tranquility. In his biography of Blok, Konstantin Mochulsky writes that Seryozha Solovyov suggested, that Lyuba Mendeleev-Blok be the living embodiment of Sophia for the sake of his, Blok's and Bely's "brotherhood".¹⁰⁹ Let us at this point make an observation which will be closely discussed later in this paper. We would like to call attention to this idea of "brotherhood" and replacement of the relationship – 'husband-wife' – with the position – 'brotherhood' or 'knighthood' serving the Ideal Feminine. We will consider variants of this 'relationship' in several texts, discussing the theme of Revolution and "Brotherhood" as an incarnation of Masculinity and an understanding of the 'manly' as refined and purified 'manhood'. From the perspective of Blok's poetics we will see a plexus of

¹⁰⁸ Konstantin Mochulsky, *Alexandr Blok*, trans. Doris V. Johnson, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 51.

¹⁰⁹ Mochulsky 94.

apocalyptic inclinations, anticipation of the inevitable ‘trial’ and a sense of guilt. He writes in *The People and the Intelligentsia* (1908):

...fewer and fewer educated people find salvation in the positive values of scholarship, public service, or art; [...] Some different, higher principle is needed. Since there is none, rebellion and violence of all sorts take its place, from the vulgar ‘theomachy’ of the decadents to unspectacular open self-destruction – debauch, drinking, all the forms of suicide. Nothing like this exists among the people. A man who embarks upon one of these fatal courses automatically exiles himself from the people’s world, becomes an intelligent in spirit.¹¹⁰

Maxim Gorky attested to the character and mood of Blok. In his memoirs Gorky commented on a discussion he had with Blok while sitting on a bench in the Summer Garden. “He said he was glad to see me freeing myself “from the intelligentsia habit of trying to solve the problems of social existence.” Blok continued to tell Gorky that in his sketches *The Town of Okurov* he was disturbed by ‘childish questions’. Gorky explained that Blok was insistent, had a “tormented face” and his eyes were almost crazy. “You hide yourself. You hide your ideas about the spirit and about truth. What for?” - Blok exclaimed. Gorky described that Blok “started talking about the Russian intelligentsia, condemning it in the most hackneyed terms - terms that were particularly inappropriate now, after the revolution: “I (Gorky) said that in my opinion **a negative attitude toward the intelligentsia is quintessentially an intelligentsia attitude.**”¹¹¹ Thus we have established that Blok, as an ‘autochthonal’ Russian intelligent, was carrying within

¹¹⁰ Alexander Blok, "The People and the Intelligentsia" *Russian Intellectual History* 1966. Reprint. Marc Raeff. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992. 362-363. Print.

¹¹¹ Maxim Gorky, A.A. Blok, *Gorky's Tolstoy and Other Reminiscences*, Trans. Ed. Donald Fanger (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) Print. 168-169.

himself a sense of guilt and the need for some kind of self-sacrifice. Like the author of *The Pale Horse*, Blok draws upon biblical metaphorical heritage.

9: 1- When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2- and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3- He told them: "Take nothing for the journey - no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. 4- Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5- If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." 6- So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

Luke 9:1-6

The title *The Twelve* reminds us of the commissioning of the twelve apostles in an episode of Christ's ministry, which is mentioned in all three synoptic gospels: Mathew, Mark and Luke. The title also comes from its twelve chapters or stanzas, and, as we have established earlier, reflects Blok's apocalyptic premonition and sense of a forthcoming catastrophe on the historical horizon. Like many Russians, he was profoundly affected by the events of 'Bloody Sunday', when unarmed protesters were shot in front of the Winter Palace in January 1905. The ensuing strikes and revolution of that year, combined with Russia's crushing and shocking defeat in the war with Japan, left the impressionable young Blok, as well as many revolutionaries throughout the country, with an awareness of the need for change. For Blok this took on an apocalyptic tone and anticipation of a 'disclosure of knowledge.' So towards his late years the imagery from his symbolist poetry and contemplations on Russia's history were suffused with biblical themes. In his

long poem *Retribution* (*Возмездие*) we come upon several motifs fundamental for this thesis, for example, sacrifice and fate of the intelligentsia.

The poem (*Поэма*) *Retribution* was conceived in 1910 and in its main features was sketched in 1911 and then it was abandoned. The *Preface* to it was written for the public reading of the poem in the Petrograd House of Arts on July 12, 1919. Feeling neither the need nor the inclination to finish this poem full of revolutionary forebodings in the years when the revolution had already taken place, Blok wanted to preface the outline of the final chapter with the story of its conception. He envisioned its structure in a form of concentric circles – “в виде концентрических кругов”, which may remind us of the Circles of Hell (described by Dante). He intended to show how the “World Whirlpool” – “мировой водоворот” was sucking everyone into its vortex, stripping the human qualities from personality - if traces of it remain, they become unrecognizable, disfigured, crippled:

The World whirlpool is sucking into its vortex almost the whole person; almost no traces of personality remain; if personality still exists, it becomes unrecognizable, disfigured and mutilated [...] and becomes absorbed by the surrounding world environment.¹¹²

Мировой водоворот - засасывает в свою воронку почти всего человека; от личности почти вовсе не остаётся следа, сама она, если остаётся ещё существовать, становится неузнаваемой, обезображенной, искалеченной, [...] поглощается окружающей мировой средой...

¹¹² A. Blok, “Retribution” (*Возмездие*).

Blok states that the ‘genus’ (род), which had experienced the vengeance of history, in return begins to create and induce retribution. ‘The last of kin’ is already able to snarl and growl like a lion - he is ready to grab in his little human hand the Wheel, which moves the History of Mankind – “колесо, которым движется история человечества.”¹¹³ In this process the new “offspring” matures - something new and edgier is deposited - at the cost of infinite loss, through personal tragedies, life failures and falls, at the cost of the loss of those infinitely high properties that “once shone like the best diamonds in the Human Corona (properties like humane virtues, impeccable honesty, high morals and so on.):

...в каждом отпрыске зреет и отлагается нечто новое и нечто более острое, ценою бесконечных потерь, личных трагедий, жизненных неудач, падений и т.д.; ценою, наконец, потери тех бесконечно высоких свойств, которые в своё время сияли, как лучшие алмазы в человеческой короне (как, например, свойства гуманные, добродетели, безупречная честность, высокая нравственность и проч.¹¹⁴

In the epilogue of *Retribution* should be depicted a baby whom his mother, a commoner, is holding on and lulling, and nursing. This baby, her son, begins to play and repeats after her a song: "I'm going to meet the soldiers ...And I'll throw myself on their bayonets ... And for you, my *Freedom*, I will ascend into the black scaffold." The Scaffold (эшафот) is a raised wooden platform used formerly for public executions. It is often used in poetical texts as a symbol of ascendance to a deadly sacrifice. Another image, important

¹¹³ A. Blok, “Retribution” (Возмездие).

¹¹⁴ A. Blok, “Retribution” (Возмездие).

for the topic of this thesis, we find in the *Prologue*, where the Poet, the one who was still singing in the crowd – the Prophet, is sacrificed. He is beheaded, and his head is presented on a dish by the ‘female Dancer’ – here we see the reference to Salome and symbolism of the sacrifice of the great prophet and martyr John the Baptist, who predicted the Apocalypse. The imagery of Apocalypse we find in the line about the Dragon languishing in prurient thirst over the whole Europe:

And in every heart, in every thought –	И в каждом сердце, в мысли каждой -
there are one’s own tyranny and law ...	Свой произвол и свой закон...
Over the whole Europe – the dragon is	Над всей Европою дракон,
gaping his jaws, languishing in thirst...	Разинув пасть, томится жаждой...
...	...
But the song –	Но песня - песнью всё пребудет,
everything will come through the song,	В толпе всё кто-нибудь поёт.
In the crowd someone is still singing.	Вот - голову его на блюде
Here – his head on a dish is presented	Царю плясунья подаёт;
to the tsar by the female-dancer.	Там - он на эшафоте чёрном
There – on the black scaffold	Слагает голову свою;
he lays down his head;	Здесь - именем клеймят позорным
Here – they brand with shameful name	Его стихи...
his poems... And I sing...	И я пою... ¹¹⁵

In the introduction to the *Retribution* Blok attempts to comprehend the events and losses of the previous years. He talks about the year of 1910 and states that the whole

¹¹⁵ A. Blok, “Retribution” (Возмездие)

‘Epoch’ is gone with the death of its most prominent people. Though, he finds more alarming, that the qualities (such as lyrical note, tremendous personal world of the artist, human tenderness, wise humanity), which these people were representing for Russian culture, were gone as well:

1910 is the year of death. [...] With Komissarjevskaya died the lyrical note of the Scene; with Vrubel the vast personal world of the artist, frantic genius stubbornness and insatiable quest - up to insanity. With Tolstoy died human tenderness - wise humanity. Further, in 1910 - there is the crisis of Symbolism...
1910 год - это смерть [...]. С Комиссаржевской умерла лирическая нота на сцене; с Врубелем - громадный личный мир художника, безумное упорство, ненасытность исканий - вплоть до помешательства. С Толстым умерла человеческая нежность – мудрая человечность. Далее, 1910 год - это кризис символизма...¹¹⁶

What was coming instead – in slogans of the ‘New Time’ – was some kind of the ‘New Man’, a different person without humanity, a sort of ‘primordial Adam’. This image is important for an understanding of the ‘new type’, ‘new species’, ‘new breed’ of revolutionary, which we are discussing in this paper along with *The Chip* and other selected works.

In the *Introduction to Retribution*, Blok mentions, that the whole poem was supposed to be accompanied by a certain “leitmotif of retaliation” and retribution, which would ring in a snowy blizzard, rising over the night, first like a dance a mazurka, that

¹¹⁶ A. Blok, “Retribution” (Возмездие).

like the clearly heard voice of Reckoning – ‘голос Возмездия’. This wind-swirl and snow blizzard appears in *The Twelve* as well. *The Twelve* begins with a description of

Wind:

Black dusk growing,	Чёрный вечер.
Snow falls white.	Белый снег.
Wind, wind blowing!	Ветер, ветер!
On his legs a man can't stand upright.	На ногах не стоит человек.
Wind, wind blowing.	Ветер, ветер -
Through the whole creation going! ¹¹⁷	На всём божьем свете!

This uncontrollable force creates instability. One cannot find anything with which to balance, to keep straight and remain standing. *The Twelve* was written in January 1918, almost in the wake of the events it described. Slogans of the *All Russian Constituent Assembly* (Всероссийское Учредительное Собрание) were still flapping in the wind. We know that the All-Russian Constituent Assembly was elected on the 12th of November, 1917, after the overthrow of the Russian Provisional Government; it was convened on the 5th of January, 1918 and dissolved by the Bolsheviks, officially, by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the *Soviet* of ‘Workers and Soldiers Deputies’, on January 6th, 1918.

For the Bolsheviks it was time to set a new course and purge Russia of the nurturing ‘Mother’:

¹¹⁷ Alexander Blok, “The Twelve”, trans. C. M. Bowra.

- O Mother who intercedes for men,	- Ох, Матушка-Заступница!
The Bolsheviks will drive us our coffins!	Ох, большевики загонят в гроб!

Through the wind we see a party of twelve men advancing. They are not an idealistic lot.
They are revolutionary guards marching like a machine.

The wind, snow flutters.	Гуляет ветер, порхает снег.
A party of twelve men advances.	Идут двенадцать человек.
Black rifle-slings upon their backs,	Винтовок чёрные ремни,
And flame, flame, flame about their tracks.	Кругом - огни, огни, огни...
With crumpled caps, lips smoking fags,	В зубах - цыгарка, примят картуз,
All should be branded as prison lags.	На спину б надо бубновый туз!
Freedom, freedom, ha!	Свобода, свобода,
But no Cross, aha!	Эх, эх, без креста!
Tra-ta-ta.	Тра-та-та!

We hear and feel the mechanical sound of the last line, and sense the march. Prisoners were released after the revolution to operate as revolutionary guards and, as we see, to conduct terror, not bring freedom. The freedom mentioned here is freedom of lawlessness and permissiveness. It is a new day, an undefined dystopia, a ‘brotherhood’ of those ‘primordial Adams’, freed from moral - the traditional teaching of Christian morality, here symbolized by a Cross, is thrown overboard.

We may suggest that Blok brings back the feminine image – the ‘brigand beauty’ from 1908 poem *Россия* in the figure of Kat’ka. She is young, beautiful and wild, though for the marching ‘Twelve’ she clearly represents the Old World, because

she used to “sleep with the officers” (“с юнкеръём гулять ходила”), thus they associate with her epithet like “Толстоморденькая” – “fat-snout”. For them she is nothing more than a whore, waste and carrion -“надаль на снегу”. She is destined to be shot just like they would shoot ‘Old Russia:

Let’s shoot our bullets into Holy Russia –	Пальнём-ка пулей в Святую Русь –
Clumsy,	В кондовую,
Wooden,	В избяную,
She – is the fat-ass!	В толстозадую!

By giving Russia and Kat’ka, “Feminine Entities”, these ‘tags’ the marching guards strip them from sacredness and femininity. In the eyes of the ‘Twelve’ – she (‘Holy Russia’ or she – Kat’ka) betrayed the Revolution and should be purged from the world as worthless. For them the ‘New Russia’, the new ‘Ideal Feminine’ becomes from now on fused with the Revolution. And for *Her* sake, the ‘Old Russia’ should be sacrificed together with her ‘Old World’, which in the poem is clinging and creeping behind like a hungry stray dog, together with a bourgeois, a priest, and a poet (or “писатель-Вития”). We get a taste of the guards’ thirst for violence.

Don’t shrink, comrade.	Товарищ, винтовку держи, не трусь!
Get your rifle out:	Пальнём-ка пулей
Give Holy Russia a taste of shot,	в Святую Русь
For the misery of all bourgeois	Мы на горе всем буржуйам
We will blow up the world on fire,	Мировой пожар раздуем,
Set the world on fire – in blood.	Мировой пожар в крови...

Blok is clear in expressing the scope of religious intensity the revolution is taking. Like wind, like a machine, the revolution moves on, not stopping to pray or pay homage to the dead. These comrades, guards of the Revolution, are proud of their mission. Their union – a form of ‘brotherhood’ – had to be stronger than any other attachments and feelings. Pet’ka is not allowed to mourn his former love or feel remorse for killing his former love. Similar characters we find among the comrades from *The Chip*, or the ‘brotherhood’ of the soldiers in Isaak Babel’s *Red Cavalry*. Their external ‘masculinity’ requires the lopping off of characteristics of a man – as a husband, or son, or father... True devotion to an idea requires spiritual castration. Judith Kalb follows a theory of Professor Alexandr Etkind: “castration serves for Blok as a metaphor for revolution. Castration is a transformative event that removes the subject’s masculine identity and releases him into an unencumbered androgynous world, where previous boundaries have disappeared and revolution is therefore possible.”¹¹⁸ In his study, *Men Without Women*, Eliot Borenstein makes a solid argument about the masculine qualities of revolution, basing his points on the George L. Mosse’s research into the culture of the German Third Reich. “Friendship among men was thought to be superior to heterosexual love.”¹¹⁹ To avoid the “taint of homoeroticism” attempts were made to remove sexuality from male *comradery*. In a sense, what remains is a human machine. Human as machine or part of machine is sacrifice of private will or conscience to become one with a historical process.

¹¹⁸ Judith E. Kalb *Russia’s Rome Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams, 1890-1940*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2008. 122.

¹¹⁹ Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. 66.

-Stop that silly tune, you damned wretch,	- Ишь, стервец, завел шарманку,
Are you're a woman, you old fool?	Что ты, Петька, баба, что ль?
-What is it you think you do,	- Верно, душу наизнанку
Turning inside out your soul?	Вздумал вывернуть? Изволь!
-Give your pride a thought or two,	- Поддержи свою осанку!
-What about your self-control?	- Над собой держи контроль!
- This is not the time,	- Не такое нынче время,
To babysit you!	Чтобы нянчиться с тобой!
We shall have a load to bear	Потяжеле будет бремя
Heavier than this, my friend! ¹²⁰	Нам, товарищ дорогой!

What load will there be? Will there be more killing? The last line is a frightening portent; it could serve as a motto-epigraph to *The Chip*. In his 1918 poem Blok gives us a glimpse into the near future. His prophetic artistry reveals the nascent national terror. The new faith is growing and will sweep away the old. We will see later, analyzing Vladimir Zazubrin's *The Chip*, how individuals were broken under the burden of "the unresolved contradiction between their Messianic belief in socialism and their commitment to practice dictatorial methods."¹²¹ The revolution was becoming totalitarian. The whole old world was meant to be destroyed. (See "Russia's Rome") The "Revolutionary justice is just becoming a euphemism for injustice as a product of Fate and history."¹²² The

¹²⁰ Blok, "The Twelve".

¹²¹ Erika Gottlieb, *Dystopian Fiction East and West Universe of Terror and Trial*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. 133.

¹²² Gottlieb, 133.

author of *The Chip* carries this torment within himself – his readers experience this tragic sentiment. For an analysis of a character’s torment and the annihilation of individual conscience, we turn to *The Chip*.

CHAPTER VII

THE REVOLUTION COMES TO FRUITION:

THE CHIP

Perhaps one of the most shocking confessions about the true horror of the Bolsheviks' politics of mass terror can be found in the words of Srubov, the main character of *The Chip*:

In France they had the guillotine and public executions. We have the cellar. That way we carry out our executions in secret. Public executions place a halo of martyrdom, of heroism, [...] serve as propaganda points for the enemy, [...] leave the relatives and friends of those executed with a corpse, a tomb, a few last words [...]. An execution carried out in secret, in a cellar [...] overwhelms the enemy [...]. Absolute emptiness. The enemy is completely destroyed.¹²³

Vladimir Zazubrin (1895-1937) was a Russian writer, born in Penza in 1895, executed at age 42 in 1937. *The Chip*'s main character, Srubov, is a member of the *Cheka* who is just beginning his duties of overseeing executions. The *Cheka* was a Soviet internal security force established in December 1917, almost immediately after the Bolsheviks took power. By 1921 numbering some 200,000 they became known for torture and execution of rioting workers, peasants and Red Army mutineers. In the story we see what we know from history described in stunning, graphic detail. Prisoners: men and women, people of various ages and social stratum (priests, peasants, officers, former tsarists and others) try to retain their humanity in the face of imminent death:

¹²³ Zazubrin, Vladimir, "The Chip: A Story about a Chip and about Her" in *Dissonant Voices The New Russian Fiction*, ed. Oleg Chukhontsev London: Harvill, 1991.

“Undress!” The word hit them with all the force of a body blow. All five of them went weak at the knees with fear. Srubov felt that the order was addressed to him, too. Without thinking, he unbuttoned his coat. At the same time, however, his mind tried to reason with him, to make him see that his action was absurd, that he was an officer of the Cheka and that he was there to oversee the execution.

Srubov needed a great deal of effort to regain control of himself. He glanced at the commandant, at the other Chekists – no one was looking at him.¹²⁴

The empathy Srubov initially feels, dissipates as he sorts out what he takes part in. He tries to understand the process of execution without comprehending the horror.

Eventually he begins to rationally explain these deaths as an inevitable byproduct of the greater Revolution taking place. War needs no trial. The executioner is also judge.

Srubov was painfully aware of the hopelessness of the prisoners’ situation. It seemed to him that the violence committed against these people was at its most intense not in the act of execution, but rather at the moment of undressing. To be made to take off one’s clothes and stand on the bare ground, naked amongst fully clothed men – this was humiliation in the extreme. At the same time, the anticipation of death was made even harder to bear by the apparent banality of the situation.¹²⁵

The dehumanized executioner performs the job of sorting pants and underwear after the executions – a final indignity to a conscienceless human. A prisoner’s plea fails to get attention.

¹²⁴ Zazrubin 6.

¹²⁵ Zazrubin,7.

“My dear brothers, do not kill me...” But for Srubov, this priest was no longer a human being; he was merely a lump of dough, a lark made out of dough.”Stop whining, you holy windbag, Moscow does not believe in tears.”¹²⁶

Srubov won't allow himself to see them as human while executing perverted Revolutionary 'justice'. Srubov loses his humanity in front of the reader's eyes. The Cheka is a machine of violence ironically initiated to end violence.

“The whole thing runs like a machine, comrade Srubov,” he said. “Like a factory.” They worked like machines the executioners did. The building the cellar in which executions were carried out was like a factory.¹²⁷

We can say that there is an end to the executioner's masculinity together with his humanity. He is no more a son: this is evident when an executioner claims to have had a drink with the man who had killed his father. He is no more father or husband – he abandons his son and wife to serve the Revolution. Srubov has a dialog with 'Her' - a monstrous Revolution he must satisfy with blood. His discussions with 'Her' grow more intense towards the end. This is a sign of his slipping into an unbalanced state.

Efim Solomin wiped thick clots of blood from under his nose, and from his moustache and beard. He straightened the dirty peak of his green, re-starred cap, which was half hanging off. (But does *She* really find any of this interesting? All *She* has to do is make some people kill, and order others to die. That's all. The Chekists, and Srubov, and the condemned prisoners are merely insignificant pawns, tiny screws in the huge mechanism, already hurtling out of control. In this

¹²⁶ Zazrubin, 10.

¹²⁷ Zazrubin. 13.

factory coal and steam feed *Her* anger, *She* is the only boss here, at once cruel and beautiful.) Srubov, wrapped up in his black fur coat, and his ginger-colored fur hat, felt *Her* breath in the smoke from his smoldering pipe. Sensing the proximity of that new intense energy, he tensed his muscles and his veins, in order to send the blood quicker round his body. For *Her* and for *Her* sake he was prepared to do anything. Even murder, if it was in *Her* interest, filled him with joy. And if necessary, he would not hesitate to fire the bullets into the prisoners' heads himself. Let just one Chekist try and chicken out, or back down from his responsibilities, and he would lay him out on the spot. Srubov was filled with a joyous sense of determination. For *Her* and for *Her* sake, he thought.”¹²⁸

Executions, rationalized as a small part of larger machine, get out of control and ‘*She*’ takes over his mind. He is desensitized as an executioner. He describes the horror of executions in basements, and the effect on the conscience of the one who is involved. He exclaims his lack of remorse with the details of the slaughter. The character says that he kills and cares not. Life here and now is consumed with the Ideal Future, when such killings won’t be needed. It is the ideal that justifies the killing or makes it complacently just a process.

The ‘*She*’ is the ideal like in the painting by Eugene Delacroix “*La Liberté guidant le peuple*” the symbolic feminine leads the French Revolution and we know from history that *La Guillotine* was one of ‘*Her*’ attributes. She is like the balm an executioner puts on his mind to be numb enough to kill day to day. Individuals ask questions, but individuality is consumed.

¹²⁸ Zazrubin, 15.

She becomes an incorporeal, infertile Divinity with classical features -dressed in a classical robe. *She* is even sometimes depicted like this on revolutionary banners and posters. "For me, though, *She* is a pregnant peasant woman, [...] "I love Her as *She* is – a real, living thing." – Srubov says.¹²⁹

Does Srubov believe that in doing his service he loves the 'Wife' - Russia. Is *She* like the one envisaged by Blok in the *Battle of Kulikova*? Perhaps the character thinks he does, but his method of honoring 'Her' is perverse. He loves the 'Mother' that "eats her children." "*The Revolution devours its children*," said Georges Jacques Danton, the hero of the people, before he was led to the guillotine. The Revolution became the demonic Mother-Russia, the 'She' who hijacked and perverted the minds of 'Her' people, demanding the communal ideal over individuality. Executioners work themselves to exhaustion to eliminate the class enemies. They do not perceive that they are following a dictatorial process, for some imagined future that will never be realized. Their goal is the total elimination of 'Her' enemies, as it follows from the explanation of their methods.

How do *The Twelve* and *The Chip* end? They end with images which have some similarities. The 'She' is standing tall and in *The Twelve* Christ floats in front of the all marching in the storm. In the end Srubov is destroyed - he cannot satisfy 'Her'. "She stood tall. Her naked feet planted on the great plain, watching the world with vigilant, hate-filled eyes."¹³⁰ Both 'She' and Christ are executioners of their Mission. 'She' at the end of *The Chip* is the 'demon unleashed'. There is no resolution in dystopia. In Blok's poem there might be a glimpse of hope: perhaps the terrible windstorm in *The Twelve* is a

¹²⁹ Zazrubin 22.

¹³⁰ Zazrubin, 68.

long but temporary crisis in humanism, and after the great sacrifice there will be resurrection or regeneration.

The events of the October Revolution, which occurred almost a century ago, still induce the most controversial discussions among historians, artists and literary scholars.

The grain monopoly, bread rationing and labor conscription in the hands of the proletarian state, in the hands of sovereign Soviets, will be the most powerful means of accounting and control, means which, applied to the capitalists, and to the rich in general, applied to them by the workers, will provide a force unprecedented in history for "setting the state apparatus in motion", for overcoming the resistance of the capitalists, for subordinating them to the proletarian state. These means of control and of compelling people to work will be more potent than the laws of the Convention and its guillotine. The guillotine only terrorized, only broke active resistance. For us, this is not enough.¹³¹

This quote encapsulates the insidious nature of totalitarian 'Revolution' and the cynical pragmatism of its leader V. Lenin: behind the banal was a grab for power that unleashed horrible totalitarian violence.

¹³¹ V. I. Lenin, "Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" The Revolution of 1917, New York: International publishers. 1932. 23.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVOLUTION WITHOUT BOUNDARIES: *RED CAVALRY*

The mission for a revolutionary technically ends when the Revolution is over. What happens to people who for many years were professional revolutionaries? After the Bolshevik putsch a new stage of the revolution began in Russia. It was marked by the Civil War and a consolidation of power by the Bolsheviks. In this chapter we will examine the collection of short stories by Isaak Babel. In 1920 Babel was assigned as a correspondent to the 1st Cavalry Army under *Komandarm* (Army Commander) Semyon Budyonny. Babel participated in a military campaign of the Polish-Soviet War of 1920 and documented the horrors of the war he witnessed in his Diary (*Konarmeyskiy Dnevnik*, 1920), which he later used to write *The Red Cavalry* (*Конармия, Konarmiya*), a collection of short stories.

Isaak Emmanuilovich Babel (1894-1940) was born in Odessa where, because of the Jewish quota, his education was supplemented with private tutors. He studied the Talmud, music and became fluent in French. He wrote in French, Yiddish and Russian. He moved to Petrograd in 1915 to begin a career in journalism and mentorship under Maxim Gorky. As was noted above, as a journalist Babel travelled with the 1st Cavalry Army and wrote a collection of short stories from the time of the Polish-Soviet war. *Komandarm* Budyonny served with distinction as a cavalryman in the First World War, but after the October Revolution his views became more radicalized, he supported the Bolsheviks and was on friendly terms with Joseph Stalin. He organized a cavalry brigade for campaigns in the Don region during the Civil War, and it was this cavalry that fought against the Poles in the Polish-Soviet War (February 1919 –March 1921). As a result of

the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (signed on February 3, 1918), the Bolsheviks under Lenin's advice withdrew from the war with Germany to consolidate power within the country which they had seized a few months earlier. By the 'Treaty' Germany kept the territories it had been occupying at that moment. In essence, Germany was able to hold on to its military gains. After Germany's defeat in 1918, these territories were assigned to become the Second Republic of Poland. For the first time since 1772 Poland was a nation. The region known as the Ukraine was under the control of Bolsheviks, Poles and anarchist forces lead by Nestor Makhno. When Kiev was taken by a Polish offensive, Budyonny's Cavalry eventually pushed the Poles back to Warsaw, before being repelled back to Lviv. Babel observed these events first hand. Historians have criticized his account, because in the work *Red Cavalry* events and geography were not always accurately synchronized. His intent was to present humans, combatants and civilians, in the dehumanizing context of revolutionary and military violence. Historians were not the only ones to criticize Babel. Budyonny himself reacted to the publication of Babel's stories very negatively:

The old, rotten, degenerate intelligentsia is filthy and depraved. Its brilliant representatives...found themselves on the other side of the barricade, but here is Babel, who has remained here out of cowardice or due to circumstances, telling us a lot of old gibberish refracted through the prism of his sadism and degeneracy.¹³²

We see here the polemic between the 'new Bolshevik' and the old 'degenerate' intelligentsia. Babel's collection of short stories which makes up *Red Cavalry*, was published in newspapers and journals through the years 1923 – 1925 until they were all bound into a book edition in 1926. It was received well by a public which had little idea

¹³² S. Budennyi, "Babizm Babel iz 'Krasnoi novi,'" *Oktiabr*; 3 (1924): 197. Babizm=womanish

of what was happening on the front lines. This was the time of the New Economic Policy when literary censorship was not a priority, let alone formulated as an integrated policy. Babel had no idea about the course of events to come after his stories were published. He did not know that Stalin's approval of Budyonny would prove so beneficial to Budyonny's fortunes or that Russia's humiliation by the Poles would resurface in the late thirties with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. For whatever alleged reason, Babel was arrested and executed in 1940.

Though Poland struck Kiev first, it is generally accepted that Bolshevik Russia desired easier access to revolutionaries in Germany for the spread of revolution to workers there. The question of when the revolution would end is a theoretical one for scholars of Lenin, Trotsky and others. For the general everyday Revolutionary it is clear that revolutionary was more than a wartime moniker it was very often a lifetime profession and identity. Many dreamed of a revolution beyond Russia, beyond Germany in Italy, and even worldwide.

The narrator periodically describes the events he is witnessing in an almost high poetic language. This appears throughout the book. The most shining example is in the chapter *The Church at Novograd*, when soldiers from the narrator's division were searching the Catholic Church in that town. The whole night of the event is full of romantic poetic imagery. Soldiers are described like medieval knights. The whole story has a veiled reference to the Riders of the Apocalypse.

The narrator arrives at a house where he expects to meet the Army Commissar. He describes the night very poetically; it was an evening filled with July stars. The priest was gone but his assistant Romuald was there. The house is filled with many things in a

“crumbling ruin.” He looks at them feeling “soothing seduction” and “unmanned.” There were crucifixes, the parchment of Papal Bulls, and “satin of feminine letters rotting in the blue silk of waistcoats.” Even the sponge-cakes he was served had an odor of crucifixes. The narrator uses poetic language to describe his perception of the catholic atmosphere. The juice in the sponge cake had the aroma of the Vatican. The author’s style combined together the everyday sponge-cake with the sacred sacrifice of the Christian faith. The Sacred and banal is mixed together like a cake batter. He sees the “wounds of ... god oozing seed.” He calls this ooze “a fragrant poison to intoxicate virgins.”

While the narrator drinks he notices colors, odors and shadows. He entered the house for a meeting but he writes about a sensual experience he had while waiting for the meeting. Near the end he meets the Commissar and Cossacks who lead him outside where he sees army outfits. He sees statues of saints. The scene is filled with the atmosphere of death. He describes himself with the Cossacks as if they were Apostles of the faith in view of the saints.

Flashing the horse’s heads embroidered on our cuffs, whispering to one another, and clanging our spurs, we went around and around the echoing temple, guttering tapers in our hands. Many a Virgin Mary studded with precious stones followed us on our way with pupils pink like the eyes of mice. The flames fluttered in our fingers, and rectangular shadows writhed on the statues of St. Paul, St. Francis, St. Vincent, on their little rosy cheeks, their curly beards touched up with carmine.¹³³

¹³³ Isaac Babel, *The Collected Stories*, “The Red Cavalry,” New York: Penguin 1974, 46.

This fantastic ride around the area reads like the coming of the horsemen of the Apocalypse. The high language gives a sense of great importance to these riders of this special section. It is as if the whole Christian culture watches them giving them the dignity of the Apostles. They enter the cache of the church which he calls a temple. It is subterranean and cavernous, and he writes as if it were filled with the riches of the Vatican. But in truth, it is only what the local priest has squirreled away. He and the Cossacks count the money or booty. The author ends the chapter with a strong sense of fleeing from the eyes of the Madonnas. We see here what the Revolution is. It is the same story since the days of the Varangians, loot and plunder. Only here the place, Novograd, had been plundered before. The church and its traditions are passive observers of this new wave.

We are surprised with the high language the author uses. He makes more out of his ride with Cossacks during the war than the common circumstances warrant. We have a view of the author as being as grand as the events he so artfully expands upon. But we learn more about his view as we read more chapters. In *My First Goose*, we see him meeting Commander Savitsky whom he calls “a giant in shining riding boots.” The narrator approaches him to relate his orders to contact the enemy and destroy him. With his appointment signed and in hand, the narrator is prepared to engage the enemy like a heroic warrior. The commander asks “Can you read and write?” The narrator responds affirmatively and states that he graduated in law from St. Petersburg University. The Commander laughs and notices his specs and asks if he can get on with the group, the narrator replies “yes.” He wears glasses and is an intelligent among uneducated Cossacks. He is told that people among the group are killed for wearing glasses but “if

he messes up a lady” he will fit in with the soldiers. He reads to himself and is laughed at. He then tells the woman of the house to get him food. She responds to him addressing him as comrade and explains her misery; she wants to kill herself for all the chaos going on. The narrator acts against his nature and aggressively kills a goose first by a boot on the neck then a sword. He then tells the lady to cook it for him. The Cossacks begin to accept him for doing this act. Later as they eat together he tries to gain respect from other soldiers by reading a letter from Lenin published in *Pravda* from the Second Congress of Comintern. Surokov, the platoon commander acknowledges the reading and Lenin’s words by comparing Lenin to the straightforwardness of a hen pecking grain. Such an analogy makes the reader wonder how such simple people can understand the Revolution and the war they fight in. They cannot. They are manipulated animal beings. Sleeping together, the narrator is haunted by the killing of the goose. It was really not part of his nature. If only that initiation was the end. Will this intelligent continue to be accepted by Cossacks? How long can he act against his nature and read Lenin? Can an intelligent become a Cossack?

“Italian Sunshine” features a letter from a cavalryman, revolutionary and roommate of the narrator, which serves as an inner tale to this short story. The narrator is also a cavalryman whose curiosity about Sidorov drives him to put away his fear of this “hairy pawed” man overcome with ‘spleen’ or capriciousness. There is fear and awe at the mad quality of the imagination found in the letter. We only see a glimpse of the man Sidorov,¹³⁴ but through his letter we get a good portrait of a revolutionary, a former anarchist. Through this portrait we see clues about the character of Sidorov and clues as

¹³⁴ Babel, 65.

to what kind of revolutionary he was and even hints that he had an intelligent background. He was surrounded by books, the narrator tells us. In his study area there is a picture of the Forum, Italian language books and a map of Rome. The narrator starts to tell the reader about the letter from the second page, beginning with a victim from a battle scene. Sidorov is writing to Victoria whom we can assume is some kind of lover.

Victoria is not the name of a peasant and we might even conjecture that it could be a political revolutionary pseudonym. Sidorov wants to turn the discussion to “the agenda” which is political language, referring to campaigns and the progress of the revolution. Victoria could be her revolutionary party name, meaning actually ‘victory’. Sidorov tells her about Makhno, the anarchist leader from Ukraine. Sidorov calls the three-month campaign a “tiresome swindle”¹³⁵. He mentions Volin, a former comrade who was still with Makhno. Volin could be another pseudonym meaning ‘freedom’. He is an anarchist who hopes to become as powerful as Lenin. ‘Sacerdotal vestments’ is a joke equating Volin with a preacher; a preacher or apostle of anarchism. Makhno according to Sidorov is a ‘mouzhik’ with decaying teeth and not an intelligent but a country man. He calls Kharkov the ‘homespun’ capital with its own Central Committee ЦК. He remembers that in the past they were all anarchist brothers, but now those in state positions laugh and don’t take their comrades still in arms seriously.

Makhno vied with Bolsheviks and Poles for control in Ukraine. When he visited Moscow he found the anarchists disbanded because of Cheka activity against them. The Cheka was a secret service for the Bolsheviks who particularly went after counter-revolutionaries. Moscow was under Bolshevik control much unlike the multi-faceted

¹³⁵ Babel, 65.

Ukraine. Makhno was surprised to see the lack of revolutionary activity in Moscow. He wrote: "Moscow appeared as 'the capital of the Paper Revolution,' a vast factory turning out empty resolutions and slogans while one political party, by means of force and fraud elevated itself into the position of a ruling class."¹³⁶ Sidorov is of the same opinion. We find he is disappointed by the bureaucratic nature of the revolution which Victoria seems to know something about. Sidorov is wise enough to know that Makhno's fate would not bring him to contend with Bolsheviks.

Having been to Moscow, Sidorov seems to have had a similar experience as Makhno. Like an intelligent, he interceded in an argument with soldiers from his own regiment, and was beaten by them viciously. He calls himself a "dithering idiot." It was an act of an intelligent person. Other revolutionaries are in state positions in Moscow, but he is in the active army.

He got wounded which did not hurt nearly as bad as the gruel, by which he means the planning of revolution in Moscow. The anarchists he met were "foppish young duds or senile dotards." In the Kremlin he went to the Party with a plan of "real work" to continue the Revolution. There he met bureaucrats who promised a position of chief assistant under the condition that he will undergo a reform from Anarchist to Bolshevik. Here is the opposition between the bureaucrat-revolutionary or the Apollonian aspect of Revolution on one side and the idealist revolutionary who carries the banner until death. Sidorov did not reform himself and went back to "fresh blood ... human dust and ashes." He is bored with the statesmen. He appeals to Victoria- 'the Fiancée who will never be a Wife' to save him. She will never be his wife he says and refers to his use of the word

¹³⁶<http://libcom.org/history/makhno-nestor-1889-1934> 3. David Footman, Civil War in Russia, p. 252 (SLIDE)

fiancée as sentimental. Here is the self-denial of the revolutionary. He has a female comrade but it is a professional relationship. In essence, Sidorov is married to the Revolution.

Regardless of his passion for revolution his pain drives him to ask Victoria to use her influence to get him reassigned. War is too boring. It is not revolutionary work. His passion is not completely dampened. He rekindles his passion with the fantasy of taking the Revolution to Italy. He discusses a terrorist act: killing the King of Italy who stands in the way of Revolution there. Sidorov knows he is talking dangerous talk. He tells Victoria not to tell the central committee about the killing of the King. Sidorov has a grand plan; he is learning the Italian language and studying the city plans. If a reassignment does not work out he is eager to go to Odessa to work with the Cheka. The Cheka's major task is to execute counter-revolutionaries. Sidorov equates killing with Revolution. War is the killing of soldiers without ideological motivations. He has a picture of the King of Italy with his wife and daughters. We understand that he is thinking of killing as he looks at this family image.

An exhausted face is a mask—something almost theatrical. Sidorov is a new type of 'romantic hero': a revolutionary, murderer, terrorist who is bored unless he can start or perpetuate a revolution. "Art is something which the man of aesthetic sensibility must always consider as a possible solution. The result of this examination as presented here raises the possibility that art falls short of being such a panacea."¹³⁷ Sidorov has an artistic imagination which is ultimately unsatisfied. Many revolutionaries had artistic bents or inclinations but killing for the revolution was the revolutionary's canvass.

¹³⁷C. Rougle, "Isaac Babel and His Odyssey of War and Revolution," *Red Cavalry A Critical Edition*; Ed. Charles Rougle, Northwestern University Press, 1996. 39.

The Modernist stylistics exploits the theme of theatricality and nature as the stage of human drama. We have seen in *The Pale Horse* Savinkov's reference to *Balaganchik*. We find references to theatre in Babel's narration as well. The *Italian Sunshine* begins with an impressionistic setting as if for an opera. *Italian Sunshine* is like a love letter where Sidorov is compared with a modern Romeo in the time of war and revolution. The 'setting' described is dark and tragic:

The scorched ton, broken columns and, dug into the earth, hooks of the little malevolent fingers of old women-seemed to me raised aloft in the air, as snug and chimerical as a dream. The crude brightness of the moon flowed down on it with inexhaustible force. The damp mold of the ruins flowered like the marble of opera seats. And I waited, disturbed in spirit, for Romeo to appear from the clouds, a satin-clad Romeo singing of love, while a dismal electrician in the wings keeps a finger on the moon-extinguisher.¹³⁸

How can we summarize Sidorov's portrait? He is a type of professional revolutionary intelligent who is passionately devoted to the Dionysian aspect of Revolution. Like many of his type, he is cut from other forms of desire like romantic love, and can only think of spreading revolution and killing the Revolution's enemies. He is presented in a doomed romantic way, his face is a mask. He is called an "ill-omened dreamer" bound by Revolution and his life will end only with that.

Konarmii creates a multilayered and complicated representation of the Revolution. The section *Gedali* begins with the narrator's description of melancholic memories of Sabbath eves. The narrator is in Zhytomyr looking for a synagogue or a

¹³⁸ Babel, 64-65.

‘shy star’ because the Jewish population there keeps a low profile during the conflict getting abuse from both Poles and Bolsheviks. Zhytomyr had been a part of Lithuania in the fourteenth century but it didn’t become a center for Jewish people until it became part of Russia in 1778¹³⁹ when Zhytomyr was a center where the Hasidic movement gained a foothold. During the time frame of the action in this book, the men were selling chalk, wicks and bluing, probably Prussian blue for washing linens. The wealth is gone observes the narrator. There is paranoia since “dumb padlocks hang upon the booths.” All shops were closed except Gedali’s where a number of curiosities can be had such as “gilt slippers, ship’s cables, an ancient compass, a stuffed eagle, a Winchester with the date 1810 engraved upon it.”¹⁴⁰ The narrator gives more description of bearded Gedali and his shop before the narrator and Gedali sit on beer barrels to have a dialogue about Revolution. Through the dialogue we gather two different perspectives on how people perceive the Revolution. The Revolution and Sabbath coexist for Gedali. He tells the narrator that ‘we’, he and the other Jews he is speaking for, will say ‘yes’ to the Revolution, but he asks with confusion about the status of the Sabbath. Are they to say ‘no’ to it in exchange for the Revolution? His affirmation of the Revolution is expressed in these words, that the Revolution is “hiding” and has “no face.” All Gedali can make out of the image of Revolution is shooting and killing. The men are speaking with symbolic language. This gives a sense of them using Russian like a pidgin language to communicate with each about the ‘business’ of Revolution. The narrator metaphorically refers to the Revolution as sunlight and those who do not embrace the Revolution as

¹³⁹ <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15254-zhitomir-jitomir>

¹⁴⁰ Babel, 69.

having their eyes closed to the 'sunlight'. "But we will cut open those closed eyes..."¹⁴¹

He speaks like a man of violent action which Gedali and the reader know is the Revolutionary, or that it is the rhetoric of Revolution. The Poles, Gedali says have closed his eyes to the Revolution. They are "bad-tempered" and treat the Jews badly he says. He likes the aspect of the Revolution that beats the Poles. The Revolution on the other hand takes from Gedali what he treasures: music, or actually his phonograph. He and the others are looted by the Bolsheviks as well as the Poles. The narrator refers to the Revolution as "She" and she is "shooting." The narrator is the Revolution and he will shoot. He wants Gedali to know that he can count on the Revolution to shoot. Gedali does not see a place for shooting in the Revolution. Poles, he says, shoot because they are the Counter-Revolution and the narrator and his cavalry shoot because they are the Revolution. Revolution is good men doing good deeds, Gedali says. Where is the joy he asks the narrator? Revolution is joy. Is this naiveté or wisdom? All in Zhytomyr are learned people Gedali says. They don't understand the Revolution making orphans and he asks "where is the joy-giving revolution?" Gedali says, his people are not ignoramuses, they know about the 'International.' He and his people would give to this what they could but he wants an international of good people where everyone gets rations, physical and spiritual.

With more figurative language Gedali says: "Pan comrade, you don't know with what the International is eaten with..." The figurative language anthropomorphizes the process of joining the international or the Revolution. Gedali calls the narrator "Pan comrade" which is a combination of two honorific titles of address; Pan satisfies Polish

¹⁴¹ Babel, 70.

and comrade satisfies the Bolshevik. The narrator responds as if he were enlightening someone. He says: the International “is eaten with gunpowder and spiced with best-quality blood.”¹⁴² What he means is that the Revolutionaries are the best and the bravest and die because death is the only thing that stops them from being Revolutionaries. “Gedali, the founder of an impossible International, has gone to the synagogue to pray.”¹⁴³ the narrator says. Gedali has an idealistic spiritual view of Revolution and that is why he supported it and ended up confused. It is a utopian view of Revolution. The narrator believes that the Revolution comes with a cost.

Babel tries to escape from reality into poetic language because reality is unbearable. Describing the characters, the boundaries between their states of mind and the unexpected, the author draws the infinite diversity of reality, man's ability to be sublime and mundane, tragic and heroic, cruel and kind, born and killing. Babel plays masterfully the transitions between horror and delight, between the beautiful and the terrifying. The author saw the face of Revolution and he realized that the revolution was an extreme situation which exposed mysteries. Even in the harsh everyday life of the revolution, people have a sense of compassion cannot be reconciled with the murder and bloodshed. Man, according to Babel, is alone in this world. He writes that the revolution is "like lava," and leaving its mark on everything it touches.

The work conveys a sense of "a large ongoing funeral." The scorching sun seems as if it “rolls across the sky like a severed head,” the author writes. The phrase: “The smell of yesterday's blood and dead horses’ caplets in the evening coolness” – starts to

¹⁴² Babel, 72.

¹⁴³ Babel, 72.

build excitement about the Revolution but the death of humans and nature complicates the initial excitement.

As was noticed above the narrator includes real historical figures, for example Makhno and Budyonny. It is interesting that in one of the chapters called the “Widow,” there is the mentioning of troops led by Savinkov. Thus, our two authors meet directly within the plot of this book. In the chapters “Widow” and “After the Battle” it describes a battle between Cossacks led by Savinkov against Cossacks led by the Red Army. Savinkov’s Cossacks are called traitors.

It is very interesting to see the representations of the contemporary political figures, Lenin and Trotsky, in the narration. The first mention of Lenin and Trotsky we find in the chapter “Salt.” This story is a letter by Nikita Balmashev, who calls himself a soldier of the Revolution. He writes a letter to a newspaper about a ‘counterrevolutionary’ woman. Mention of Lenin and Trotsky appear in the final quarrel between Balmashov and the woman. Balmashov says to the ‘counter-revolutionary’ woman:

Look at our wives in the heat plains of the Kuban that are spending their women’s strength without their husbands, and the husbands, alone too, all through dire necessity violating the girls who come into their lives. And nobody touched you, you wicked woman, though that’s what would have served you right. Look at Russia crushed with misery...”

And she answers back: “I’ve gone and lost my salt so I’m not afraid of telling the truth. You don’t bother your heads about Russia. You just go about saving the dirty Jews Lenin and Trotsky.”

“We aren’t discussing the Jews now, you noxious citizen. The Jews haven’t got nothing to do with the question. By the way, I won’t say nothing about Lenin, but Trotsky was the desperate son of a governor of Tambov and went over to the working classes though he himself belonged to another class. They work like niggers, Lenin and Trotsky do, to drag us onto the path of a free life; while you, abominable woman, you’re more counterrevolutionary than the White General who goes about on a horse that cost a thousand and threatens us with the sharp point of his saber. He can be seen from everywhere, that general can, and the workers are only dreaming and planning to get at him and do him in; but your incalculable citizen with your comic kids that don’t ask to be fed and don’t have to be potted- you can’t be seen no more than a flea can, and you go biting away for all you’re worth.”¹⁴⁴

It is interesting how the soldier emphasizes the higher role of Trotsky than that of Lenin. Trotsky was People's Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs of the Soviet Union from 1918 until 1925 which made him very popular among soldiers. After Lenin’s death Stalin mistrusted him as a competitor. This emphasis on Trotsky might have caused Babel himself trouble with the developing cult of Stalin.

In the chapter *Treason* we read the report to Investigator Burdenko from a Party member Nikita Balmashev. Balmashev explains how his life was in the service of his parents in the field of agriculture until:

I went over to the ranks of the Imperialists to defend Citizen Poincaré and Ebert-Noske the hangman of the German Revolution, as went to sleep it looks like and

¹⁴⁴ Babel, 126.

saw in their sleep how to help my native settlement of St. Ivan in the Kuban. And so things dragged on till Comrade Lenin, along with Comrade Trotsky, turned my savage bayonet aside and showed it other predestined guts and viscera what was more worth going for.¹⁴⁵

The peasant farmer was brainwashed in the First World War. With violence carrying on after the October Revolution, he claims that Lenin and Trotsky showed him a new direction to point his bayonet. He has renewed his “life” as a bloody killer thanks to Lenin and Trotsky.

Lenin is mentioned very importantly in “My First Goose” when the narrator reads Lenin’s speech from the 2nd Comintern published in *Pravda*. The killing of the goose and reading of Lenin’s speech suggest to Cossacks that he could be a comrade.

And loudly, like a triumphant man hard of hearing, I read Lenin’s speech out to the Cossacks. Evening rapped about me the quickening moisture of its twilight sheets; evening laid a mother’s hand upon my burning forehead. I read on and rejoiced, spying out exultingly the secrete curve of Lenin’s straight line. “Truth tickles everyone’s nostrils,” said Surovkov, when I had come to the end. “The question is, how’s it to be pulled from the heap. But he goes and strikes at it straight off like a hen pecking at a grain!”¹⁴⁶

This remark about Lenin was made by Surovkov, platoon commander of the Staff Squadron. Lenin is included a newly formed folk style proverb. The twisted language of Lenin’s speeches is perceived by the common people as “straight” talk that captures the

¹⁴⁵ Babel, 173.

¹⁴⁶ Babel, 76-77.

“truth.” The use of this reading and its effectiveness upon the Cossacks conveys a sense of cheapness which is symbolized by the moon: Already the moon hung above the yard like a cheap earring.¹⁴⁷

Throughout *Konarmia*, the theme of nature as a stage set installed with human gore and viscera serves as a metaphor for a Revolution that holds the idea that “man is the measure of all things”. The cosmology of this work is bound by mankind with its hope for joy and all the gore and horror of not achieving it. The above reference to cheap earring is a clue that Lenin’s speech is selling out for less than human dignity is worth.

Another interesting reference to Lenin’s role can be found in *The Life and Adventures of Matthew Pavlichenko*. It could be viewed as a ‘paraphrase’ of the popular genre ‘Life stories of Saints or Heroes’. It even starts in a similar style appealing to the audience, like an epic or ballad would begin.

In the name of all mankind learn the story of the Red General, Matthew Pavlichenko. He used to be a herdsman...

This sounds like many stories of apostles, biblical heroes or saints. When Pavlichenko faces his enemy, he uses Lenin’s authority almost like a hero would appeal to God’s message. When he approaches his former landlord and class enemy with the long cherished dream about revenge, he answers the old man’s question whether he is his destiny or not. He says:

Cut that talk. God has left us, slaves that we are. Our destiny’s no better than a turkey cock, and our life’s worth just about a copeck. So cut that talk and listen if you like to Lenin’s letter.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Babel, 76.

He pretends that he is reading a letter which begins like a judgment before an execution:

In the name of the nation, I read ‘and for the foundation of a nobler life in the future, I [Lenin] order Pavlichenko, Matthew son of Rodion, to deprive certain people of life, according to his discretion.’¹⁴⁹

He presents himself as an apostle of the new judgment, with Lenin supporting his position, justifying his rite to execute his enemy with the sanctity of the new faith.

The last mentioning of Trotsky appears in the chapter “Son of a Rabbi.” The narrator is spreading flyers among the wounded soldiers with the message from Trotsky. He writes that only one hand rose to catch a leaflet: “I flung a pile of Trotsky’s leaflets at them. But only one man among them stretched a dead and filthy hand to catch a leaflet. And I recognized Elijah, son of the Rabbi of Zhitomir.”¹⁵⁰

Among the miserable small belongings of the dying man, there was a portrait of Lenin.

His things were strewn about pell-mell – mandates of the propagandist and notebook of the Jewish poet, the portraits of Lenin and Maimonides lay side by side, the knotted iron of Lenin’s skull beside the dull silk of the portraits of Maimonides. A lock of woman’s hair lay in a book, the Resolutions of the Party’s Sixth Congress, and the margins of Communist leaflets were crowded with crooked lines of ancient Hebrew verse.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Babel, 105.

¹⁴⁹ Babel, 105.

¹⁵⁰ Babel, 192.

¹⁵¹ Babel, 193.

“The Rabbi’s Son” mourns of a young wasted life. The narrator is discussing the Sabbath as an anthropomorphized being “crushing the stars beneath her little red heel?” He remembers the evening of prayers at Rabbi Motale Bratslavsky’s place.

...we saw in the funeral candle light the Torah roles sheathed in covers of purple velvet and blue silk and, bowed above the Torah, inanimate and resigned, the beautiful face of Elijah the Rabbi’s son, last prince of the dynasty.

The apocalypse here is referred to by the word ‘dynasty’. We read of the wasted corpse of the ‘last prince’ and are meant to feel the nostalgia resulting from all the generations that will not be brought forth because of his death, hence the ancient dynasty is truncated by the revolution. The military and politicians may just see loses in the campaign, but to understand the meaning of the death is to understand the Apocalypse. What also feeds the notion of Apocalypse is the integration of the death into the mundane. Revolution in the short story cycle becomes associated with the extinction of the ancient Jewish dynasty, the old culture of aristocratic Poland (Chapter “Berestechko”) and the ‘holy republic of bees’ in Volyn’ (Chapter “The Road to Brody”).

Among Elijah’s possessions the narrator sees pages of the *Song of Songs* (the poetic celebration of sexual love), a lock of woman’s hair between the pages of the book and revolver cartridges, and is overtaken by sadness. The narrator recalls discussing the Party and Revolution with the dying Elijah.

You didn’t belong to the Party at that time, Bratslavsky...

“I did,” [...] only I couldn’t leave my mother.”

“And now, Elijah?”

“When there’s a revolution on, a mother’s an episode,”

He whispered, less and less audibly. “My letter came, the letter B, and the Organization sent me to the front...”[...] I took over the command of a scratch regiment, but too late...I hadn’t enough artillery...”[...] He died before we reached Rovno. He – that last of the Princes – died among his poetry, phylacteries, and coarse foot-wrappings.¹⁵²

Milton Ehre in his study *Isaac Babel*, describes *Konarmiia* as an epic which through the narration accumulates apocalyptic connotation. Nature does not exist separately from the human world. “Moon like chopped head, trees like naked corpses.” He animates nature but often uses imagery of human death. The apocalyptic atmosphere here is intensified by the evidence of violence we see in this imagery the author paints upon the landscape. As we have read in *The Chip* the Revolution is animated as the Feminine Force. The Feminine Force appears in *Konarmiia* in the form of animated Mother Nature. As Ehre writes:

Much of Red Cavalry has a fantastical, at times even hallucinatory quality – moonlit Gothic churches, green skies hovering over deserted manors. “Zamoste” alternates between a reality turned nightmare and a dream of escape. Caught up in a maelstrom of destruction, Lyutov, seeking the embrace of the maternal earth, dreams of comfort at a woman’s breast. However, to turn back in nostalgia to the mother is also a kind of death.¹⁵³

Animation of Nature through images of human death creates a paradox of negating the act of animation. Eroticism and fertility, all that is good in Nature, is associated with death in the time of Revolution.

¹⁵² Babel, 193.

¹⁵³ Babel, 75.

Babel through Lyutov brings the idea of Cultural death from Revolution to the text as well. Ehre writes:

Lyutov feels the pull of two forces – the commissar’s imperious rhetoric and the insinuating seductions of the old order. Building his stories on contrast, Babel is also fond of contrasting syntax, of coordinate sentences whose clauses clash: “He spoke of the Second Congress of the Comintern, while I wandered past walls here nymphs with gouged out eyes were leading an ancient choral dance.” Aristocratic culture, though impotent and doomed, still exerts the fascination of art. The story concludes on the notes of power which opened it. “You are in power,” the commissar exhorts. “Everything here is yours. There are no more Pans. I now proceed to the election of the Revolutionary Committee.” Lyutov ambles in a no-man’s land, recognizing the unequivocal voice of power, drawn to the sinuous paths of culture and the pathos of dying ways.¹⁵⁴

The Apocalyptic symbolism in *Konarmia* is built around the Dionysian/Apollonian masculine/feminine dualities. Those who are overtaken by Dionysian energy are Revolutionaries until death stops them. The masculine aspects of a character as protector of tradition and community is lost as the character becomes the neuter of the machine. The character seeks camaraderie in brigades and by being a soldier of the Revolution. The Feminine is either a target or becomes a destructive apocalyptic force replacing Mother, Mother Nature.

¹⁵⁴ Milton Ehre *Isaac Babel*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1986. 74.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

It is interesting that the fates of authors often were as tragic as the ‘life stories’ of their characters. We know that Zazubrin and Babel were executed. Aleksander Blok died young after depression. Boris Savinkov died in Lubyanka prison in unclear circumstances. Avril Pyman in the chapter ”The Sophia-myth and the theme of Apocalypse” in *A History of Russian Symbolism*, writes that the Apocalypse theme is a type of “panic from fear of absence”. More than that was the momentum of city life that could not be stopped that no one paid attention to. Briusov in his poem *Kon bled* (The Pale Horse) writes about a non-event Pyman writes.

Но восторг и ужас длились – краткое мгновенье.
Через миг в толпе смятенной не стоял никто
Набежало с улиц смежных новое движенье
Было все обычным светом ярко залито...¹⁵⁵
But the delight and terror lasted - a brief moment.

A moment later, the crowd was not the confused one
Ran up from the streets adjacent new movement
It was all the usual bright light filled ...

Only a prostitute, madman and poet notice Pyman reminds us. Signs are there that ‘entropy’ is unraveling civilization. The common, average person does not notice, they are part of the unstoppable momentum. If the Apocalyptic theme perpetuated the portents and chaos, it is no exaggeration that to write that Russian literature of the beginning of the twentieth century depicted unprecedented events in human history, which combined the violence of the Civil War and revolution with the destruction of a

¹⁵⁵ Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism*, 233.

three hundred year old empire. The arrival of the new regime realized the most cynical perversion of morals and human laws.

The most forceful expression of Lenin's ideas about taking power which also supports George Orwell's hindsight portent that revolutions are for establishing dictatorship, was found in *The Red Sword* a Cheka periodical:

For us there do not, and cannot, exist the old systems of morality and 'humanity' Fates of authors often follow the fates of characters. Characters die pursuing Revolution. Authors were often executed for predicting the fate of the revolutionary regime.invented by the bourgeoisie for the purpose of oppressing and exploiting the 'lower classes'. Our morality is new; our humanity is absolute, for it rests on the bright ideal of destroying all oppression and coercion. To us all is permitted, for we are the first in the world to raise the sword not in the name of enslaving and oppressing anyone, but in the name of freeing all from bondage...Blood? Let there be blood, if it alone can turn the grey-white-and black banner of the old piratical world to a scarlet hue, for only the complete and final death of that world will save us from the return of the old jackals.¹⁵⁶

We can see ideas of violent change, Revolution as renewal and violence to end violence in the above passage. The rhetoric of purging the old by any means as the only way to find a new morality has aspects of revenge mixed with brainwashing and utilitarian control over the un-informed.

In *The Pale Horse* we saw an account of the recruitment of idealistic youth for the purpose of carrying out terror for the sake of terror alone. The miscalculation on the part

¹⁵⁶ *Krasnyi mech*, No. 1, 18 Aug. 1919, p. 1. Hoover Institution, Stanford.

of the political leaders of terror was that it was a ‘cheap’, political tool to gain power during the autocratic system. In *The Twelve* we read about the forces unleashed once the old regime was gone. The passion for purging of the old society seen in the *Red Cavalry* seemed stronger and more clearly defined than any vision of a future. In both works the destructive passions of the Dionysian bring about more violent purging and predictions of more violence. *The Chip* shows the effect of unrestrained violence of a genderless paranoid police state that cannot quench its thirst for blood from the perceived ‘traitors’ within. The final work of this paper, *Konarmia*, portrays the exportation of Revolution that results in the end of dynasties, law and culture. In all works here mentioned the revolutionary pursues terror as an aspect of Revolution without a sense of self preservation, but for the goal of a vague undefined future utopia. The utopia is unachievable because Revolution is infinite. Y. Zamyatin did not arrive at this wisdom alone. He refers to N. I. Lobachevsky (1793- 1856) the pioneer of non-Euclidean geometry:

Lobachevsky cracks the walls of the millennia-old Euclidean world with a single book, [...] Revolution is everywhere, in everything. It is infinite. There is no final revolution, no final number. The social revolution is only one of an infinite number of numbers: the law of revolution is not a social law, but an immeasurably greater one.[...] like the laws of conservation of energy of the dissipation of energy (entropy).¹⁵⁷

One generation likes to ‘close the door’ on the following generation when the older generation says: “in our day”. The myth of the ‘Golden Age’ could be perceived as

¹⁵⁷ Y. Zamyatin *A Soviet Heretic*, “On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters,” 107-108.

revolutionary because it implies that all ages are not similar and conflict can lead to ‘breaks in Time’ and an undefined future. In *The Pale Horse* we recognize a type of politician - perpetrator of crisis, who is prepared to prevail, while a society plunges over precipices, which that kind of politician creates. The analysis of these texts showed a dramatic change of the representation of Revolution and revolutionaries in literature and in people’s minds. Obviously the 20th century writers viewed these topics differently than, for example, the Decembrist or late nineteenth century authors, but even within the early twentieth century texts we see, how symbolist, romantic and utopian perceptions of Revolution had been transformed into apocalyptic and dystopian visions. To the questions: why would people go to Revolution, or why a writer would choose to write about such disturbing and horrible things like the *Cheka* executions, we could say, that the initial intention, by which they were driven, was often romantic and heroic. It involved the desire to study and document the rightfulness of Revolutionary justice (i.e. for Zazubrin) or the heroic Revolution (i.e. for Babel). Through the process of observing and writing, those authors came to the overwhelming awareness of the destructive nature of Revolution and depictions of death, decay and madness. The loss of social identities, defined gender characteristics, and loss of faith led to madness and physical destruction. Symbolist stylistics of the narratives, which we appreciate in *Babel* and *Zazubrin*, could be seen as an attempt to escape the horrors of reality, using the imagery of theatre and stage. Their romantic pathos fails with the realization, that Revolution is no play but an end in itself, a deadly and destructive agency, leading to a humanitarian catastrophe.

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