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Lev Loseff

On the Beneficence of Censorship

Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature

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ARBEITEN UND TEXTE ZUR SLAVISTIK · 31
HERAUSGEGEBEN VON WOLFGANG KASACK

Lev Loseff

ON THE BENEFICENCE OF CENSORSHIP

Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature

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Lev Loseff (1937), der Leningrad 1976 verlassen mußte und seit 1979 in Hanover, New Hampshire am Dartmouth College in den USA als Professor of Russian Language and Literature lehrt, hat u.a. Werke von E. Švarc, N. Olejnikov und M. Bulgakov herausgegeben. In seiner ersten großen Monographie "On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature" analysiert Loseff an Werken von Švarc, Solženicyn, Evtušenko u.a. die aus der Auseinandersetzung mit der Zensur gebotenen stilistischen – auch bereichernden – Besonderheiten der modernen, in der Sowjetunion entstandenen russischen Literatur und veranschaulicht diese im Kontext von Werk, Autor und Epoche.

Wolfgang Kasack

Translated by Jane Bobko

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"Да чем же это дело несообразное? Тут, кажется, ничего нет такого".

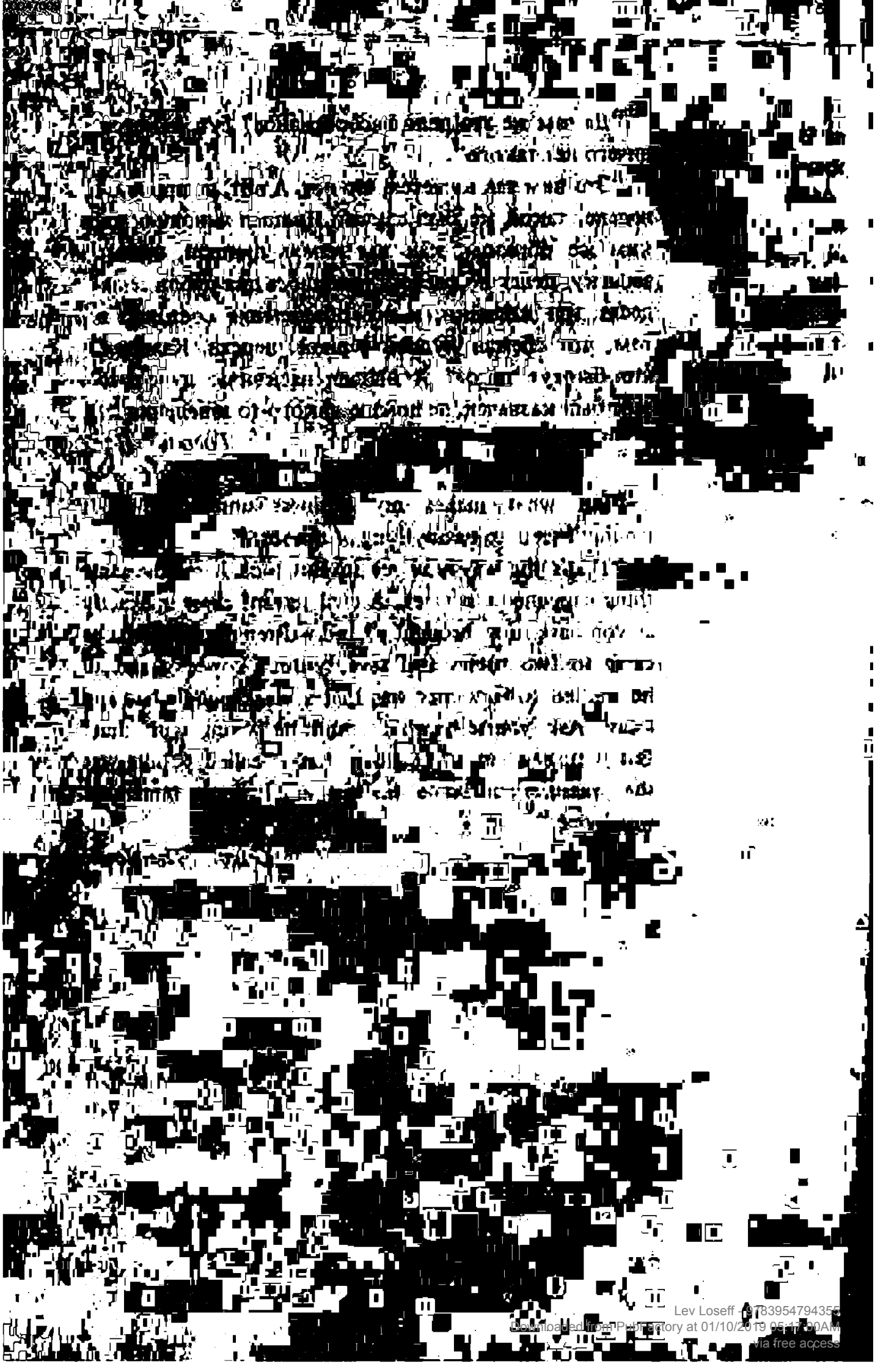
"Это вам так кажется, что нет. А вот, на прошлой неделе, такой же был случай. Пришел чиновник таким же образом, как вы теперь пришли, принес записку, денег по расчету пришлось два рубля семьдесят три копейки, и все объявление состояло в том, что сбежал пудель черной шерсти. Кажется, что бы тут такое? А вышел пасквиль: пудель-то этот был казначей, не помню какого-то заведения".

Гоголь, "Нос"

"But what makes my business unreasonable? It wouldn't seem to be anything of the sort."

"That's the way you see it. But look here, the same thing happened last week. A civil servant came in exactly as you have now, brought a hand-written note, the charge came to two rubles and seventy-three copecks, and all he wanted to announce was that a black poodle had run away. Ask yourself, what could be wrong with that? But it turned out to be libel; that so-called poodle was the treasurer of some institution, I don't remember which one."

Gogol, "The Nose"



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Preface

For the two hundred and fifty-odd years of its existence modern Russian literature has been constantly under the thumb of state censorship. Naturally, therefore, the attention of historians of Russian writing has always been drawn to various aspects of literature's relations with censorship. Literary historians like Lemke and Yevgeniev-Maksimov, for example, have investigated different periods in the development of state censorship; or they have examined the influence of censorship on the strategy of literary journals and have studied the clashes of individual writers with the censorship; finally, they have posited endless interpretations of the encoded messages of individual works. Strictly speaking, from the era of Peter the Great on, the entire history of Russian literature is to a significant degree also the history of Russian censorship. (This would exclude, however, Soviet literary-historical writing on the Soviet period: the very fact of the existence of Soviet censorship has there been censored out.)

There is one area, however, which has received far less than its share of attention: rarely has the relationship between literature and censorship been studied on the aesthetic plane; there has been scant consideration, that is, of the censored text's artistic specificity and the special nature of the relations among *author*, *censor*, and *reader*.

These relations, among other things, take on an obvious significance if one wishes to inject scholarly objectivity into a discussion of the fundamental question of Russian literature's unique national character, if one is interested in a serious typological approach rather than that chronic speculation on the humanism, prophesying, and preachiness "peculiar" to Russian writers.

Unfortunately, there is no end of essays written on the level of the dilettante's axiom that Russian literature is the more prophetic, English literature the more witty.

It has in fact been recognized in Russian cultural circles for more than a century that the aesthetic changes in a literature under the influence of censorship have a specific character. First in the spoken language of the intelligentsia and then in criticism and literature itself, this wide range of observed phenomena received the special designation "Aesopian language."

The present work seeks to describe "Aesopian language" as a special literary system, one whose structure allows interaction between author and reader at the same time that it conceals inadmissable content from the censor.

The work has seven chapters, with a summation in the eighth.

Chaper One outlines the area of investigation and provides a history of "Aesopian language" and its critics. The following two chapters take up general theoretical aspects of "Aesopian language": there, in particular, an attempt is made to uncover the structure of the Aesopian text and to classify its component literary devices. The analysis of actual literary texts in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven demonstrates the various paths to the realization of Aesopian aesthetics.

This is also the place to give notice of a special circumstance which necessarily limits the content of this work. The investigator of "Aesopian language" is faced with an ethical dilemma: to what extent has the critic the right to expose a writer's anti-censorship tactics when in Russia ideological censorship has not only not been abolished but, on the contrary, is patently on the increase? The majority of those who write about Russian literature of the Soviet period have arrived at a common-sense solution: inasmuch as the simple fact of the existence of "Aesopian language" is common knowledge, it is permissible to discuss the general outlines of "Aesopian language," but without delving into any specifics of the work of individual writers. (This, for

example, is the approach of Dewhirst and Farrell.)* Herein the following solution has been adopted: a considerable portion of this study is based upon the work of writers who are either deceased or who have emigrated from the USSR; the works of writers still living in the USSR are included only if their authors have already been unmasked and branded or have repented; in every other instance it has been necessary to reject highly relevant material in favor of less impressive examples. As for its revelation of the devices of "Aesopian language" themselves, this study will scarcely be to the detriment of any working writer since, for all their structural uniformity, these devices change their appearance with every realization. Writers always leave censorship behind, as did the fabulous tortoise who beat Achilles. (It is, incidentally, one of the tasks of these pages to demonstrate this.)

* * *

The author is fully aware of the objections which his work may raise; no doubt there are blind spots to be found, topics which have escaped attention. Such is the inevitable fate of all initial forays into any little-explored territory.

This study was conceived many years ago when the author was not just an observer but also a practitioner of Aesopian-language writing in Russia. As fate had it, the author later found himself in another hemisphere, where his observations of many years began to crystallize into the present monograph.

Although the author alone bears responsibility for all shortcomings, this book could hardly have been completed without the invaluable help of the individuals listed below.

I must mention, first of all, Professor Deming Brown from the University of Michigan, a scholar of immense knowledge in the field of modern Russian literature and a man of great personal warmth. I will ever be grateful to Deming for his advice, support, and encouragement.

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* See Note 4, Chapter 1.

I was very fortunate to meet Jane Bobko (then a graduate student at Harvard), who proved able to overcome the incredible differences in style between Russian and Anglo-American scholarly discourse. Jane was not only an ingenious translator but also an astute adviser and keen editor.

Our mutual endeavor was constantly supervised by my colleague Richard Sheldon, who generously gave us his time, read the manuscript, and commented on the translation in progress.

Among other scholars whose consultation was of great importance at different stages, I must name Walter Arndt, Herbert Eagle, Asya Humesky, Nina Loseff (closely related to this author), Barry Scherr and Munir Sendich.

While working on the book, I have held long conversations on my subject with such distinguished Russian writers as Vassily Aksyonov, Yuz Aleshkovsky, Joseph Brodsky, Sergei Dovlatov, Naum Korzhavin, Mark Popovsky, and Vladimir Voinovich, whose insights and personal memories helped me a great deal.

I am grateful to the Committee on Faculty Research of Dartmouth College for its steady financial assistance in the preparation of the manuscript, and to Professor Wolfgang Kasack and Dr. Irmgard Lorenz of the University of Cologne for their help in the final stages of my work.

There is one person in Madrid without whom the whole project would have never been possible. This person taught me to understand and to enjoy the subtlest nuances of Aesopian prestidigitation.

You, rather than I, should have written this book, and you would have done it better. Let me, at least, dedicate it to you, my unforgettable Persian friend.

Lev Loseff
Hanover, New Hampshire
April 1, 1983

PART ONE

Chapter I

THE LANGUAGE IN "AESOPIAN LANGUAGE"

The expression "Aesopian language," so it is held, was brought into currency in the 1860s by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin. Since that time, in Russian criticism and literary scholarship no less than in the spoken language of the intelligentsia, this expression has been used widely and over a broad range of contextual meanings. In the spoken language it is at times replaced by the informal shorthand "Aesop."

For the student of literature, however, it is the word "language" which first and foremost commands attention, for it suggests a certain linguistic or metalinguistic system. That such a system exists will be demonstrated in this work, where its presence will be established either directly, through textual analysis, or indirectly—by comparing and interpreting definitions of "Aesopian language," opinion on it, and uses of the term "Aesopian language" in modern Russian literature. These pages aim to bring a solidly formulated notion of Aesopian language into general scholarly and critical usage; to explicate the poetics of Aesopian language—both its individual components and its structural role in the text; to classify the varieties of Aesopian language; and to devise a methodology for the analysis of texts which contain elements of Aesopian language.

Before proceeding with that investigation, however, we must entertain one doubt: is the expression "Aesopian language" anything more than a frozen metaphor, one whose application to a wide range of such common yet disparate literary phenomena as the *genre* of the fable, the *poetic device* of allegory, or ironic

style is not entirely consistent? Is the word "language" used other than in that purely metaphorical, not logically dictated, sense in which it appears in a number of other popular locutions—"the tongue of the placard" (Mayakovsky), "the tongue of native asps" (Turgenev), and Soviet newspapers' "language of intimidation" or "language of business-like cooperation," for instance?

The foregoing verbal clichés are metaphors in which the word "language," as the vehicle, either means "an organ of the human body" (as in Mayakovsky's "The poet licked consumption's spittle clean / with the scratchy tongue of the placard") or is deliberately ambiguous (as in Yesenin's "The golden grove has stopped using / Its gay birchtree tongue"). These and similar "languages" are metaphorical designations for diverse natural, social, and psychological phenomena without being themselves actual languages: they are not, that is, structurally organized systems of communication.

It is worth noting the existence of "placard language," which means something very different from Mayakovsky's catch phrase: "placard language" denotes the system of representational devices typical of the work of poster artists. The latter, from the standpoint of the semiotics of art, may be considered a language.

Considering only their etymology, all modern literary terms are metaphorical (the term "metaphor" here being no exception). Each has evidently come into being as the poetic label for a new literary phenomenon whose systematic character is not yet fully appreciated by contemporaries; the metaphorical provenance of the term is obscured, and a term in the full sense of the word created, only as a result of the recurrence and essential consequence of the phenomenon. Even to someone conversant with Greek the word "metaphor" does not evoke the image of physical transference from one thing to another.

As will be seen below, "Aesop's/Aesopian language" (or "Aesopian speech") was initially a purely metaphorical designation for a distinctive body of phenomena new to Russian literature in the 1860s. The metaphor acquired wide currency and was popularized

in Russian literary usage by the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, which fact alone indicates the spread and tenacity of the phenomenon for which the metaphor stood. Yet its ready intelligibility also attests that the metaphor had become the customary and convenient label for the phenomenon—a term, that is. So, for example, in verses which lamented that the easing of censorship in Russia had been so brief, S. Skitalets wrote in 1907 (speaking as Satire):

Я говорила языком
Эзопа
И удивлялась мне притом
Европа.
Свободной я хотела стать
Некстати...
И наложили на печать
Печати...
И на цугундер взяли Русь
Всю скопом...
Ну что ж... Ужель опять займусь
Эзопом? [1]

I spoke the language / of Aesop. / And what's more, I astonished / Europe. / My bid for independence was / ill-timed. . . / They slapped their imprimaturs / on the press . . . / And put one over on all Russia / to a man . . . / Well, what the . . . Am I really back / to Aesop?

The informal shorthand "Aesop" in the last line points to the poet's confidence that the mass reader (it should be recalled that the poem was printed in a mass publication intended for broad democratic circles) would readily grasp which literary phenomenon he meant. The poet assumed that his audience would be familiar with the term, a fact which is no less revealing than the frequent use of the same term in the literary-historical studies, criticism, and political writing of the time.

A fairly long synonymous line of metaphors for the designation of this one phenomenon—"reading between the lines," "a slave's way of speaking," "cryptography," and so on—appeared simultaneously with Aesopian language. That Aesopian language (at times "Aesopian manner") prevailed over these competing terms was due primarily to its linguistic advantage: a combination of noun plus adjective is the most effortless in Russian and significantly better suited—particularly if noun and adjective are both short—to frequent usage and employment in the spoken language than are set phrases which demand the use of the oblique cases. The foreign provenance of the adjective was in this case no obstacle to popular acceptance of the term, for Aesop's fables were widely known to the Russian reading public thanks to a classical education and the retellings or translations of Krylov, Kheraskov, Khemnitser, and others. (It is not without significance that the book *Aesop's Parables*, published in Russian and Latin by Ilya Kopievsky in Amsterdam in 1700, marked the beginning of the Russian Age of Enlightenment.[2]) Even at present, however, the aforementioned synonyms for the designation of Aesopian language are not uncommon, and the reader should not be misled by their use.

It is therefore assumed that for approximately one hundred years "Aesopian language" has been a term used to designate a peculiar phenomenon which has a bearing upon literature. But is the phenomenon for which the term "Aesopian language" stands a purely literary one?

The existence of ideological censorship is the obvious precondition for the rise of Aesopian language in literature. An extraliterary factor, in other words, is prerequisite to Aesopian language, one which does not inhere either in the text or in the minds of author or reader, one which does not strictly speaking even address literature as such—for *censorship treats literary texts as non-literary.* In the eyes of the ideal Censor, if such can be imagined, the artistic text is not artistic. If, for example, the Censor comes across an anti-government statement in a text

under review, he will require that this statement be expunged (in the event that he does not ban the text altogether). As they figure in the given text's internal web of relations, however, a character's anti-government statements may have no bearing at all upon the actually existing government and nothing to do with thorny political and ideological issues as such; in the last analysis, such statements are intended to manipulate the reader's perception, to play upon his state of mind. Almost without exception, however, such statements are deleted from the text by the Censor.

This most simple example of the conflict between Censor and Author, incidentally, raises a more basic phenomenological problem of the text: taken by itself, without once having been incorporated into any of the structurally organized realms of intellectual activity, the text exists solely as a material object (as paper covered with typographical markings, as waves of sound, and the like); the text, in other words, has no existence in the scheme of social values. Yet because this text is one thing in the political structure and another in the artistic structure, the Censor and Author, while seemingly dealing with the same quantity, are actually dealing with two disparate quantities.[3]

It should be noted that here and elsewhere, with special exceptions, Author, Reader, and Censor are understood in an ideal sense, as if each of these three actors in the Russian literary process had at his command but one code for reading the text (the censor's code, for instance, would be formed of an officially ratified system of sanctions and prohibitions). In reality, however, censors exhibit varying degrees of limitation, and readers and authors varying degrees of awareness. It is a well-known fact that even members of the artistic and intellectual elite—S. T. Aksakov, Goncharov, and Nikitenko, for example—served as censors. However, functionaries whose interests do not range beyond the official regulations have never been in short supply. But even the latter type of censor cannot always be regarded as the ideal, for the reason that the regulations themselves have narrowed or

expanded the duties of the censorship in different ways at different times: there have been periods when a government censor was held responsible for enforcing only the letter of the censorship's restrictions and when he was even *forbidden* to weigh the possibility of alternate interpretations; whereas in other periods monitoring possible second and third meanings was considered every government censor's paramount responsibility.[4] Naturally, the more clear-cut the jurisdiction of the censor and the more methodical the government bureaucrat's discharge of his appointed duties, the closer he approaches the ideal Censor.

Imagine the situation, therefore, when the Author, who fully understands the system of political taboos (i.e., the censorship), determines to anticipate the Censor's intervention: dispensing with a number of direct statements in the text and with the straightforward depiction of certain details of real life, he replaces them with hints and circumlocutions. While his rationale in this instance lies outside literature, the Author has no means but the literary—tropes, rhetorical figures, and intrigues within the structure of the work as a whole—to realize his hints and circumlocutions. The interpolation of these elements must be consistent and systematic; otherwise their effect, should they produce one at all, will be so small as to be insignificant. Properly applied, however, the inserted hints and circumlocutions will have an inevitable influence upon the text as a whole: they will enter into either smooth or conflicting relations with the text's other components, will cause a shift in shades of meaning and emotional emphasis, and so on (see Chapters III and VI). It is this systemic alteration of the text occasioned by the introduction of hints and circumlocutions which these pages will take to be Aesopian language.

While Russian criticism not infrequently uses the word "style" for this category of phenomena, it is purposely avoided here as ambiguous (see Chapter II for a more detailed discussion). Indeed "style" is also the name given to an author's individual manner, which, however, can in no way be identified with a penchant for

Aesopian language: use of Aesopian language does not rule out individual diversity. Instead, it is the tripartite model of Roland Barthes, who distinguishes *language*, *style*, and *writing (écriture)*, which usefully defines Aesopian language as it is understood herein. Language and style, according to Barthes, are fixed quantities (the former, a given, sets the frontiers which the writer may not overstep, while the latter is rooted in the inborn features of the writer's personality) and it is only writing which is subject to the writer's will, always under the pressure of extraliterary circumstances. Those changes imposed upon writing by a given set of circumstances (historical or social) are called a *mode of writing (la mode d'écriture).* Aesopian language is such a mode.[5]

"The price of Aesopian language alone! . . . How difficult, draining, almost unseemly it is!" wrote M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin.[6] Invectives against Aesopian language abound in Russian literature, criticism, and even in literary scholarship. Thus it is a rare reference to Aesopian language in Soviet sources which manages without the addition of a quotation from Lenin's 1912 article, "The Party Organization and Party Literature:"

> Accursed days of Aesopian talk, literary bondage, slavish language, ideological serfdom! The proletariat has put an end to this corruption which choked everything alive and fresh in Russia.[7]

It is easy to understand why Lenin was so incensed: for him Aesopian language was a means to guide "the idea of peasant revolution, the idea of the masses' struggle to overthrow all the old authorities, through the obstacles and snares of the censorship."[8] Lenin's habit of listing his "profession" as "man of letters" is an obvious indication that what he meant by "literature" was political polemicizing and propaganda. For Lenin the practical politician, Aesopian language was a necessary subterfuge, but one which he would have preferred to do without. Yet a contemporary political observer of an entirely different persuasion, V. V. Rozanov, also thundered against Aesopian language,

coupling it with the cowardice and debased spiritual needs of the Russian intelligentsia and deriding it as "giving the finger up one's sleeve." [9] In point of fact, however, Rozanov was merely continuing the tradition, begun long before him by Dostoevsky (see Chapter VIII), of criticizing Aesopian language on moral grounds, just as today the same verdict rings from the political writings of Solzhenitsyn.[10]

But while numerous historical considerations vindicate the censure of the politician or the moralist, the refusal of many literary critics and specialists to seriously examine Aesopian language, having settled in advance on a negative view of this fact of literary life, seems paradoxical even in an historical perspective. The following statement by one of the most influential critics of the Shchedrin era, D. I. Pisarev, is typical in this regard:

> . . . Shchedrin's ridicule is always sincere, and it is not so much what he observes in life as *how he himself relates and describes* the events and situations that he is mocking; adjust the *manner of exposition* slightly, discard the *pranks with language* and *mischievous design,* and one will see that the flavor of the humor turns flat and is weakened for good. In order to make the reader laugh, Mr. Shchedrin . . . lets loose *grammatical and syntactical salto mortale* [emphasis added].[11]

It is curious that the socialist and utilitarian critic's reproach touches on all those basic elements of the text which produce the mode of writing and the author's individual stamp.

Although not all were as open as Pisarev, Russian critics before the revolution held predominantly to the view that Aesopian language notoriously reduced a work's artistic merit. As the above quotation makes clear, even a writer's masterful command of Aesopian language was itself suspect as a quality unbefitting a genuine artist and outside serious art. Critics of varying persuasions proceeded from a presumption of Aesopian language's aesthetic inferiority and preferred the excited rhetoric of "bold" Juvenalian satire to the "servile" Aesopian brand. Skabichevsky, a critic who scarcely shared Pisarev's radical views, wrote:

> Shchedrin's talent is for satire which is, so to speak, ephemeral. The short-lived type of the petty tyrant crops up—and Mr. Shchedrin picks on petty tyrants; Tashkent sorts turn up—and Mr. Shchedrin picks on the Tashkent sorts. . . . These are types of the moment. Let the given moment pass, and Mr. Shchedrin's satire loses its spice and becomes the property of archeology.[12]

This critical reluctance to concede to Aesopian language an artistic significance in its own right and to analyze it from the standpoint of its efficacy as a component of the text (in the way, for example, that it was customary to write about the musicality of Fet's verse, Tolstoy's sentence structure, or Ostrovsky's vocabulary) is rooted in the cultural value system of the time. During a period when a liberal-radical movement was on the rise, the fearless champion of the common people was a more exemplary figure than was the sly ironist. And while politics had already for some time intruded into Russian literature, it was in the 1860s that the removal of political debate to artistic literature and to literary criticism reached its peak. Under such circumstances, it was indeed difficult for critics to distinguish between a writer's civic position and the devices of his creative work. They met the writer at every step with a demand for the courage of a Schillerian hero, forgetting Schiller's wise dictum: "Only he who is true to his time will gain immortality."

This view of Aesopian language held by critics and readers during the 1860s and 1870s gave way during the 1880s and 1890s to a different view, which can be explained as follows: the growth of Aesopian language in literature occurs simultaneously with the spread of liberal radicalism in society; only when a period of profound social stagnation sets in, however, do critics and the intelligentsia as a whole learn to perceive Aesopian language aesthetically. By the 1880s and 1890s, Shchedrin's Aesopian works had lost their political timeliness, but they remained popular for their wit and humor. The intelligentsia, as Gorky put it, began "to lick Shchedrin's diseased liver" with gusto. (That

Gorky belonged already to a new era, that of the next ascendancy of radicalism and liberal aspirations, explains his sarcasm.)

It is not surprising that Soviet criticism has adopted the conventional liberal wisdom that "Juvenalian satire is superior to Aesopian." In "Russian Satire of 1905-1907," a rich article which abounds with material, even the impartial critic A. Ninov writes:

> By tempering an 'Aesopian manner' with candid 'Juvenalian' debunking, the verse satire of 1905 took *an important step forward* in devising an artistic style which met the needs of a new era in Russian history [emphasis added].[13]

This claim reflects not only the notion, typical of Soviet criticism, that literature has a progressive development, but also the traditional view of "Aesopian manner" as an arrangement which abridges artistic freedom. But whatever the paradox, the Soviet critic and believer in the progressive evolution of literature is only rehashing notions which are a century old; these ideas about the inferiority of Aesopian writing were held, for example, by I. S. Aksakov:

> . . . with us the very words had their meaning bent and they took on allegorical import . . . the writer had become an expert and he managed to pass his view on to the public—like a thief, so to speak, between the lines . . . anything in order to smuggle his thought like contraband past the censor's lookout post—and the thought would tiptoe softly by, bundled up in double-edged turns of speech![14]

Seldom does one encounter a positive approach to Aesopian language, and even then it is usually accompanied by a note of surprise or phrased in the interrogative. During the 1906 relaxation of the censorship, the popular satirist A. Krasny wondered:

> О, муза яда и печали,
> Ты пела, цепи волоча,

Чего же песни отзвучали,
Когда не стало палача? [15]

O Muse of venom and dolor, / You sang when you were fettered. / Why ever did your music fade / Once hangmen were extinct?

Yet, while liberal rhetoric habitually accused the censorship of the executioner's sins, the censorship would no sooner recede into the shadows—a retreat which in Russian history has never lasted for more than a brief spell—than it would become apparent that literature had thereby lost rather than gained. And with the return of an unremitting censorship, what is more, writers would sometimes entertain the paradoxical thought that, like it or not, censorship had become a factor in the creative process, owing to which an Aesopian manner was not artistically detrimental, but beneficial. And here Saltykov-Shchedrin remarked, "And again I repeat: it [an Aesopian manner] does not obscure my intentions in the least, but—on the contrary—makes them public." [16]

Herzen's conclusions in this regard were quite trenchant:

> . . . censorship is highly conducive to progress in the mastery of style and in the ability to restrain one's words. . . . In allegorical discourse there is perceptible excitement and struggle: this discourse is more impassioned than any straight exposition. The word implied has greater force beneath its veil and is always transparent to those who care to understand. A thought which is checked has greater meaning concentrated in it—it has a sharper edge; to speak in such a way that the thought is plain yet remains to be put into words by the reader himself is the best persuasion. Implication increases the power of language. [17]

Here with exceptional insight Herzen touches on the very heart of the problem—the increased suggestiveness of the text in the work's aesthetic design and the heightened involvement of the

reader in its psychological scheme.[18] Even N. G. Chernyshevsky, one may believe, did not intend only irony when he called Aesopian language his "favorite style."

In their observations the masters of Aesopian language directly link a writer's formal virtuosity to the censorship and the necessity of avoiding its snares. The traditional comparison between the hangman and his victim begs to be replaced by one with ecological import: wolves are needed to keep the deer in top form.

In summing up more than a century of his predecessors' experience, the poet Brodsky has said:

> . . . the machinery of constraint, of censorship, of suppression turns out to be—this is a paradox—useful to literature. The fact is, the linguistic norms which are prescribed by the state transform the entire population into one mass of readers. For the writer this is an extraordinary advantage, since he knows in this case what not to do if he wishes to find his own voice; moreover, if there is censorship—and in Russia, God knows, there is!—then one must avoid it; that is, censorship is unwittingly an impetus to metaphorical language. A person who might under normal conditions speak normal Aesopian language is speaking Aesopian language at a third remove. This is remarkable, and the thanks for it must go to the censorship.[19]

(It is of particular interest in this statement that Brodsky, by his mention of degrees of Aesopian language, echoes the judgment of Saltykov-Shchedrin: Solovyov had already made his 1879 attempt upon the life of Alexander II when Saltykov-Shchedrin remarked upon literature's passing "from a merely Aesopian to a doubly Aesopian pitch."[20])

The present work is concerned with the aesthetic functioning of Aesopian language on various levels of the text, with a description of the sum of poetic means which constitute Aesopian language in modern Russian literature, and, in part, with guidelines for the application of the knowledge about Aesopian language thus obtained to concrete literary-critical analysis.

While from time to time the need for similar studies has been cited, none has yet been undertaken—and for good reason: Russian scholarship and criticism, no differently than literature, have never known freedom from ideological censorship (the very same censorship which presages the appearance of Aesopian language), and discussion of anti-censorship tactics is impossible in a state of censorship. Even an investigation into the struggle against censorship and the Aesopian language of past eras automatically acquires, under the conditions of the current censorship, an Aesopian ambiguity.

Although those who study Russian literature outside Russia have not been limited by censorship restrictions of this sort, there were and are other, almost equally insurmountable obstacles for them. Their chief handicap is the fact that a thorough acquaintance with the entire idiom of the active Russian language, as well as a complete knowledge of every side of Russian cultural life—including those whose existence is officially hushed up or denied (censored)—and familiarity with the complex and shifting balance of relations among official and unofficial subcultures within the larger national culture are the basis of any understanding of Aesopian language. This information is empirically available to all who reside within the country, yet almost impossible to obtain from published linguistic or sociological studies and the like. Such is the vicious circle begotten by censorship.[21]

Precisely because of their small number, those works which do treat Aesopian language are widely known to all readers who have an interest in this matter; their meager bibliography flits from reference book to reference book and from one article to the next.

The list of works which address the problem of Aesopian language in Russian literature as a whole is, strictly speaking, confined to two encyclopedia articles, both of which delineate the problems more than they propose an analysis. Nonetheless, these surveys—by V. P. Grigoriev in the *Concise Literary Encyclopedia* and by Ray J. Parrot in the *Modern Encyclopedia*

of Russian and Soviet Literature—present the history of Aesopian language and sketch the difficulties which it entails as comprehensively as only an encyclopedia article can.[22] All the remaining studies treat Aesopian language exclusively in the context of the work of an individual writer or as a footnote in histories of Russian publishing, periodicals, and censorship.

A large part of the work on Aesopian language is clustered about two principal topics: 1) the populist and revolutionary democratic literature of the 1860s and 1870s which, it need hardly be said, comprises the work of Saltykov-Shchedrin and Chernyshevsky and the activities of the radical journals, and 2) the satire of 1905-7, for which satirical journals were the main forum.

There has been isolated attention to elements of Aesopian style in eighteenth-century literature, in the literature of the early nineteenth century, and in Pushkin.[23] In principle, however, one may begin to speak of Aesopian language as understood herein only in the 1860s; studies of that and later periods, accordingly, hold the greater interest.

The revolution lifted what censorship restrictions there had been on studying the work of the radical writers of the nineteenth century, and Soviet authorities encouraged investigations in this area as part of an extensive propaganda campaign to establish an ideological base for the new regime.

Work began on editions of Nekrasov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Chernyshevsky, and other writers of that cast. Aesopian texts were studied and annotated, with many critics believing that the problem of Aesopian language in Russian literature was one which traditional explication could solve. The prominent Bolshevik Olminsky's suggestion to modern readers that, in view of their "many allusions to bygone events," the works of Saltykov-Shchedrin be read "together with someone who knows the past" exemplifies this naive approach.[24] His primitive understanding of Aesopian language also gave Olminsky the bright idea of assembling a *Shchedrin Dictionary*.[25] Such an approach to

Aesopian language as a crude cipher has so gripped Soviet literary scholarship that even A. I. Yefimov's solid *The Language of Saltykov-Shchedrin's Satire*, which offers a subtle analysis of the semantics of Shchedrin's texts, inclines in places to the same onesided decoding—or "translation"—of individual words, particularly in its first three chapters.[26]

An abundance of valuable factual material has been amassed as a result of the work of Chukovsky on Nekrasov, the "men of the sixties," and satirical journalism in the days of the first revolution; of V. E. Yevgeniev-Maksimov and M. V. Nechkina on the history of the Russian periodical press; of A. I. Yefimov and S. A. Makashin on Saltykov-Shchedrin; of a group of Saratov scholars—Ye. I. Pokusaev, B. I. Lazerson, and L. Ya. Paklina—on Chernyshevsky; and of L. A. Yevstigneeva on the journal *Satyricon*. Unfortunately, only a few of these studies attempt, if not a typological approach, at least a simple classification of the Aesopian devices in the *oeuvre* of individual writers.

Two small studies by K. I. Chukovsky, "Aesopian Discourse" (the concluding section of the well-known *Nekrasov's Artistry*) and "Cryptography in *Hard Times*" (which deals with Vasily Sleptsov's Aesopian novel), ought probably to be considered the first, and as yet the most important, experiment in this direction.[27] It might be added that Chukovsky first attempted a practical classification of Aesopian works "according to devices" as far back as 1925 in *The Russian Revolution in Satire and Humor*, a book whose first part he edited.[28]

In "Cryptography in *Hard Times*" Chukovsky deciphered and analyzed the various Aesopian devices employed by Sleptsov, and in so doing demonstrated the artistic function of Aesopian language in the work, its stature as the work's focusing stylistic component. The methodological significance of this relatively unambitious work by Chukovsky lies in its demonstration of the importance of steady and consistent coordination of the analysis of an Aesopian text with the cultural context of the era during which the work appeared.

In the final chapter of his book on Nekrasov, Chukovsky approached the problem of systematically classifying Aesopian language as a peculiar literary-aesthetic category. With the work of Nekrasov as his material, Chukovsky managed to touch on many aspects of Aesopian language, of which the following should be deemed the principal:

a) *the presence of two types of Aesopian language*—one which exists as an artistic element of a literary text and the other as a special political code (cf. Chapter II.2ff. and ChapterV),

b) *the impossibility of Aesopian language outside a social context,* to which there are two dimensions: the social milieu which determines the rise of Aesopian language and the duration of Aesopian exchanges between Author and Reader (cf. Chapter III),

c) *the orderliness of Aesopian poetics,* which pertains both to the selection of poetic devices classified by Chukovsky and to the rigid structure of the Aesopian utterance (cf. Chapter II and III).

The three preceding points represent an attempt to abstract and sort Chukovsky's ideas concerning Aesopian language, ideas which Chukovsky himself, given his differing purposes, puts forth in unrestricted essay form, precluding rigorous consistency and permitting formulations which are metaphorical and approximate. Chukovsky illumines certain features from every angle, while others—which are, however, no less critical—he merely touches in passing. With respect to Nekrasov in any case, Chukovsky's analysis of poetic tropes in an Aesopian function and his detailed description of varying types of allegories are almost exhaustive.

Chukovsky reserves much attention for the crucial question of cultural-historical context, of the social conditions in which special devices of Aesopian codification are contrived. The issue, however, is not the compilation of a dictionary or some sort of "prison Morse code" as Olminsky naively supposed, but rather the employment of unchanging devices of a structural type—such

as *the encoding of ideas* and *the rearing of an Aesopian reader* (cf. Chapter III):

> . . . in many of its elements the language of Nekrasov, Shchedrin, and Chernyshevsky was, as has been shown, a group, collective language, which was also its chief strength. . . .
>
> The whole business lay precisely in the *schooling,* the education, of the reader and in the protracted and unbroken influence on him of revolutionary ideas concealed by legal forms of discourse, while as a consequence of their long use these forms, with each passing year, grew more perfect, more complex, more refined and flexible.[29]

Chukovsky mentions as well the capacity of such a reader to shift certain works into the Aesopian mode without being bound by the wishes and intentions of the author (cf. Chapter II.3 and Chapter III); he takes passing but thoughtful notice of the internal structure of an Aesopian utterance and, in citing Nekrasov's poem "Not a year passes but my powers slacken. . . ," offers an excellent example of a marker (on markers and screens, see Chapter II.5):

> Что ни год – уменьшаются силы.
> Ум ленивее, кровь холодней.
> Мать-отчизна! дойду до могилы,
> Не дождавшись свободы твоей! [30]

> Not a year passes but my powers slacken. / The mind is more feeble, the blood colder. / My country, my mother! I'll go to my grave, / Without having lived to see you free!

This elegy, in which personal, lyric motifs are interwoven with the civic (the last within the bounds of what was permitted by the censorship at the beginning of the 1860s), is shifted into the Aesopian mode by one small detail—by the date of its composition, 1861. Had "1851" or even "1860" appeared below the

poem, it would not have been Aesopian, but simply lyric-civic verse. In 1861, however, when the emancipation of the serfs was under way and when in Chukovsky's words "the entire liberal press was blaring that the long-awaited era of freedom for the peasants would dawn any minute now," the date of Nekrasov's poem said what he could not say openly: the reform had not brought freedom.[31]

Chukovsky faced squarely the working out of the problem of Aesopian language as an artistic system, writing of the late 1850s and early 1860s:

> A very stable, harmoniously ordered 'language,' designed for many years of secret communication with readers, had already been forged from it [Aesopian discourse] at that time.[32]

Chukovsky's working definition of Aesopian language, which he gives at the very outset, as a stylistic phenomenon points to the necessity of a systematic investigation within the bounds of stylistics:

> [Aesopian language is] the formative stylistic element in his [Nekrasov's] work, which was decided not so much by the complex of his aesthetic opinions and tastes as by those conditions of oppressive censorship in which he, like all men of letters in the revolutionary camp, was compelled to move among his readers.[33]

One can only conjecture why Chukovsky failed to undertake a thorough investigation into the style generated by this element and regret that he confined himself to passing observations, however insightful. That Chukovsky himself made active use of the same methods in his own literary work is, possibly, the reason that he did not develop the topic (see Chapter VII).

L. Ya. Paklina's *The Art of Allegorical Discourse: The Aesopian Voice in Artistic Literature and Political Writing* is the sole separate publication devoted to Aesopian language.[34] Yet, the

sweep of its title notwithstanding, Paklina's work is no more than a booklet; of its three constituent articles, the first two concern the journal *Notes of the Fatherland*, while the third—"Artistically Honed Language: Some Observations on the Aesopian Language of V. I. Lenin"—may give a few examples of the political Aesopian code, but has on the whole hardly any bearing on the aesthetic problem under consideration here.

The greatest interest of Paklina's book lies in her very statement of the problem, which she regards as threefold:

(a) understanding the artistic resources of Aesopian language,

(b) determining the specific character of Aesopian language, and

(c) tracing Aesopian language's historical-literary genesis.

The author's announced intention to place principal emphasis on questions of poetics holds out equal promise:

> to decipher an Aesopian image is not to put one's finger on that fact of reality which occasioned the allegory, but to interpret the life of this fact in the artistic world of the writer.[35]

In that Paklina is quite right. It is a pity that she confined herself to picking out examples (from *Notes of the Fatherland*) of poetic devices which Chukovsky and Yefimov had already described.

B. I. Lazerson adheres to approximately the same approach in a series of articles which treat Aesopian language in Chernyshevsky, granted that she analyzes the inner structure of Aesopian devices in far more detail—particularly in the article "Irony in Chernyshevsky's Political Writing"—than does Paklina.[36]

Lazerson's studies are concentrated almost entirely in the area of journalistic writing and of a non-artistic Aesopian code.

One might yet mention among the works which, because of their material and analysis, are of interest, L. Yevstigneeva's *The Journal "Satyricon" and the "Satyricon" Poets.*[37] This book, and similarly certain other literary-historical works whose concern is the satirical press at the start of the century, will be cited at the proper moment in later pages.

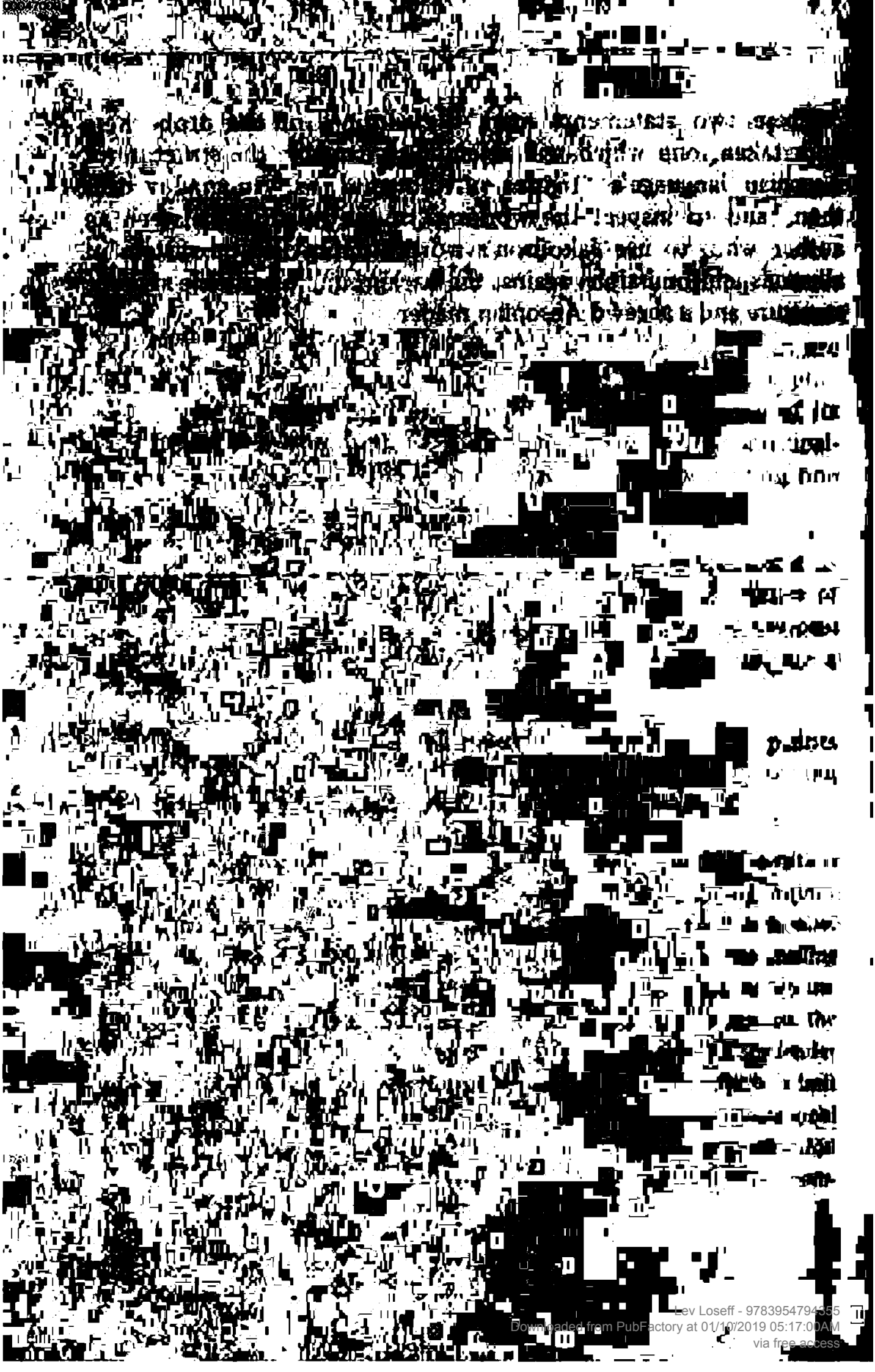
It is evident from this survey, whose brevity cannot be helped,[38] that none of the researchers who have touched on questions of the theory and practice of Aesopian language in Russian literature has ventured beyond the analysis of certain poetic devices in the work of one or another writer, a reticence justified, however, by the object of their attention—the work of an individual writer. Nonetheless, it is clear from even a hurried comparison of scattered observations that what confronts the literary historian are not the isolated facts of writers' biographies, but a certain phenomenon common to Russian literature in certain periods of its development. Such a phenomenon must be thought of theoretically as *a special category of expressivity*, this expression being one borrowed from V. V. Vinogradov:

> In satirical representation, play with logical forms is the source of pointed rhetorical effects. An analysis of its devices, of 'figures of thought,' is a complex problem of rhetoric. . . . The forms of Aesopian language, for which a socio-political 'taboo' is the rationale, are a special category of rhetorical expressivity.[39]

R. O. Jakobson, that other remarkable theoretician, also points to a general theoretical formulation of the problem of Aesopian language in his "Marginal Notes on Puškin's Lyric Poetry":

> . . . one must not overlook the fact that the obtrusive and relentless censorship becomes an essential co-factor in Russian literary history (this applies to a high degree also to the Puškin period), that a sense for reading between the lines becomes unusually keen in the reading public and that the poet indulges in allusions and omissions or—to use the Russian idiom—in 'Aesopian language.' It is precisely against the background of such stabilized relations between images that the reader experiences with particular intensity those relations which admit diverse variations. Compositionally this reminds us of the traditional comedy *(commedia dell'arte)*, in which possibilities for improvisation stood out the more sharply against the background of fixed components.[40]

These two statements mark the outlines of the probe here undertaken, one which will attempt to examine the structure of Aesopian language's "figures of thought," as Vinogradov calls them, and to inspect the workings of the relations between an author who, to use Jakobson's word, "improvises" a system of allusions and omissions against the background of a stable stylistic structure and a shrewd Aesopian reader.



Chapter II

THE AESTHETIC NATURE OF AESOPIAN LANGUAGE

1. *Aesopian Language as a Metastylistic Phenomenon*

The understanding of style from which this discussion proceeds is one which views style as a control placed on perception of the text. The style of an artistic text is realized in a sum of stylistic devices which may be enlisted by the author and which must properly be distinguished from figures of speech, or rhetoric. In a strict sense, moreover, it is not in the text, but rather in the consciousness of the reader that stylistic devices achieve their function: a stylistic device is revealed in the striking impression upon the consciousness of the reader which results from the author's deliberate disappointment, in the context of his work, of linguistic and cultural predictability.[1]

In order that any given segment of the text exhibit the markings of style, it is imperative that there be a conflict between some two of its elements. Stylistic markings arise, therefore, in the context of the literary work itself; whereas an Aesopian device involves the contrast of the text of an artistic work—a text, that is, which is already organized stylistically—with a socio-ideological situation, in which wider context the entire single work, or even the whole of literature, is but one component part. There is therefore reason to label Aesopian language a *metastyle.*

Three excerpts from the first chapter of *Eugene Onegin* may clarify this inadvertently cumbersome abstraction.

А. Вот мой Онегин на свободе;
Острижен по последней моде,
Как *dandy* лондонский одет –
И наконец увидел свет.
Он по-французски совершенно
Мог изъясняться и писал;
Легко мазурку танцевал
И кланялся непринужденно;
Чего ж вам больше? Свет решил,
Что он умен и очень мил.

Now my Onegin is at large: / hair cut after the latest fashion, / dressed like a London Dandy– / and finally he saw the World. / In French impeccably / he could express himself and write, / danced the mazurka lightly, / and bowed unconstrainedly– / what would you more? / The World decided / he was clever and very nice. (Chapter 1, IV)

By injecting the conversation filler "what would you more?" Pushkin gives this enumeration of his hero's representative and emphatically surface qualities the character of a spontaneous overheard monologue. The implicitly present speaker—be he "a man on the street" or the author masked as such—represents "the world," a synecdoche which Pushkin, true to the light tone he has adopted, simultaneously unravels: "The World decided..." In its content, too, this passage imitates an insubstantial society *causerie:* Onegin's outward show is noted, but nothing is said that might reveal his intellect or mental faculties. One easily imagines adding to the list still other gleanings from Onegin's "personal profile," for instance, "he went to Petersburg University," "he attended lectures in Heidelberg," "he owns an outstanding library." Without such additional information, the verdict on Onegin's wit as it issues from the lips of "the world" is unexpectedly alogical: the verdict is not supported by such credentials as a fashionable haircut and stylish clothes, by the ability to dance, bow, and speak French. Yet Pushkin emphasizes that

this is the final verdict in three ways: by concluding the stanza with this judgment, by using the verb "decided," and by resorting to unusual rhythmical mischief—the first and second feet of the final line are in Russian connected by a clear nasal rhyme, *что он/ умен.* A contradiction is thus insinuated into an otherwise routine conversational passage, shattering the linguistic predictability of the text. This is a stylistic device—in the given instance, irony.

B. "Мой дядя самых честных правил..."

'My uncle has honest principles: . . . ' (Chapter 1, I)

Here the stylistic device is again irony, but with a difference. In order that the irony of Example B be perceived, the reader must know Krylov's fable "The Ass and the Boor," in which the fourth line reads, "The donkey had most honest principles . . ."[2] The mechanism which triggers the ironic device in this instance—an ironically parodied quotation—is accordingly also more complex.

C. Онегин, добрый мой приятель,
Родился на брегах Невы,
Где, может быть, родились вы
Или блистали, мой читатель;
Там некогда гулял и я:
Но вреден север для меня.

Onegin, a good pal of mine / was born upon the Neva's banks, / where maybe you were born, / or used to shine, my reader! / There formerly I too promenaded– / but harmful is the North to me.
(Chapter 1, II)

Example C differs in principle from the two preceding examples because the irony of its last line is intelligible only in the context of an historical situation, the final days of the reign of

Alexander I. This is an Aesopian utterance, which can be deciphered only by reference to an extra-literary context. In the process of reading, however, the reader not only deciphers the political allusion, but also automatically assimilates it into the text. A subtextual structure, which is implicitly the biography of the Author ("I," "Pushkin"), rises in conjunction with the life story of Onegin explicitly provided by the text; it is on the additional level of subtext that the line "but harmful is the North to me" functions as an ordinary ironic stylistic device. The structure of an Aesopian utterance is clearly more complex than that of the utterances which accommodate stylistic devices in Examples A and B: the former encompasses both the level of style and the level of metastyle, Aesopian language.

It ought to be remembered that the textual extent of the Aesopian utterance may vary: from a phrase in a text, as in the examples above, to an entire work. Yet even in the second instance it is by the same process that the Aesopian message is realized in the consciousness of the reader and that it in return exerts its influence upon the structure of the text. Two more of Pushkin's poems will serve by way of example: "Here I am, Inesilla . . . " and "I set little store by high-sounding rights . . . " ("From Pindemonte"). The poems are similar in plot, "I" adopting an exotic mask in each. The mask is in the first poem that of a romantic Spaniard, in the second that of an Italian (Pindemonte).[3]

The basic stylistic device in the first poem involves the convergence of synonymous images which conform to the stereotype "Spaniard" of European romantic tradition: the hero is outfitted with a cloak, sword, and guitar, he is animated by courage and jealousy; the heroine bears the name of Inesilla; the setting is Seville, in the gloom of night; a serenade and secret escape comprise the action. This condensed stream of "Spanish" images is given in two-foot amphibrachs, a vigorous and striking meter which in fact leaves one breathless. The entire text consists exclusively of details drawn from a single plane, resulting in a vivid

stylization of the Spanish ballad as it was conceived by the Romantics.

"I set little store by high-sounding rights . . ." is a considerably more complex poem, in which the exotic mask (the title) is but one of the stylistic nuances in which the poem abounds. However, precisely because it is out of place in the context of the poem—other than the title, there are no "Italian" details whatsoever—the title accomplishes an ironic stylistic function. This discrepancy at the same time induces the reader to seek an explanation of the poet's motives in hiding behind an exotic mask. The absence of exotic details in a poem which has been announced as a foreign one redirects the reader from a theoretical "Italy" to Russian reality. Here the contrast between an Italian title and non-existent Italian subject matter in the text is an Aesopian device, one which binds the poem to the context of the poet's life and time (cf. Chapter III).

Two poets' differing treatment of the same objective material will serve as a final illustration of the difference between Aesopian satire and other manifestations of irony.

The ideological aim of Mayakovsky's poem "Mexico" is to show that for all its exoticism Mexico is a nation of hateful and onerous mediocrity, a nation whose bourgeois drabness and tedium call to mind the absolutely unexotic Latvia. He writes:

Две Латвии
с двух земных боков –
Различные собой они
лишь тем,
что в Мексике
режут быков
в театре,
а в Риге –
на бойне.[4]

> There is a Latvia / on either side of the earth– // The only difference // is / that in Mexico / they butcher their bulls // in an amphitheater, / in Riga– / in a slaughterhouse.

By substituting the prosaic *режут быков* (they butcher their bulls) for the anticipated "corrida" or "bullfight," Mayakovsky obtains his desired ironic effect.

Yevtushenko's verse narrative "Corrida" (1967) is built on the successive incarnation of all the persons and objects which have traditionally been part of this Spanish spectacle. Monologues delivered by the bull, banderillas, the picador's horse, the audience, vendors, torero, a former matador, sand, blood, and a Spanish poet follow one after the other; in each monologue motifs of cruelty, treachery, deception, and opportunism are clearly audible. The stylistic surprises here are very different from those found in the ironic Mayakovsky, who openly compares the Mexican bullfight with a commercial slaughter-house in Riga. In Yevtushenko there are no outright comparisons between the Spanish tragedy, to which the richly metaphoric monologues refer, and the tragedy of any other nation, yet in the text there is a long line of stylistic (lexical and phraseological) shifts (*сдвиги* in the terminology of the Russian Formalists; see Chapter III). In the speech of the banderillas with which the unfortunate bull is badgered, for example, there are bits of official Soviet critical jargon, words which not infrequently figured in critical chastisement of Yevtushenko himself: "deviationists," "abstract humanist." The speech of the vendors rings with Moscow street slang:

> 'Кому мороженого, граждане?
> Вам крем-брюле, а вам пломбир.'
> Нам все равно, кого *пристукнули*, –
> нам важно *сбагрить* леденцы.
> (Emphasis added)[5]

'Folks, who wants ice cream? / A butterscotch for you, and plain for you.' / We don't care who got *knocked off,*– / Just so we *unload* our lollipops.

And later there appear such expressions as "the government theater box" *(правительственная ложа)*, "socially speaking, they're not worth a dime" *(ни шиша общественно не значат)*, and so on.

By the consistent application of such uniform shifts Yevtushenko's narrative poem is transformed into an Aesopian allegory. For the reader with keys to the code, for the initiated reader, that is, there is additional guidance in his knowledge that "Spain" in Yevtushenko's individual Aesopian code regularly stands for "Russia" (see Chapter VI).

2. *The Aesopian Utterance's Semantic Mechanism*

The following analysis of the elementary semantic structure of an Aesopian utterance is not, strictly speaking, the immediate concern of literary scholarship, but rather of linguistics and the semiotics of culture; the theory of literature, however, is a discipline which by nature rests its own constructs upon the findings of other sciences.

From the standpoint of semantics there is no essential difference between an Aesopian utterance and a folk riddle, the latter defined by a contemporary semanticist as "a text whose referent is some object which is expressly unspoken in the text itself"; in order to distinguish the riddle from other periphrastic, metaphorical, and metonymical texts, the definition of the riddle continues: "the function of this text is to induce the addressee to name the object-referent."[6] The riddle text is "an incomplete and/or distorted (transformed, metaphorical) description of the riddle object."[7] These are distinctions which are equally

valid for the semantic description of allusions (Aesopian utterances in everyday speech or in a social setting.)[8]

An Aesopian utterance which took the form of an organized situation (an Aesopian "happening" of sorts) is cited below from among the author's personal observations.[9] (An extra-literary example has been chosen deliberately, so that later it will be possible to show how, given the similarity of their semantic mechanisms, Aesopian utterances in artistic and non-artistic texts differ.)

"Riddle"

On November 7, 1975, the first channel of Moscow television broadcasts nationwide a so-called "government" concert to mark the holiday (this meaning that the concert hall holds members of the government and representatives of the Party elite). The popular Soviet singer Iosif Kobzon is on the program. Following two or three recent hits, he performs the song "The birds are migrating . . . ," words by M. Isakovsky:

Летят перелетные птицы
Ушедшее лето искать,
Летят они в дальние страны,
А я не хочу улетать,
А я остаюсь здесь с тобою,
Родная навеки страна,
Не нужно мне солнце чужое,
Чужая земля не нужна.

The birds are migrating / In search of the vanished summer, / They're flying to faraway lands, / But me, I don't want to leave, / Me, I'm staying put with you, / My native land till the end of time, / I don't need a foreign sun, / I don't need a foreign land.

This song has not been performed, and has been half-forgotten, since its heyday at the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s.

The television cameras show the applause of the audience, including the clapping approval of the government.

"Solution"

The Soviet government lends its support to loyal Jews, who are well-off in the Soviet Union.

Millions of Soviet television viewers understood immediately and effortlessly that the given concert selection was an Aesopian message, and they proceeded, again without difficulty, to decipher it ("to solve the riddle"). In order to explain how this might happen, the episode may be represented in schematic form, on the model of formulae which are used for the semantic analysis of folk riddles.

Here the object of the riddle (P) is the situation described in the "solution." For the ease of operations below, P will be simplified as follows: "if a Jew is loyal, he is well-off." This situation (which is conceived as a whole, as a kind of self-contained unit) consists of three segments: *a Jew* (A), *loyalty* (B), *prosperity*, ("well-off") (C); the segments are held in place by the implication "if. . . , [then] . . ." (r); the result is the formula CrAB ("prosperity [for a Jew], if the Jew is loyal").

Should one wish to make the Aesopian message concrete, those properties of the segments which were discarded for the sake of simplicity may now be added. For example: *a Jew—an intellectual* (a_1), *a performing artist* (a_2); *loyal—to the USSR* (b); *prosperity—in the land of his birth* (c), and so on. The schematic representation now appears this way: $Cc \rightarrow Aa_1a_2Bb$ ("prosperity in the land of his birth, if a Jew-intellectual-performing artist is loyal to the USSR").

That is the structure of the "solution."

How is the object of the "riddle" transformed so that it becomes the "riddle," or becomes rather the Aesopian utterance of the foregoing example, in which "a Jew" is couched in "the performing artist Kobzon," "loyalty" in the song's lyrics "But me,

I don't want to leave . . . etc.," and "prosperity" in the sight of the clapping authorities?

On the whole, one observes the replacement of one object by a comparable object (P → P'); all of the segments are transformed according to one or another principle of equivalence: A (a generalized "Jew," in the sense of "all Jews") → A' (Kobzon, "a specially selected Jew" that is, synecdoche); B ("loyalty") → B' (the song performed, a metaphor); C ("prosperity") → C' (government applause, also a metaphor). However, in the structure of the Aesopian text, as also in the semantic structure of the riddle, the qualifying attributes of the segments are identical on both sides of the transformation:

$$Cc \subset Aa_1 a_2 Bb \rightarrow C'c \subset A'a_1 a_2 B'b$$

that is, all qualifications—"in the land of his birth" (c), "an intellectual" (a_1), "a performing artist" (a_2), "the USSR" (b), and so forth—remain invariable for both the general and the individual situation, the same for the Jew in general and Kobzon in particular. Of course, the type of dependence among the segments, a relation in this instance of implication, also remains unchanged.

Levin's study of riddles shows that the vehicle for the transformation of the riddle object (grammatically, its subject) is most often an arbitrary or semi-arbitrary word, selected on the basis of a shared feature: a riddle might call the moon "a bull," for example, because both moon and bull possess what are identically referred to as "horns."[10] Likewise on Soviet television: the choice of none other than Kobzon (as grammatical subject) is from the semantic point of view an arbitrary one (Mullerman, Aleksandrovich, Utyosov, Maya Kristallinskaya, or any one of the stage singers of Jewish extraction would have done as well). Modifiers of the riddle's subject, conversely, are in Levin's estimation "more often than not precise words" (identical for both the riddle object and its resulting transformation). As has been

seen above, this rule may validly be applied to the Aesopian text as well. As for the predicate of the riddle, it is most often presented in broad, generalized form, and it is the area where variation is possible. Thus in the example above, the extent of Kobzon's success, the predicate, is measured by the government's applause; but the award of a medal to Kobzon, an article lauding him in *Pravda*, or something of a similar nature would be no less effective an expression of the singer's comfortable advance.

The final structural component of the riddle short of the actual concern of these pages—Aesopian language in the artistic text—is "that structural principle in the riddle which usually carries with it an element of surprise, which removes the riddle from the category of ordinary expression, and which renders it artistically significant."[11] Levin calls this obligatory component, without which any transformations of individual elements will be at odds, random, and unsystematic, the *point* of the riddle. The presence of an internal point in the text may be judged from one of two properties of the riddle: 1) its structuredness and 2) its oddity (Levin employs the term "unreality"). Structuredness is manifest in the use of such formal semantic mechanisms as contrast, antithesis, punning, and so on, while there may be oddity insofar as the situation described in the text is improbable and exceptional. Taking such riddles as "steamed and boiled, but never eaten" (the answer is "a felt boot"; antithesis plus the oddity of not eating whatever has been boiled), "what has teeth, but no mouth?" (the answer: "a saw"; same as the preceding), "who can ride horseback with his legs behind your ears?" (the answer: "eyeglasses"; contrast plus oddity), and comparing them with the Aesopian text-situation of "a Jew, but one who is well-off and has no desire to leave the country, sings 'But me, I don't want to leave. . . '," there is in the latter clearly an element of structuredness (the antithesis "a Jew, but one who has no desire to leave," comparable to "steamed and boiled, but never eaten") as well as an element of oddity (he chooses a song which no one has touched for years).

On the basis of riddle material Levin formulates a *principle of compensation*, according to which the weaker the manifestation of one point in the riddle, the more forceful must be the expression of the other. The example of Kobzon bears out this principle as well. Structuredness (antithesis) is in Kobzon's case not especially pronounced: while it may be assumed that all Jews wish to leave the USSR, there are enough who remain all the same, and thus the antithesis "a Jew, but one who is not emigrating" is a weak one. The element of oddity, however, is quite strong: it is current popular songs which are the regular fare of such concerts; a song with lyrics by Isakovsky was considered hackneyed and trite, and no one could have foretold its performance. Even before the audience caught and began to decipher the text ("The birds are migrating . . . , but me, I don't want to leave"), already at the half-forgotten but still unmistakable opening chords, the audience received a signal: something out of the ordinary!

This point of structuredness or oddity, which signals the Aesopian quality of the emerging text, is always present in instances of the artistic application of Aesopian language as well. Since for the artistic text the most important function of the point is to mark the shift into the Aesopian mode, it will henceforth be referred to as a *marker* (see Chapter II.5).

3. *The Requisite Property of the Aesopian Text: Ambivalence*

The following admission by Yu. Levin, who has studied the riddle's semantic structure in such fine detail, is typical:

> It is namely in the example of the riddle that all the unruliness of human thought, of linguistic thinking in particular, and its reluctance to confine itself within fixed limits and categories may be distinctly

discerned. And while this study attempts a certain formalization of the riddle, the author wishes to add that such attempts are made with his full awareness of their shortcomings. The purely formal approach sharply simplifies the true state of affairs and at best accounts for one or another narrow class of riddles; whereas attempts to provide a more or less adequate description of the semantics of a fairly wide class of riddles at once become non-formal. An apparently simple object proves upon closer inspection to have a highly complex organization, and it does not easily submit to either intensive scrutiny or even simple classification.[12]

And in another place:

> . . . guessing 'one element at a time' is a fairly crude model of the actual process of solving a riddle. Ordinarily the person guessing proceeds from the whole, from the overall network of the riddle text's semantic associations. The modeling of such an all-encompassing process does not, however, appear possible, for the variety of possible associations has no limit and cannot be formalized.[13]

The infinite variety of contextual relations of which Levin speaks is as typical of political allusion as it is of riddles. Relatively unencumbered abridged forms of political Aesopian language (a hint at an allusion) may still be encountered in everyday speech; the simplest example of such a form would be one of the various tags, or nicknames, which imply a judgment upon the activity of persons in power who cannot be openly criticized. The nicknames for Stalin which proliferated and became established in Soviet colloquial speech during his rule are of this type:

the boss — a tinge of fear and respect

leader and master coryphaeus — ironic, parodies of propaganda formulas; in wide circulation among the intelligentsia

father dearest *the old boy with the mustache* (also: *the one with the whiskers, whiskers, cockroach*–see Chapter VII) *(отец родной, батька усатый, усатый, усы)*	–	ironic with reference to the paternalistic character of Stalin's rule
bootblack (and from it the synecdoche *shoewax)*	–	chauvinistic contempt for a non-Russian and representative of an "inferior" nation[14]

The incidence of Aesopian language in an artistic text, where the Aesopian utterance occurs at the intersection of an even greater number of contexts than exists under everyday conditions, is a different matter. In this case the Aesopian utterance betrays the presence of two valencies, one of which ensures its inclusion in the social-ideological orbit, the other in the literary-aesthetic.

For Aesopian language in artistic texts, ambivalence is indispensable.

The forms by which this ambivalence is manifest are multifarious and changeable. In differing social-historical circumstances, for example, the same artistic work will now display the features of Aesopian metastyle, now will not. Moreover, it ought to be remembered that that portion of the text which carries out an Aesopian function has always a non-Aesopian, simply stylistic, role as well.

This may be shown with two examples. The first is A. A. Rzhevsky's poem "A Sonnet, or a Madrigal to Libera Sacco, Actress with the Italian Independent Theater," which first appeared in the second issue for 1759 of the journal *Monthly Compositions Whose Aim It Is to Edify and Amuse:*

Когда ты, Либера, что в драме представляешь
В часы те, что к тебе приходит плеск во уши,
От зрителей себе то знаком принимаешь
Что в них ты красотой зажгла сердца и души.

Довольное число талантов истощила
Натура для тебя, как ты на свет рождалась.
Она тебя, она, о Сако! наградила,
Чтобы на все глаза приятною казалась.

Небесным пламенем глаза твои блистают,
Тень нежные лица черты нам представляют,
Прелестен взор очей, осанка несравненна.

Хоть неких дам язык клевещет тя хулою,
Но служит зависть их тебе лишь похвалою:
Ты истинно пленять сердца на свет рожденна.[15]

You, Libera, who perform upon the stage, / When spectators' applause laps your ears, / You take this as a sign / That your beauty has inflamed their hearts and souls.

Nature exhausted a goodly number of her gifts / On you when you were being born. / She, O Sacco! she endowed you / To be pleasing to all eyes.

A heavenly flame shines in your eyes, / Your tender features lend us shade, / Your glance is a delight, your carriage matchless.

Though the tongues of certain ladies slander you maliciously, / Their envy merely serves as praise: / Truly you were born to capture hearts.

Various authors have cited this poem as an early example of Aesopian allegory.[16]

"Saint Bartholomew's Night" by Bella Akhmadulina is excerpted below as the second example:

...заведомо безнравственно дитя,
рожденное вблизи кровопролитья. [. . .]

Еще птенец, едва поющий вздор,
еще в ходьбе не сведущий козленок,
он выжил и присвоил первый вздох,
изъятый из дыхания казненных. [. . .]

Он лакомка, он хочет пить еще,
не знает организм непросвещенный,
что ненасытно, сладко, горячо
вкушает дух гортани пресеченной. [. . .]

Не знаю я в тени чьего плеча
он спит в уюте детства и злодейства.
Но и палач и жертва палача
равно растлят незрячий сон младенца. [. . .]

Привыкшие к излишеству смертей,
вы, люди добрые, бранитесь и боритесь,
вы так бесстрашно нянчите детей,
что и детей, наверно, не боитесь. [. . .]

А в общем-то – какие пустяки!
Всего лишь – тридцать тысяч гугенотов.[17]

A child born hard by bloodshed / is foreordained immoral. [. . .]

Still a chick scarce cooing nonsense, / still a kid with no grasp of walking, / he survived and appropriated his first air, / confiscated from the breath of the executed. [. . .]

A gourmand, he'd like more to drink, / but his inexperienced system doesn't realize / that what it insatiably, sweetly, warmly consumes / is an obstructed windpipe's air. [. . .]

I don't know whose shoulder shades him / dozing in the warmth of infancy and villainy. / But the hangman and the hangman's victim / alike defile the infant's unseeing sleep. [. . .]

You, good people, who are used to death in excess, / you protest and fight, / you indulge your children with such abandon / that, probably, you have no fear of them. [. . .]

And after all—what trifles! / Just some thirty thousand Huguenots.

In this Aesopian poem, as her commentators have rightly noted, Akhmadulina "laments the fate of [her] generation, brought up in the atmosphere of the terror of the Stalinist 'Bartholomew Nights'."[18]

The outward ambivalence of what is Aesopian in these two poems, separated by two centuries, lies in the fact that only in a specific historical context is either perceived as Aesopian. The modern reader, should he lack special commentaries, may regard Rzhevsky's sonnet as a lyric address, as a depiction of the art of the stage in the language available to another art, and so on. Scholars have learned, however, that what Rzhevsky's contemporaries perceived was not a poem addressed to a charming actress so much as one intended in disguise for Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, whom Libera Sacco did not charm in the least. Likewise, the reader not closely acquainted with Russian historical reality in the twentieth century (a foreigner, for example, who reads the poem in translation, or a hypothetical future reader) may perceive "Saint Bartholomew's Night" as a work on the eternal opposition of wickedness and childhood, or even as a concrete historical poem concerned with events which occurred in France on 24 August 1572. The two poems, therefore, both are and are not Aesopian, as determined by factors which lie outside the text—by the knowledge of the reader. No matter what the context, however, the poems retain an artistic significance.

From the vantage point of a hypothetical "uninformed reader,"

the metastylistic—Aesopian—devices which are encountered in these two poems will loom simply as stylistic devices, no more than the elements of a stylistically organized text. In Rzhevsky this will include the Aesopically ambiguous phrase *некие дамы* (certain ladies), and in Akhmadulina an entire trove of ambiguities: *казненные* (the executed), *палач* (the hangman), *пресеченная [гортань]* (obstructed windpipe), *изъятый [вздох]* (confiscated air); a direct address to her contemporary reader, *Вы, люди добрые* (You, good people); an elliptical antithesis at the ironic close of the poem, *какие пустяки! Всего лишь — тридцать тысяч гугенотов* (what trifles! Just some thirty thousand Huguenots—by comparison, that is, with the millions of victims of Soviet terror). The "uninformed reader" will not be sensitive to this duality, which Rzhevsky and Akhmadulina attain through an assortment of grammatical and lexical means which already in their own right are charged with double meaning.

An inherent duality dictates Rzhevsky's choice of modifier in the phrase *некие дамы* (certain ladies). While it is on the one hand a pronoun with an indefinite reference, *некие* may, on the other hand, have a specific referent, but one which the author deliberately chooses not to identify. The text of the poem as a whole is so organized that the pronoun may be perceived in both its meanings.

The modern author Akhmadulina commands a more subtle set of means, which rely largely upon shades of synonymy among individual words and turns of speech. Thus "executed" and "slaughtered" are synonymous; the victims of the historical Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre, however, were sooner slaughtered than formally executed, while the victims of Stalinist terror, conversely, were for the most part executed rather than slaughtered. A "slit throat" may be termed an "obstructed windpipe," although it is far from standard usage; "obstructed," nonetheless, is without fail associated with the usual legal derivative from the same word-root, "an obstruction of justice." The direct address to the reader may flow from the universal human significance of

the poem's tragic historical subject, or it may be an indication of the topicality of the poem's subject matter; likewise the particular form of the address may be interpreted as both an appeal to men of good will and as the traditional cry for help, *Люди добрые!* The bitter irony of the ending may be apprehended in the context both of general and of Soviet history. In short, Akhmadulina's poem may either remain within the field of "direct" perception or it may allow these markers to shift it into the Aesopian mode.

A typology of Aesopian means—screens and markers—is considered in the following chapter; for the present, as a general rule, it is noted only that the choice of imagery for screens and markers proceeds always within the bounds of what is realistically admissible. Thus Akhmadulina says nothing of Huguenots sentenced by a troika of judges to be shot or relegated to camps, although in a non-Aesopian text such metaphors would be entirely plausible. Rather, she speaks only of the mass-murdered, an image which may realistically be ascribed to France in the sixteenth century. It is in this, above all, that Aesopian imagery differs from the imagery of the traditional fable or allegory: in the latter, images do not take shape on the basis of ambivalence, but are formed rather in accordance with fixed connotations lodged in mythology.

Insofar as the Aesopian quality of a text is registered solely in the consciousness of the reader, one may speak of historical vagaries which cause the text to now lose, now reacquire an Aesopian attitude. Such has been the fortune of many classic texts in modern times.

In Praise of Folly, for instance, was intended by its author as an Aesopian work. Although its universal human irony endures, the Aesopian content of Erasmus' work is for a modern American reader, living in a society built on rationalist and positivist principles, betrayed only in the special explanations of the historian. For the Soviet reader, however, the Aesopian function of *In Praise of Folly* is once more being activated, although there are also changes in the referent of the allegory.

This extra-textual aspect of the fate of classic works of literature has been subtly observed by Gukovsky, who was taken by an apparent contradiction: the classicist canon of the school of Sumarokov demanded a detachment from isolated facts of concrete reality, while at the same time readers have not infrequently seen in the works of its adherents allusions to perfectly explicit phenomena (Gukovsky has the 1760 satire on government contractors particularly in mind). Gukovsky continues:

> . . . for more than 150 years the cited poems by Sumarokov, likewise a number of other analogous ones, were perceived as general, everyday moral discourses, and no immediate applicability to the concrete facts of social strife was detected in them. That, moreover, is the way they are written: they are perfectly distanced, with nothing to directly indicate the poet's active role, strictly in keeping with the canon of genre and style which was accepted as a general requirement; their real political significance takes shape, as it were, outside the text, at that moment when the verse finds its way into 'life'. . .[19]

With the passing of the years, in other words, the classics may gain or lose "Aesopianness." It is a property reflected in the device of Aesopian quotation (see III.5).

4. Aesopian Language in the Light of Information Theory

Information theory holds that any channel of communication, including the channel which stretches from Author to Reader, contains noise.[20] Lotman writes as follows concerning the impact of noise upon artistic information:

> Noise is defined by information theory as the intrusion of disorder, entropy, or disorganization into the sphere of structure and information. Noise squelches information. All manner of mutilation–the

> jamming of a voice by acoustic interference, the deterioration of books from mechanical wear and tear, the deformation of the structure of the author's text which results from the censor's interference—all alike are noise in the channel of communication. . . . If the volume of noise is equal to the volume of information, the message will be zero.[21]

The noise, or obstacle in the way of information, which is relevant to Aesopian language is "the censor's interference" alluded to above. But censorship in the Soviet period has not, of course, been conducted only in the offices of Glavlit; there are, rather, numerous other manifestations of Soviet ideological censorship, and they include the "internal censor" which Solzhenitsyn describes in *The First Circle:*

> Whenever he started an ambitious new work, he would get fired up, swear to himself and his friends that this time he would make concessions to no one, that this time around he would write a real book. He would sit down to the opening pages with enthusiasm. But he would very soon notice that he was not writing alone—that the specter of the person for whom he was writing, and through whose eyes he would involuntarily read over each just completed paragraph, had arisen before him and was looming ever more distinctly. And this Person was not the Reader—who is a brother, friend, and coeval—nor was He just any critic. Rather, it was always, for some reason, that celebrated and pre-eminent critic, Ermilov.[22] (See also Appendix 1)

It is appropriate at this point to note the vital difference between noise in the process of aesthetic communication and that which is deemed noise in practical communication. From a purely pragmatic standpoint, all the poetic invention of the artistic text may be regarded as noise. According to this, the pragmatic view, the ideal communication if male subject A wishes to inform female object B of his plans for marriage is the statement "I want

to marry you"; organization of the text based upon the regular alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, with the necessary assonance, or a description of the changing color of the sky and a cloud dressed in trousers will prove equally irrelevant noise. In Mayakovsky's poetic system, however, precisely this "noise" is the most effective, and even the most economical, form in which to relay information, the very substance of which is not permanently fixed: the communication changes from a general declaration ("I want to marry you") to a declaration which is made immeasurably richer by a specific emotional and aesthetic content.[23]

This specific feature of the process of artistic communication informs the discussion of Aesopian language in these pages. However, when ideological censorship exerts its influence upon the work of the writer and the perception of the reader, this is already something of a second imposition of practical obstacles to information. Furthermore, the noise inspired by the censorship has many gradations, extending from simple physical noise—produced by the cutoff of radio broadcasts—to such psychological phenomena as the "internal censor" mentioned above.

Nor should it be forgotten that the reader always empirically assumes a certain amount of noise in the process of artistic communication, noise which is the result either of the author's want of artistry or of the reader's unreadiness to perceive a given text. Put another way, the author in the first instance is a poor encoder, the reader in the second a poor decoder.

It is this type of noise, commonly indicated by such an exchange of value judgments as "What a terrible book" / "But you missed the whole point," which forms the basis of Aesopian strategy. An Aesopian text will make its way successfully from author to reader if what is in actual fact an Aesopian device is perceived by the censor as a lapse in the author's command of his craft (as noise outside the competence of the censorship) and by the reader as the express indication of an Aesopian text which

awaits decoding. The skill of the Aesopian author lies in his ability to arrange such a successful transaction.

In the view of an ideally operating filter of Censorship (C), communication between Author (A) and Reader (R) should take the following schematic form:

$$A: T_c + T_{nc} + N \rightarrow C: /-T_{nc}/\ T_c + N \rightarrow R$$

The text as it is created by the Author includes a segment to which the censorship is agreeable (T_c); a segment which the censorship will find objectionable, a taboo segment (T_{nc}); and a segment of noise (N), an authorial deficiency. As it passes through the filter of effective censorship (C), the text loses T_{nc} (blacked out by the censor) but retains T_c (understandably) as well as N, this being the province of aesthetic criticism, not the censorship (ideological censorship in its ideal state is not concerned with whether a work is well or poorly written, but only with whether that work contains information which has been forbidden to spread.)[24]

Because the above schema of the censorship process is common knowledge, the Author has but one opportunity to relay T_{nc} to the Reader, namely by making $N = T_{nc}$; the Author's one chance is to construct the text in such a way that the objectionable material will reach the Reader but be perceived by the Censor as an aesthetic imperfection, irrelevant material, empty filler, or noise. This quasi-noise is the Aesopian utterance (N_{ae}).

The text of a work may consist of variously devised combinations, depending upon the tasks which the Author sets himself. But the maximal such combination would in any case be $T = T_c + T_{nc} + N + N_{ae}$, where T represents the text as a whole and in which T_{nc} is incorporated "just in case" it might suddenly slip through the censorship (denied this slim chance, however, T_{nc} is fated for deletion).

Should the Author charge himself with offering the Reader

only such content as cannot be passed through the censorship, the Author will make every effort to construct his work in such an optimally effective fashion that (ideally) the ready Reader will perceive T_C in its entirety as a smoke screen; T_C will appear to the Aesopian Reader as noise for the benefit of the censor (N_C); and $T = T_C + N_{ae}$ will be replaced by $T = N_C + N_{ae}$. Thus the ideal schema of communication from the standpoint of the Aesopian author is as follows:

$$A: N_C + N_{ae} \rightarrow C: /-0/ \rightarrow R$$

The channel of communication sustains no losses, nothing is trapped by the censorship's filter (minus zero).

The conversion of the text entirely to N_{ae} is, for practical reasons, an improbable variant: the censorship will be put on its guard by a text which consists exclusively of noise (although such cases are not unknown—see, for example, Chapter III.5).

The ideal variant—when, having navigated the filters of censorship without incident, $T = N_{ae} + N_C$ reaches the Reader—is in practice encountered rarely. It accounts for those most memorable occasions in Russian cultural life when readers have thrown up their hands and exclaimed, "How on earth was this published!" The list of such unqualified Aesopian successes includes both works of minor genres (see, for example, the poems by Markin in Chapter III.5) and whole books, among them the late A. Belinkov's *Yury Tynyanov*.

Yury Tynyanov is to all appearances a sketch of the life and work of the writer and scholar who had taken various aspects of Russian literary and social life in the 18th and 19th centuries as his concern. It is in reality, however, an extended essay on the nature of despotic and totalitarian power. The charge that Russia's present-day rulers are no more than inflated tsarist despots is Belinkov's underlying theme.

Belinkov's choice of a colloquial, intellectually comfortable, narrative style not common to ordinary literary-historical writing

at once informed the reader that "history" was a cover for discussion of contemporary issues. But for the ideological censors who had approved two editions of Belinkov's book, the "inappropriateness" of its style was little more than noise. Safely shielded by the protective armour of this noise, Belinkov found it possible to discuss at length and in print topics which were absolutely closed for discussion, to deride the shibboleths of official ideology.

The "Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against the fascist German aggressors" is one such official ideological fetish; the constant recurrence in all propaganda texts of the phrase "Great Patriotic War" has established it in the consciousness of readers, who unerringly associate it with Soviet participation in the Second World War. The official Soviet version of the war, moreover, attributes partisan activity in German-occupied territory to the Soviet patriotism of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian peasants. In his desire to point up the true motives of the partisans, Belinkov ironically quotes, as if on another matter, an entry from a pre-war Soviet encyclopedia which is no longer in use:

> 'PATRIOTIC' War, nationalist Russian designation for the Napoleonic War of 1812 . . . [Looting] was the reason for the rise of a partisan offensive: armed with whatever was available that they might defend their property from the French, the peasants were an easy match for the disarrayed and famished French troops. This is taken as the beginning of the so-called 1812 Popular War, as a consequence of which the larger war received the exalted title 'Patriotic': it was not a question of any swelling of patriotic 'spirit,' but a matter of the peasants defending their belongings.[25]

Another of propaganda's obsessive concerns—"Revolutionary vigilance and the struggle with foreign reactionary intrigue"—is likewise indirectly criticized:

I have in mind the so-called Austrian Affair, of which the Third Section was informed by Bulgarin.

It is typical of the thinking of reactionary epochs that there be an attempt to ascribe an uprising in one's own country to foreign influence. This is not hard to understand: an insurrection fomented by one's enemies is more palatable than one prompted by hatred for one's own beloved rulers. It is for this reason that all legal investigations into cases of challenge to the existing order always begin with the revelation of the criminal's connection abroad.[26]

Belinkov attacks even propaganda's literary darling, "the great Soviet writer M. A. Sholokhov":

> . . . attempts to check, prohibit, or control the searching of the artist are fruitless. The history of Russian literature, the very fact of its existence in periods of the unbridled operation of a literary inquisition and the sharp rise in its spiritual integrity insistently and convincingly bespeak the fact that the artist's quest, which others seek to either suppress or compromise, is irreversible and inevitable; the search cannot be called off even by the authority of an honest writer of the preceding literary generation, and certainly not by some ex-writer whose prestige is an official reward and who acts now as a scarecrow, by the Vendean, Cossack, aide-de-camp *[дрaбант]*, and policeman of Russian literature.[27]

It is of particular interest that the author should be guided in this example by his estimate—as it turns out, accurate—of the censors' cultural ignorance, of gaps in their knowledge which would preclude any recognition of Sholokhov in the words "Vendean" and *дрaбант*. These are, in fact, curious words, listed neither in the two-volume Ozhegov dictionary nor even in the four volumes of Ushakov; even in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* a meticulous censor would find no mention of the expression "Cossack Vendée," which referred to the Cossack counter-revolution immortalized by Sholokhov. Nor would the

Encyclopedia inform the censor that among the Don Cossacks a military orderly (a demoted rank, one comparable to Khrushchev's and Sholokhov's heralding of writers as "apprentices of the Party" in the propaganda of the early 1960s) was known as a *драбант*.[28]

Aesopian utterances make an appearance on every page of *Yury Tynyanov*. Still, to make sure that the reader will be left with no doubt of the book's overall allegorical intent, Belinkov explains—in the continuing tone of ironic historical allegory—his Aesopian design:

> At the end of the twenties a certain segment of the Russian intelligentsia began to see analogies between the modern age and revolutionary eras of the past.
>
> This was a view of history which belittled the significance of fresh circumstances and was careful in its selection of the shared features of bygone eras. The history of the past was of interest not as experience, but rather as law befitting any epoch . . . at the end of the twenties—during the final days of NEP and the beginning of collectivization and industrialization, at the height of internal Party strife, and in the era of the proletarian dictatorship's unqualified victory—a certain segment of the Russian intelligentsia began to discern in literary and historical reminiscences an application to real life. Then came the notions of history repeating itself, a fixed circle of events, and a universal law of history.
>
> These were years when the revolution had completed one stage—armed overthrow—but had not yet advanced to socialism. During these years of transition members of the intelligentsia compared their old notion of human freedom with the newer idea, yet little by little they began to abandon this pursuit, for they understood that now was not the time and they feared the possible complications.[29]

As a consequence of "history repeating itself"—as a consequence, that is, of the reaction and terror which follow inevitably in the wake of revolutionary upheaval—it is dangerous to profess the

usual understanding of human freedom. By shifting unexpectedly into a more personal informal style, Belinkov allows a lyrical note into his historical look at a nation which is fast being submerged in darkness: "little by little they began to abandon this pursuit." Here Aesopian writing attains a tragic element.

5. *Screens and Markers: The Fundamental Elements of Aesopian Language*

It is well known that the study of the aesthetics of verbal art has three divisions, divisions which correspond to three basic levels on which the literary text may undergo scrutiny. They are: the cultural level, the level of deep structure, and the level of surface utterance. They are all, moreover, structural levels, for each embodies a complex of rules, or limitations which exist in a given culture (1), mythology (2), or poetics (3).[30] To take the example of Dostoevsky, the rules—or paradigms—of nineteenth-century Russian culture have a critical bearing, above all, on his selection and use of genres: there can be no examination of these matters without appreciation of the social function of the novel in Russia during the lifetime of the writer, or awareness of which of the genre's aspects were deemed traditional, which considered innovations. No attempt to uncover the deep structure of Dostoevsky's works will be availing if in the analysis the ideas of the writer are not shown in their connection with the invariant motifs of Russian Christian and European Judeo-Christian mythology—motifs such as the image of the divine Mother Earth, who grants absolution to those who confess their sins against her; innocently spilled blood; and the God-seeking of Holy Fools. The level of utterance, finally, will entail the study of how Dostoevsky organizes his verbal material so as to achieve the needed aesthetic effects.

Given the understanding of Aesopian language elaborated in this chapter, it is clear that there will be no place for the analysis

of deep structure: a deep structure is "deep" for the very reason that it is joined to those impulses buried in the individual or collective conscious which ultimately constitute the culture of a given people in a given period (although, of course, this often occurs by indirect and mysterious routes). Aesopian language is instead a product of relationships which are formed on the surface of cultural life, in the political sphere. Aesopian language is realized in the literary text on the level of utterance.

The principal mechanisms by which Aesopian language functions in the text have been considered in earlier sections from the standpoint of stylistics, of semantics, and of information theory. The practical poetics of Aesopian language remains.

It has previously been noted that Bella Akhmadulina's poem "Saint Bartholomew's Night" may be perceived by a certain group of readers as Aesopian.[31] The actual content of the whole poem, of course, surpasses in both richness and breadth that part of it which comprises the Aesopian message. In order to disclose the entire content, however, it would be necessary to conduct an exhaustive exegesis: deep mythological structures, cultural connotations, and the like would need to be explored. Conversely, yet with some simplification and slight reduction, it is possible to state the Aesopian content of the poem as follows: "from the moment of their birth the citizens of modern Russian society, which relies upon coercion and injustice, are destined for moral corruption."

If it is examined only with an eye to its Aesopian content, the poem separates, as it were, into two sets of literary devices, each with an opposite intent: the devices of one group are bent on concealing the Aesopian text, while the devices of the other draw attention to that same Aesopian text (see Chapter II.3). The former are *screens*, the latter *markers*.

When the term "marker" was first introduced in Section 2 of this chapter, its basic function was indicated to be that of a signal. Here it is necessary to elaborate: "screen" and "marker" are the designation of functions, and they may be realized both

in verbal stylistic devices (for example, in anachronisms) and in plot or the individual elements of plot (the entire plot of "Saint Bartholomew's Night" is a screen, while an element of plot—the title "From Pindemonte"—is a screen in Pushkin's poem cited in Section I.[32])

Finally, while screens and markers may be realized in different elements of a literary work, it is frequently one element which is the realization of both screen and marker and which indicates yet again the invariably dual nature of an Aesopian utterance. Akhmadulina's title "Saint Bartholomew's Night," to cite the same example, may be viewed as screen and marker alike: it will conceal from one reader the fact that Akhmadulina refers to the present as well as past, while it will lead another reader, aware of the expression "Saint Bartholomew's Night" in its larger use, to surmise that the accompanying text has been Aesopically encoded.

A typological description of the screens and markers available to Russian literature will comprise a descriptive poetics of Aesopian language.

Chapter III

A TYPOLOGY OF AESOPIAN MEANS

1. Aesopian Language and the Emotional Coloring of the Text

Prior to the actual classification of Aesopian means extensively employed in Russian literature, the reader is advised to beware the popular misunderstanding whereby, evidently by analogy with Aesop's fables and the genre of the fable as a whole, Aesopian language is in loose, everyday usage equated only with an ironic style and is as a rule associated only with the products of satiric or comic genres. In actual fact, however, there is no necessary connection between Aesopian language and either satire or humor. Satire may well be Aesopian, but it may equally well be straightforward (as it is in Juvenal). On an emotional level, Aesopian language may lend pathos or give the text a sentimental or pointedly polemic slant, not only a comic one. While this should in essence be already apparent from the treatment of Aesopian language in previous chapters, concrete illustration is provided below.

The Aesopian Language of Pathos. Andrey Voznesensky's 1967 poem "Shame," structured entirely on exclamations of outrage, is a typical instance:

Постыдно,
Когда в Греции введена цензура,
И все газеты похожи одна на другую.

Постыдно,
Когда Вьетнамом играют, как фишкой,
Лгать, лгать постыдно.[1]

It's shameful / When censorship is introduced in Greece, / And all the newspapers look alike.

It's shameful / When Vietnam is a playing chip, / Lying, lying is shameful!

These stanzas are read in the Aesopian context of the poem (see III.3) as a protest against Soviet censorship and against Soviet foreign policy, which is amoral in its pragmatism. Here there is no irony, nor is there humor or sarcasm, only the passion of the publicist.

An Aesopian text may be, and not infrequently is, informed by a tragic pathos. In a poem by the Leningrad poet Nina Korolyova, for example, a poem which occasioned quite a stir, the author's outwardly untargeted indignation at worldwide evil is meant in fact for the Soviet regime, guilty of murdering the wholly innocent children of Nicholas II, among other crimes. Korolyova's poem slipped by the censorship and was published in the Leningrad young people's literary magazine *Aurora* in November of 1976.

Но город, глядящийся в реки,
Молчит, осторожен.
Здесь умер слепой Кюхельбекер
И в землю положен.

И в год, когда пламя металось
На знамени тонком,
В том городе не улыбалась
Царица с ребенком...

И я задыхаюсь в бессилье,
Спасти их не властна,
Причастна беде и насилью
И злобе причастна.[2]

But the city regarding itself in the waters / Keeps silent, cautious. / The blind Kuechelbecker died here / And lies in the ground.

And the year that flames tore about / The flimsy flag, / The Empress and her child / Wore no smile in this city...

And impotence chokes me, / I haven't the position to save them, / I am a party to affliction and violence / And an accessory to malice.

Oddly enough, another Aesopian poem which expressed distress over the same injustice, this a poem by Maria Shkapskaya, had crept into Soviet print a half-century earlier.[3]

Sentimental Aesopian Language. A brief poem by G. Ladonshchikov which appeared in the children's magazine *Happy Pictures* was received by that publication's adult readers as Aesopian:

Улетел скворец от стужи,
Славно за морем живет,
Воду пьет из теплой лужи,
Зерна вкусные клюет...[4]

The starling left the frost behind, / He lives like a king abroad, / Drinks water from a warm puddle, / Pecks good-tasting seeds. . .

"A frost" is in educated Russian circles often a metaphor for political reaction (as it is in Leontiev's variant, "Russia needs a good chilling"), and so in the minds of the poem's readers the starling who "left the frost behind" was symbolic of the departing intelligentsia. On the issue of emigration Ladonshchikov apparently shared the position of the moderate segment of

Russian society which, while not passing judgment upon the émigrés as did ideological extremists, nonetheless considered emigration to be mistaken so far as national allegiance was concerned. From this hesitation derives the sentimentality which colors the entire poem once its outcome becomes known; "abroad" the starling longs

По Маринке, по Алешке,
По приятелям своим,
И немножечко по кошке,
Что охотилась за ним.[5]

For Marinka, for Alyoshka, / For his friends, / And just a little for the cat / That used to hunt him.

One cannot deny that the author of this sentimental Aesopian poem understands the psychology of former citizens of a totalitarian society.

Polemic Aesopian Language. Hidden meanings are a common occurrence in non-artistic texts. Because the straightforward or uncountered publication of certain information is ideologically taboo, the Soviet press employs the complete range of tropes and rhetorical figures in order that the reader be made aware of this information. Such is the reason for the countless euphemisms in government pronouncements: a bloody reign of terror is termed "a personality cult," the military occupation of a neighboring state "brotherly assistance," and economic collapse "occasional failings." A deliberately euphemistic style usually conceals a warning signal of possible danger (for example, an article may refer at considerable length and in glowing terms to agricultural advances, but make only passing mention in its next to last paragraph of the poorly organized procurement of cattlefeed "in certain areas"; for an experienced reader, the content of the article amounts to a forewarning of imminent meat shortages). Once the printed reports of the government's

latest moves are regarded as rhetorical devices, it is possible to discover even irony among them. Thus it is from an ironic hidden meaning that the populace learns of the failed career of one of its political leaders: a decree of the Supreme Soviet announces the appointment of the once all-powerful Minister of Foreign Affairs (Molotov) as ambassador to Mongolia, a country which no one seriously considers a sovereign state.

Despite their formal resemblance, however, there is a difference in principle between the coding devices above and the devices of Aesopian language in artistic texts. Semi-official texts are rhetorically coded solely in order to feed the reader specific information. This is not the case in artistic works.

In this regard certain documentary dramas, such as M. Shatrov's *The Bolsheviks*, make an interesting case.[6] The drama-documentary is, in a formal respect, an instructional genre, a means of acquainting the reader/spectator with little-known facts of history. The text is made to resemble as closely as possible the source material and historical documentation. (For the performance of one such drama even the walls of the auditorium were graced with enlarged reproductions of archival documents.)

The entire text of *The Bolsheviks* is devoted to debate among members of the Party leadership on 30 August 1918, following upon the attempted assassination of Lenin by the Socialist Revolutionary Fanny Kaplan. The subject of the debate is whether the fledgling Soviet government ought to respond to opposition terrorism with its own mass terror, whether it should set the new regime on the path of terror. The emphatic attribute of the play's characters (who are historical figures—Pokrovsky, Lunacharsky, Semashko, and others) is their intellectual side: the discussion proceeds on theoretical grounds; historical parallels are cited; the foundations of a sense of right and wrong, likewise humanist ideals, are considered. After a series of spirited disagreements, the view of terror as a historical necessity comes to prevail and a resolution is passed to declare a "red terror." All this "instructiveness" and "documentary objectivity,"

however, is actually an Aesopian façade. The true, and Aesopian, plot of *The Bolsheviks* rests upon an ellipsis (see III.5). What is omitted from the tight dramatic plot is the historical hindsight which, while it is yet to be acquired by the characters on stage, is already available to the audience; the audience knows that the terror which the characters describe as a supremely temporary measure, and for which they seek convincing humane arguments, will drag on for decades, be unleashed upon all who would promote human values, and bring on, incidentally, the political or the physical demise of the very persons who appear on stage. Behind the façade of documentary reportage, therefore, lies a polemic with the Bolshevik idea of power; the informative, documentary content is merely a cover for its polemical Aesopian substance. Another play of this kind deals with one of Lenin's early doings, to which official biographies ordinarily give only the barest mention. When Lenin began working as a court lawyer's assistant in the early 1890s, he obstructed in every way possible the charitable enactments designed to alleviate the sufferings of the starving peasants of Samara province; *á la* Pyotr Verkhovensky, Lenin expected that in this way he would hasten the revolution. Though disguised as a documentary apologia, ready to assume its place alongside closely similar examples of official Leniniana, it is actually an attack on anti-humanism; the play is another example of the Aesopian genre (see III.3 and ff.).

The safety which these plays gained from their Aesopian literary disguise stems paradoxically from the fact that both profane precisely those topics which semi-officialdom holds most sacred: Lenin, the founding of the Party, and establishment of a Soviet government. Their affiliation with an iconographic genre, above all, was an effective screen. (One may also presume that the aesthetic ignorance of even formally educated censors favored easy approval at every echelon of the censorship: like all aesthetic semi-literates, censors recognize in art its illustrative, didactic, and entertainment functions, but lack the varied

intellectual and aesthetic experience which alone permits recognition of a work's subtext.[7]) Certain plot elements, however, which by tradition belong to the genre of Soviet iconographic Leniniana (some show of the Bolsheviks' popular backing, a demonstration of Lenin's kindliness, and so on), as well as certain traditional stylistic features (elevated revolutionary rhetoric from the positive characters, caricature of all "enemies") are missing from these plays; the absence of each serves as a marker which points the knowing audience to the plays' Aesopian content.

Ironic Aesopian Language. Inasmuch as this represents a common occurrence, and because many of the examples in other sections deal precisely with the ironic cast of a text, no comment need be made here except to note that irony itself may be variously colored. One may discriminate such shades of irony as *ironic zeal* (on the order of Švejk's famed "On to Belgrade!"; likewise the hero of V. Voskoboynikov's quasi-children's story, a young boy drilled to excess in a Pioneer camp, composes and recites a poem, "We love to stand for inspection!"), *ironic liberty* (typified by an anonymous song which is a favorite among students, *Материя первична, сознание вторично, а на остальное наплевать!* ["Matter first, consciousness second, and to hell with the rest!"]—the basis of Marxist theory, the primacy of matter over consciousness, is discredited by means of stylistic deflation), and *sarcastic compliance* (Belinkov says of Blok, for example:

> . . . in the difficult year of the intervention and blockade, the great Russian poet exclaimed, 'With bodies, hearts, and minds, pay heed to the revolution.' Granted, three years later he would say, 'But these are not the times we expected.' No question, it was a grave mistake...[8]

—the ambiguity of the last sentence sarcastically parodies one of Soviet criticism's set locutions).

2. *A Classification of Aesopian Devices*

The principle of metonymicity (the substitution of one for another) underlies all Aesopian devices. One might protest, along with Potebnya, that such metonymicity is the general basis for all artistry. Here, however, an entirely specific case of metonymy is involved: metonymy which has been engendered by a specific system of social and political restrictions that constantly draws the reader into a ritual contest with the restrictive system (see Chapter VIII).

There are three planes on which metonymic substitutions occur.

A. *On the level of genre and plot* ("Aesopian genres"). By dint of a series of surface, "screening" plot features, the work claims inclusion in one genre while it in fact belongs to another:

	In appearance	In reality
1.	A work treating a historical plot	A parable (a cautionary tale)
2.	An exotic (foreign) plot	A parable
3.	A fantastic plot	A parable
4.	A nature plot (one which treats animals, for instance)	A parable
5.	An exceptional plot	A parable
6.	A translation (likewise an imitation, "After. . . ")	An original work, parable

B. *On the level of intended audience* (sender and receiver). By virtue of its "screening" features the work claims one circle of readers as its destination, when in fact it is addressed to a different quarter:

Apparent audience	Actual audience
1. Specialists (possibly, opponents) in such fields as literary criticism or one of the sciences	The general reader
2. Children	Adults

C. *On the level of utterance* ("Aesopian poetics"). Here virtually every type of trope, rhetorical figure, and poetic device is encountered; applied most frequently are:

1. Allegory
2. Parody
3. Periphrasis
4. Ellipsis
5. Quotation
6. Shifts *(сдвиги)*
7. Reductio ad absurdum and non sequitur

There is one distinctive feature of Aesopian language which follows from the "underhandedness" of its means, namely, its use of metalogical devices (those indicated above, primarily) to the exclusion of autological devices (such as simile).[9] Many authors (Kanonykin, Paklina, Tolstov, and certain others) are led seriously astray by their failure to take note of this specific feature. Their analysis of the style of Shchedrin, Chernyshevsky, and other writers is an indiscriminate description of all poetic means attested, which amounts to the loss of what is specifically Aesopian as distinct from the simply satirical. Thus the classification of Aesopian means which Kanonykin proposes for Shchedrin, for instance, turns out to be in error. Kanonykin produces examples of litotes (which he calls "slighted metaphor"), such as "the pompadour misbehaved," and examples of oxymoron, of the type "well-meaning extortion" and "a divinely inspired bribe." These figures, however, while all typical of

satirical style, are not Aesopian: they signify no proscribed, unspeakable object; they broach no taboo.[10]

Oxymoron cannot in general be Aesopian, for its essence is as a straightforward rather than an underhanded device. Likewise simile, also an autological device, may not be Aesopian. There is, for example, no context in which the phrase "Lenin, the *bloodthirsty friend* of the working man" (oxymoron) or the phrase "Lenin behaved *like a man-eater*" (simile) will become an Aesopian utterance—nothing is left unsaid. The metaphor "the Moscow man-eater," however, may in a particular context be considered Aesopian.

3. *Aesopian "Genres"*

Historical Fictions—Parables

The functions of screen and marker in a quasi-historical plot are etched with diagrammatic precision in these lines from a poem by Naum Korzhavin:

Был ты видом – довольно противен,
Сердцем – подл...
Но – не в этом суть.
Исторически прогрессивен
Оказался твой жизненный путь.[11]

You were foul enough of face, //Base at heart. . . / But that's not the point. // The path your life took proved // Historically progressive.

Korzhavin's reference is to "the Gatherer of the Russian Lands," Prince Ivan Kalita. The archaic turns *видом противен*

(foul of face) and *сердцем подл* (base at heart), however, have a screening role, while the *исторически прогрессивен* (historically progressive) taken over from Soviet historiographical jargon marks the text's Aesopian character: "Reader, beware! This is no fourteenth-century prince, but a twentieth-century tyrant instead."

This fragment of Aesopian text permits an easy explanation of precisely what is understood as the "ambivalence" of Aesopian language. The archaisms *видом противен* and *сердцем подл* are the vehicles of one stylistic device, of stylization. Taken on its own, this initial portion of the text (the first full sentence) has nothing Aesopian about it. Nor is the final segment of text (the last complete sentence) in itself Aesopian, if only because it is an example of parody. *(Исторически прогрессивен оказался твой жизненный путь* [The path your life took prove historically progressive] parodies the ubiquitous formula of Soviet historical writings of the Stalin era; the textbook *History of the USSR* states, for example, that ". . . inasmuch as it was directed against the nobility, the oprichnina had a progressive slant. . ."; and according to another source:

> The undisputed cruelties with which Ivan IV instituted his policies, no matter how terrible, cannot diminish the fact that his struggle against the boyar and princely nobility was historically conditioned, inevitable, and progressive.[12])

Thus in one block of text, in one stanza of a poem, two stylistic devices—stylization and parody—collide. Joined with the help of the adversative *Но — не в этом суть* (But that's not the point), these two stylistic effects together beget a third, an effect which is here labeled metastylistic or, given its socio-political reference, Aesopian.

Turning to Aesopian macrotexts with a kindred theme, to V. Kostylev's trilogy *Ivan the Terrible*, Dmitry Kedrin's verse narrative "The Architects," or to Eisenstein's fabled film (Ivan

the Terrible being in general one of the central themes of the Aesopian "historical genre"), the outline is everywhere the same. As the critic Vera Aleksandrova astutely observed in 1943 concerning the first part of the Kostylev trilogy, "The picture of life in Ivan's time is strongly redolent of contemporary Soviet reality."[13]

Aleksandrova, incidentally, had called attention even earlier to Mikhail Levidov's *The Travels of Jonathan Swift*, a biographical novel which was published in the USSR and whose Aesopian meaning she accurately uncovered:

> As the contemporary of another great revolution coming to a close, Levidov managed to extend his discussion of Swift to the truly worrisome revolutionary question of the social conduct of a man convinced that the end results of revolution do not merit the great hopes which were entertained for it.[14]

In both Aesopian historical parables and the Aesopian historical allegories essentially akin to them, it was especially common for writers in the 1960s to use episodes drawn from the history of Russian literature (cf. Chapter II.4 and Chapter VI).

Exotica—Parables

Shifting the locale of cautionary tales to conventional, geographically remote surroundings is a device already typical of folklore. The opening phrase of many folk tales is as a consequence a "geographical" formula—"Across the seas, beyond the hills. . . ," "Beyond thrice nine lands. . . ," "In a certain kingdom, in a certain land. . ." (in folklore "chronological" introductions—"Long, long ago. . . ," "Under Tsar Gorokh. . ."—are more rarely encountered).

The attribution of properly Russian concerns to realms which are geographically far-removed is a device which has been employed extensively by Russian political commentators as a screen against the censorship. Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of*

Capitalism (1916) is the often cited example: its basic premise rests upon an analysis of the economic relations between Japan and Korea (mother country and colony, respectively), relations which were, in Lenin's view, equivalent to Russia's ties to Finland and Poland.

In literary writing, and in Russian literature particularly since the latter half of the eighteenth century, one of the most widely proliferated types of Aesopian plot has been the exotic variety, its infallibility ironically sworn to by Nekrasov:

> Переносится действие в Пизу,
> И спасен многотомный роман.[15]

> When the action is shifted to Pisa, / Endless volumes of fiction are spared.

Because the forms taken by despotism are essentially analogous, moreover because despotic societies frequently have been and often are absorbed in sharp political confrontation (as were Russia and Germany, for example, at the beginning of the 1930s and in the 1940s, as are Russia and China at present), there has always been a margin of freedom for Aesopian creation. So, for example, the contemporary scholar L. Yevstigneeva can write concerning the Russian journal which was most popular at the beginning of the century:

> The favored way of Aesopian storytelling in *Satyricon* involved foreign touches. Reading 'shah,' one had to think 'tsar,' 'Persia' or 'France'—'Russia,' 'Clemenceau'—'Stolypin,' 'Ferdinand II' or 'the king of Bulgaria'—'Nicholas II,' and so on.[16]

The exotic locale on which *Satyricon* settled with particular frequency was Persia. The journal's contributors used this economically backward nation, in which bureaucratic attempts at Europeanization were constantly perverted and upended by the

entrenched forms of medieval Asiatic despotism, as a metaphor covenient for the depiction of Russian conditions.

Di-Avolo's "A Little Tale" became a kind of general marker of *Satyricon*'s overall "Persian tendency," a token, that is, of the Aesopian dimension of all works which had "Persian" subjects. Availing himself of Russian culture's most traditional symbols, the author, as it were, teaches the reader how to decode the Persian metaphor. Mikhryutka, the simple "Russian muzhik" of "A Little Tale," wants "to open a window on Europe"; however, "an officer" (who is a symbol of despotism) steals what Mikhryutka erroneously refers to as his "plant"—not "plan"—and substitutes another. Mikhryutka opens his window not on Europe but on Persia where, given "the barbarous Asian way of life," men are regularly impaled.

"A Little Tale," like all the other "Persian" pieces in *Satyricon* and like Yevtushenko's narrative poem "Corrida" mentioned earlier, shows how the artistic Aesopian text's network of devices differs from folklore and topical political writing. In folklore and in political essays, screens and markers are not integral components of the primary text, and no ambivalent, stylistically productive interaction occurs among them; whereas in the artistic Aesopian text these are necessary conditions. In the folk tale, for example, a screen may be a prelude ("Across the seas, beyond the hills. . .") and a marker the finishing touch ("The story's all lies, still it holds a clue. . . "), but it is between them that the actual text extends. Likewise, neither screen (Japan and Korea) nor marker (its place for all practical purposes taken by an appeal to a circle of initiates) substantially affects the primary concern of Lenin's essay, a discussion of political economy.

Science Fiction—Parables

By now the reader has certainly remarked that there is no essential difference in the Aesopian mechanisms which operate in works with varying plots. It is everywhere a question of the essentially unvaried operation of screens and markers; any

distinctions are owing to the external features of a plot which is sooner dictated by the literary tactics of the moment than chosen to satisfy the poetics of Aesopian language; consequently, one frequently encounters hybrid plots, in which the action is set at both an historical and a geographical remove from modern Russia. Levidov's biographical novel on Swift, L. Zorin's play *A Tale of Rome*, and Bulgakov's *The Life of Monsieur de Molière*, a novel which was subsequently reworked as a play, are among such mixtures.[17]

Fantastic works may be regarded as analogous hybrids whose plots combine the historical and the exotic. Aesopian language will accordingly be represented in them by a combination of stylistic screens that remove the content to distant realms, albeit in this case to other planets and galaxies rather than to known countries, and to distant times, to the future more often than not.

There are two writers of the fantastic, the brothers Strugatsky, whose oeuvre provides a highly instructive view into how the recombination of elements of Aesopian language consistently from one work to the next leads to an evolution of genre: science fiction gives way in their writing to anti-utopian satire. Examining the artistic evolution of the Strugatskys against the background of Soviet literary politics in the 1960s, one might ask why the same authorities that had approved their previous work decided to reject their novel *The Ugly Swans.*

As a whole, science fiction during the Soviet era has always been a popular and officially encouraged genre: even during the most critical period of the "battle with cosmopolitanism" there were multiple printings and reprintings of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and other classic writers in the genre, as well as such Soviet science fiction writers as A. Tolstoy, A. Belyaev, I. Yefremov, and others. In writing which, with its gripping plots, was largely entertainment, serious social content was not of the first moment: no mention of social injustice, no negative character in Tolstoy's *Engineer Garin's Death Ray* or Belyaev's *The Amphibious Man* wandered from the prescriptions of Communist propaganda.

Such priorities found their stylistic reflection in, among other things, the speech patterns of the characters: the speech of positive characters embraced the clichés of Soviet propaganda-type journalism, with a greater or lesser dash of the substandard popular speech of the respective era; whereas the speech of negative characters followed the clichés of second-rate Russian translations of Western literature—or borrowed from the caricatures of Soviet propaganda (Shelga and Garin in A. Tolstoy's novel well illustrate this point).

It is not without significance that the writing of anti-utopias had its very beginnings in post-revolutionary Russia, in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*. The idea of utopia lay at the cornerstone of state ideological doctrine, and so it was natural that the regime perceived in the anti-utopia the most seditious of all literary genres. For Russian writers the very genre became taboo, although anti-utopias by foreign writers—from Wells and Aldous Huxley to Ray Bradbury—were treated as anti-capitalist doomsaying and thus permitted in Soviet editions. (Two classic works, Orwell's *1984* and Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* were, of course, exceptions; the first was disqualified on the grounds of its forthright anti-Communism, the second, above all, because its author was an émigré.[18])

The Strugatskys' first published works, *The Land of Crimson Clouds* (1959) and *The Road to Amaltea* (1960), were little different from the bulk of Soviet science fiction writing: they depicted standardized representatives of the "Communist tomorrow" caught up in scientific and technological, but not social conflicts. The novels *The Interns* (1962), *The Return* (1962), and *The Distant Rainbow* (1964) also remained more or less within the bounds of science fiction.

The year 1962, however, saw the publication not only of *The Interns* and *The Return*, but also of *An Escape Attempt*, a narrative in which totalitarianism already figures as a plot motif. And beginning in 1964, the features of traditional science fiction, with its futurological, scientific, and technological story lines,

began to disappear from the work of the Strugatskys. In view of their dominant plot motifs, the narratives *It's Hard Work Being a God* (1964), *The Predatory Things of This Age* (1965), *The Snail on a Slope* (its first part in 1966, second in 1968), *The Second Martian Invasion* (1967), *The Inhabited Island* (1969), *The Ugly Swans* (1969), and *The Kid* (1971) may all be considered cautionary social tales and anti-utopias. All without exception depict the destruction of the individual under the yoke of absolute ideological dictatorship, the demise of social morality in its Judeo-Christian sense and the struggle to salvage it.

The direction taken by the Strugatskys in the 1960s is further underscored by the appearance of pure social-satiric grotesque in their work. *Monday Begins on Saturday* (1965) and its continuation, *Tale of the Troika* (1968), no longer have any connection, either futurological or self-protective, with any coming age.

The two works which are assigned above to the genre of social-satiric grotesque are not Aesopian; coding is not a factor in them. Although neither directly names the Soviet Union as its place of action, such a bald statement is as unnecessary as an announcement by a realist writer that the village or city he depicts is a part of the present-day USSR: the sum total of faithfully reproduced particulars will inform the reader of the fact. Both *Monday Begins on Saturday* and *Tale of the Troika* evince what is for their purposes the same accumulation of telling national and cultural details, granted that these particulars are grotesquely parodied. At the same time as they are caricatures, even the names of the characters are perfectly Russian or Russian-Armenian, Russian-Jewish, and otherwise russified names: Larry Fedotovich, Eddie Amperian, Farfurkis, Christobal Hoseavich. But what is more important is that the folklore motifs central to the plot, likewise the reported forms of social life, are unreservedly Russian.

Such is not the case in anti-utopias. All the basic distinguishing features of such works are Aesopically ambivalent; if they are compared with either realistic literature treating contemporary

themes or science fiction, anti-utopias are clearly distinguished from both one and the other by screens and markers which, by their presence in the text, both determine the structure and set the principal stylistic tone of the work as a whole.

The main heroes in *It's Hard Work Being a God* and *The Inhabited Island*, and certain characters who crop up in their recollections, are the traditional figures of science fiction. The world around them, however, is anything but *another planet* populated by monsters, as is the science fiction norm. This world has been endowed with social features, and its borders defined by verbal devices, which find a ready parallel in Soviet realities. The result is a complete turnabout in the functions of the most fantastic elements of the narrative. For instance, the most notable peculiarity attributed to the fantastic world in which the hero finds himself in *The Inhabited Island* is its situation along the inner rather than the outer surface of a sphere; in this world, that is, the sky is located within and the existence of other worlds is, accordingly, inconceivable. Insofar as the way of life of the inhabitants of this closed, concave world recalls in many of its details that of the Soviet Union—the inhabitants' speech, what is more, bears an idiomatic resemblance to contemporary Russian speech—the fantastic setting is perceived as a double-edged image and the narrative as a parable about a locked-in society and the stifling atmosphere of reactionary ideology. A medieval setting which is in part reminiscent of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* fills the same role in *It's Hard Work Being a God.*

If in the Strugatskys' other anti-utopias screens and markers are neatly balanced, if, that is, the text maintains an equal ratio between the traditional elements of science fiction and those elements which reflect Soviet Russian particulars, in *The Snail on a Slope* and *The Ugly Swans* this balance is so tipped in favor of markers that whole pages have the look of realistic, almost naturalistic, scenes:

'Oh Lord, why? Where have we sinned, oh Lord?'

'Bastards! Should've sent 'em to the chopping block a long time ago. The smart ones were already talking. . . '

'And where's the burgomaster? What the hell is he doing? Where are the police? Where are all those fat cats?'

'Sim, I'm being crushed. . . Sim, I can't breathe! Sim, oh. . .'

'What did we refuse them? What did we begrudge them? We took the bread from our own mouths, tramped about in rags just so they would have clothes and shoes. . .'

'Everybody lean all together, and it'll be goodbye, gate. . . '

'Why, I never laid a finger on him in his life. I've seen you chase after yours with a leather strap, but that was never the way in our house.'

'Did you see the machine guns? Can they really mean to fire into the crowd? Come for its own children?'

'Munya! Munya! Munya! Munichka, my baby! Munya!'

'Whatever does it mean, oh Lord? It's some kind of madness! Has there ever been anything like it?'

'Never mind, the legionnaires will show 'em. . . They'll come up from the rear, get that? The gates'll open and then we heave. . . '

'But did you see the guns? They mean business. . .'

'Let me in! Let me in, I'm telling you! My daughter's in there. . .'

'They've had it up their sleeve for a while, I saw that, only I was scared to ask.'

'But maybe it's all right after all. What are they anyway, wild beasts? It's not as if they're foreign invaders, they didn't take them before a firing squad or to the ovens.'

'I'll beat 'em 'til they bleed, I'm gonna tear 'em apart!'

'Right, but anybody can see that we're total shit if our own children left us for untouchables. . . Give up, they left on their own, no one forced them. . .'[19]

In this passage from *The Ugly Swans* only the words "burgomaster," "police," and "legionnaires" belong to the screening layer of the text, and they are literally lost in a convergence

of markers which are first of all in the form of distinctive locutions from contemporary spoken Russian. The spoken language is, moreover, represented in all its variety, whether the speech of the elderly ("Oh Lord, why? Where have we sinned, oh Lord?"); women's ritual lamentation, regularly given to rhetorical questioning ("What did we refuse them? What did we begrudge them? We took the bread from our own mouths. . ."); substandard masculine speech, peppered then as now with vulgarisms ("Bastards! Should've sent 'em to the chopping block a long time ago. . ."; "I'll beat 'em 'til they bleed, I'm gonna tear 'em apart!"; ". . . we're total shit. . . "); or Russian-Jewish patois ("Munya! Munichka, my baby!").

The names of many of the novel's characters sound thoroughly Russian (the book's main hero, Viktor Banev, is a heavy drinker; accordingly, the word from which his name comes is not the *баня* which means "a Russian bath house," but rather that *баня* which in the term *пол-бани* is slang for "a bottle of vodka," "a half-liter"[20]). In such circumstances the ambiguous sound of the name "Sim" in the dialogue reproduced above is curious. "Sim" has, in one respect, an exotic flavor—a Biblical sound, perhaps, or the ring of those monosyllabic names with which science fiction customarily fits those from "other planets"; in another respect, however, it suggest the ordinary Russian name Sima (a diminitive form of Serafima) with its final vowel dropped, an operation which in the modern spoken language will form the vocative.

Details of Soviet life are encoded in ways which are the most easily decoded. This may involve, for example, the principle of approximate synonymy: "a songbird" appears in place of "a stool pigeon," and "the Legion Fund" replaces "the Comintern Fund."[21] Other revealing details, such as "the badge of Gunner First Class, Paratrooper First Class, and Submariner First Class" (decorations of the Soviet armed forces), are simply mentioned outright.[22] The verses which in the novel are the work of Viktor Banev are quotations from Vladimir Vysotsky, whose songs are

widely known thanks to an unofficial tape-recording network, and who was himself the transparent prototype of his novelistic imitator.[23]

The fundamental stylistic features of *The Snail on a Slope* are analogous. It too shows a decided turning away from ambiguous anti-utopia toward social grotesque centered upon the realities of present-day Russia. Nonetheless, both *The Ugly Swans* and *The Snail on a Slope* remain within the borders of Aesopian anti-utopia. Unlike *Monday Begins on Saturday* and *Tale of the Troika,* neither employs comic deflation as its basic device. Even if certain screen motifs have only a tentative double edge, the preservation of at least this ambiguity inclines their parody sooner toward nightmare than humor.

In their pursuit of artistic ends the Strugatskys neglected the practical work of Aesopian language, their screens proved too few, and what screens there were proved too transparent. As a result only fragments of *The Snail on a Slope* were published in the USSR, and it met with sharp official criticism; *The Ugly Swans* appeared only outside the Soviet Union.[24]

Nature-Writing—Parables

This variant, which played so significant a role in the history of the fable, is at the present time evidently obsolete as an Aesopian genre.[25] It is in any case relatively rare during the period of Russian literature examined herein; the traditional preserve of the animal fable was ceded almost in its entirety to literature which, like the fables of Mikhalkov, promotes the ideology which would censor it.

Yury Koval's tale "The Yearling" is one of the rare exceptions.[26] In the fur-breeding world, "yearling" is the name given a one-year-old animal who is not yet sufficiently grown that he may be slaughtered for his pelt. Koval's tale, which is on the surface sustained in a manner approaching the prose of Chekhov's and Tolstoy's animal stories (such as "Kashtanka," "Whitebrow," and "Strider"), describes the fate of an unusual yearling, one of

a hundred foxes being reared in cages on a state fur-breeding farm in the north of the Russian Republic. One psychological anomaly distinguishes this tiny animal from all the others: while the other foxes relish the abundant food, constant care, and the mixing with female foxes, this fox is oppressed by life in a cage (no matter that he was born into one) and is constantly looking to escape. His first attempt ends in failure, a later one succeeds.

Stylistically "The Yearling" stands in sharp contrast with the works of the Strugatskys. While the Strugatskys do everything to emphasize that their screens are provisional and dispensable, it is above all the well-substantiated description of life on a fur farm, brimming with a multitude of precise details, which is a screen for Koval. It is not simply the reader's perception but a fact that the tale is an exemplary piece of writing about animals with the same generous dose of anthropomorphism as in Chekhov, Tolstoy, Jack London, Thompson Seton, Colette, or any other writer known for his animal stories.

The markers which declare the tale's Aesopian intention are planted quite sparingly and they are, one might say, models of ambivalence. Above all, they revolve around the feeding-trough, a motif which is recalled throughout the narration. A part of every fox's cage, the trough is described as the focus of the animals' life aspirations; feeding time is a moment separate from all others in the rhythm of their lives; moreover, the expression of anxiety or excitement is linked to the trough: the foxes drum on the troughs when they sense either the approach or (more likely) the delay of their dinner. For the main hero, whom the reader knows only by his number (as certain of Zamyatin's and Solzhenitsyn's characters are also known), there is a choice between the trough and freedom: flight from the farm means loss of the trough and the risk of death by starvation. A "feeding-trough" *(кормушка)*, however, is not an animal-breeding term alone; in contemporary popular speech it is also a commonly accepted metaphor for a profitable office or sinecure, often ideological work which is carried out in the immediate midst of the state

apparatus. Thus a single narrative detail, contained in a single word, becomes a kind of hinge on which the entire complex structure of a lengthy tale may turn and appear before the reader in an Aesopian perspective. When placed in this perspective, all other details of the narrative, all images of animals and men, of time-servers and guards, immediately assume the shape of a parable.

A fox dubbed Napoleon, who has been especially trained to retrieve runaways, is an image that is particularly revealing. Endowed with an unusually good nose, he tracks and overtakes the runaway animal, joins the fugitive in his flight, but then, unnoticed by the original escapee, begins to bend the direction of their route so that some two or three days later they arrive back at the farm. The naive runaway forms the impression that there is no escaping the farm—it is everywhere.

While the modern reader thinks, of course, of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, there is in essence no resemblance between Orwell's work and that of Koval. *Animal Farm* is a grotesque, tracing its lineage as a genre to the animal fable. In contrast, "The Yearling," by virtue of the inherent double vision which allows it to be simultaneously a parable and a psychological tale, is Aesopian precisely as defined herein. (One may only speculate that Koval's roughly Orwellian theme was somehow intended as additional marking of the tale's Aesopian dimension—translations of Orwell's novels are, after all, "*samizdat* bestsellers.")

Anecdotes—Parables

Any work of verbal art, as Potebnya establishes, is synecdochic.[27] However, there is in recent Russian literature a recognizible number of plots wherein the exceptional event or anecdote related not only awakens in the mind of the reader resonance of a general aesthetic sort, but is also conducive to precisely those kinds of generalizations, targeted by the censorship, which cannot themselves be openly made. Without question, the exceptional or anecdotal character of plot in such cases (which

is to say, its synecdochic character) performs the function of an Aesopian screen.

Fazil Iskander's long tale *The Goatibex Constellation* is exemplary of this bread. Deming Brown pinpoints the mechanism whereby it obtains its Aesopian effect when he writes:

> Built on an extended hyperbole like Gogol's *Dead Souls*, the story is a rollicking, widely ramifying satire which, for all its playfulness, penetrates deep.[28]

That the anecdotal events played out in the Abkhazian backwater offer a lesson on Soviet life in general is marked chiefly by a complete parallelism between those events and every facet, without exception, of bureaucratic exercises during the Khrushchev era. As Brown shows in his analysis, the improbable scheme of a provincial careerist to breed a goatibex—no common farm animal, but one which will give more meat and wool than any other, which will, furthermore, surpass the others in fecundity but require the least amount of care—fast balloons with ideological slogans, newspaper articles, and the verse of obsequious poets. In such a case the ludicrous improbability of the plot and the limited provincial locale act as screens, while the story's actual, Aesopian, content is indicated in the parodying of official campaigns in their every detail.

Translations—Original Works and Parables

Cases in which the translation of a foreign literary work has doubled as a means of expression of the author-translator are not uncommon among Aesopian practitioners. Moreover, if, as stated above, it is possible to regard Aesopian fantasy as combining a quasi-historical with a quasi-exotic plot, then it is similarly possible to discern in purported translations a variation of the same strategy: the author of the translation, who is secretly if not openly the narrative "I," assumes a mask which is incongrously removed in time, in place, or both.

In addition, two variants of translation are possible. One is the merely feigned translation, a work which is in fact entirely original. A second possibility is that the translation is indeed a translation; at the price of a certain stylistic modification, however, it can also be the Aesopian original of its translator.

The first of these two variants was more common in the literature which preceded the revolution. It at times involved nothing more than the most effortless screen, of the type which a subtitle "From the German" represents (cf. Chapter II.1); at other times an author would exhaust the possibilities of stylization in order to camouflage his message. The "songs of Pat Willoughby" which appeared in B. Lapin's "The Exploit" and were popular in the 1930s and 1940s, for example, belong to this latter category:

Солдат, учись свой труп носить,
Учись дышать в петле,
Учись свой кофе кипятить
На узком фитиле. [. . .]
Смотри, на пастбище войны
Ползут стада коров,
Телеги жирные полны
Распухших мертвецов...[29]

Learn to carry your own carcass, soldier, / Learn to breathe inside a noose, / Learn to boil your coffee / On a narrow wick. . . . / Look, herds of cows are creeping / Onto the pasture of war, / The oozing carts are full / Of bloated corpses.

Northeastern China, the setting of Lapin's story, was during the period in question a locus of Soviet militarist ambitions. A great many works of Soviet literature, among them the song "Three Tankmen" of great renown, rested upon descriptions of the Red Army's glorious and easy future victories in the region. In this context of militarist propaganda Lapin's songs were by

contrast perceived as a stern warning, one which was Aesopically screened, however, by the songs' Kiplingesque or Remarquian poetics. (Two decades later Bulat Okudzhava would eschew stylization, confining the screen of his anti-militarist songs to their titles: "The Song of an American Soldier," "François Villon's Prayer."[30]).

The most recent example of such Aesopian camouflaging is Vladimir Lifschitz' *James Clifford*, a verse cycle whose initial poems were printed in *The Batum Worker*, a southern newspaper. The first publication was a complete hoax, with the real author's name omitted and the poems promoted as translations from "the English poet James Clifford." When subsequently the cycle appeared in Moscow publications, the author's tactics had changed and now, in prefaces to the poems, Lifschitz made a point of the harmless stylization which his depiction of English life represented in this peculiar "narrative in twenty-three poems with a biographical sketch and farewell." In the closing words of the "biographical sketch" Lifschitz laid bare his device: "Such could have been the biography of this English poet, who grew up in my imagination and who has materialized in the poems whose translation I ask you to consider."[31] Here the role of screen is assumed by the "biographical sketch" and by certain poems of the narrative cycle, such as "Uncle Dick," which are richly saturated with stylized anglicisms; whereas the unexpected absence of stylization in other poems, unexpected given the cycle's frame and poems of the "Uncle Dick" sort, is an elliptical marker of the Aesopian import of, in the first instance, "Squares," "I dreamt I'd never die. . . ," "Retreat in the Ardennes," and "The Barkers." "Squares," for example, reads as follows:

И все же порядок вещей нелеп.
Люди, плавящие металл,
Ткущие ткани, пекущие хлеб, –
Кто-то бессовестно вас обокрал.

Не только ваш труд, любовь, досуг –
Украли пытливость открытых глаз;
Набором истин кормя из рук,
Уменье мыслить украли у вас.

На каждый вопрос вручили ответ.
Все видя, не видите вы ни зги.
Стали матрицами газет
Ваши безропотные мозги.

Вручили ответ на каждый вопрос...
Одетых серенько и пестро,
Утром и вечером, как пылесос,
Вас засасывает метро. [. . .]

Ты взбунтовался. Кричишь: – Крадут!.. –
Ты не желаешь себя отдать.
И тут сначала к тебе придут
Люди, умеющие убеждать. [. . .]

А если упорствовать станешь ты:
– Не дамся!.. Прежнему не бывать!.. –
Неслышно явятся из темноты
Люди, умеющие убивать.

Ты будешь, как хину, глотать тоску,
И на квадраты, словно во сне,
Будет расчерчен синий лоскут
Черной решеткой в твоем окне.[32]

Still the order of things is absurd. / You people who smelt steel, / Who weave fabrics, who bake bread– / Someone has crookedly picked you clean.

Not just your labor, love, spare time– / They've stolen the searching from your open eyes; / By handfeeding you a set of opinions, / They've stolen your ability to think.

They dished out an answer to every question. / You eye everything, but don't see a speck. / Your submissive brains / Have become newspaper plates.

They dished out an answer to every question. . . / Every morning and evening, in your drab and motley dress, / The subway sucks you in / Like a vacuum cleaner. [. . .]

You rebelled. Your cry: Thieves! . . . / You don't want to hand yourself over. / And now you'll be visited / First by people who know how to persuade [. . .]

But if you persist: / I won't be had! . . . Nothing doing like before! . . . / From out of the darkness there will noiselessly appear / People who know how to kill.

Your longing will go down like quinine, / And black bars, as if in a dream, / Will rule the shred of blue sky in your window / Into squares.

It is unthinkable that this poetic diatribe against the conformity and totalitarianism of Soviet society would be published either on its own or in a collection with other poems; when it was submitted as the work of a fictional hero, however, as a game of translation, the poem was indeed published. This admittedly occurred during a relatively liberal period, in the 1960s prior to the invasion of Czechoslovakia; in the selected works of Lifschitz printed in 1977, *James Clifford* was no longer included.

The second Aesopian strategy accommodated in quasi-translation, the variant in which a genuine translation is the vehicle of an Aesopian message, is the more widespread. It is best illustrated by Boris Pasternak's translation of *Macbeth*, an example which Anna Kay France has already noticed. France, concerned with how *Macbeth* became a medium allowing Pasternak to communicate his experience of the years of Stalinist terror to his readers, compares passages from the original to Pasternak's

translation and finds that the translator has made vital changes in the nuances of Shakespeare's meaning. In the following passage, for example, Pasternak proves "more laconic and subdued" than Shakespeare; the lines set off below show Pasternak emphasizing that "loss and horror have become a commonplace," "an everyday occurrence" to which Macbeth's benumbed and apathetic subjects have grown indifferent:

Alas, poor country!
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where
nothing,
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rent the
air
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy; the dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's
lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.
(IV.iii.164-173)

Страна неузнаваема. Она
Уже не мать нам, но могила наша.
Улыбку встретишь только у блажных.
К слезам привыкли, их не замечают.
К мельканью частых ужасов и бурь
Относятся, как к рядовым явленьям.
Весь день звонят по ком-то, но никто
Не любопытствует, кого хоронят.
Здоровяки хиреют на глазах
Скорей, чем вянут их цветы на шляпах,
И умирают, даже не болев.

In an earlier passage, however, Pasternak hardly understates the effects of a reign of terror, having in the following lines eliminated the obscurities of Shakespeare's text:

> But cruel are the times, when we are traitors,
> And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumour
> From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
> But float upon a wild and violent sea
> Each way, and move.
>
> (IV. ii.18-22)

> Времена ужасны,
> Когда винят в измене и никто
> Не знает почему; когда боятся
> Ползущих слухов, не имея средств
> Опасность уяснить; когда безвестность
> Колышется кругом, как океан,
> И всех подбрасывает, как скорлупку.

Nonetheless, as France points out, Pasternak's translation is not without ambiguities of its own: while the original Rosse uses the third person plural in reference to those who suffer under Macbeth, Pasternak's Rosse uses the general third person which, because it never specifies a subject, makes fear and terror emotions shared by all—even by the tyrant.[33]

A peculiar blend of the first and second variants, a mixture in other words of the specious and the authentic translation, appears in Joseph Brodsky's cycle "Letters to a Roman Friend": in certain of the cycle's verses free translation is compounded with stylization.[34] The text as a result becomes significantly multilayered: the Rome of Nero and Titus comes to life for one viewer, while another reader, knowing that in Brodsky's poetic vocabulary "empire" is a code word, reads these lines as Aesopian:

Пусть и вправду, Постум, курица не птица,
но с куриными мозгами хватишь горя.
Если выпало в Империи родиться,
лучше жить в глухой провинции у моря.

И от Цезаря далеко, и от вьюги.
Лебезить не нужно, трусить, торопиться.
Говоришь, что все наместники – ворюги?
Но ворюга мне милей, чем кровопийца.[35]

Even if a hen's no bird, Postumus, / there's no end of misery with birdbrains. / If you lucked on being born within the Empire, / it's best you live in a remote province by the sea.

Far from Caesar and from snowstorms, / there's no need to brown-nose, cower, or wheel and deal. / You say all procurators are out-and-out thieves? / I'll take a thief before a leech.

"Empire," "province," "Caesar," "procurators," and "Postumus" without question refer to ancient Rome. Moreover, it fell to Nero's subjects in no lesser degree than to latter-day Soviet subjects to "brownnose" and "cower" amidst "out-and-out thieves" and "leeches." However, such shifts (see III.5) as the idiomatic Russian proverb "a hen's no bird" (". . . and a woman isn't human") and the expressive suffix, again idiomatic, in *ворюга* (out-and-out thief) are, to be sure, markers of a hidden Russian theme. "Snowstorms," what is more, are a detail more appropriate to Moscow than to Rome.

In his article "Poetic Translation in the History of Russian Literature," E. G. Etkind assigned the work of translators in the latter half of the nineteenth century to one of four lines: to the political, socially enlightening, poetically enlightening, or lyric line. Those translators who belong to the first group, he wrote,

> use Western authors to propagandize their own revolutionary-democratic ideas; under cover of a recognized foreign name they create a political poetry in Russian,

while the poets of the third group

> strive to bring the Russian reader the notion of beauty native to poets of different times and peoples and to various languages which are, to one degree or another, remote from Russian.[36]

In the twentieth century, in translations following the model of Pasternak and of Brodsky, these two currents have become one.

4. Aesopian Language and the Intended Audience of the Text

A work which appears aimed at specialists, while it in fact addresses the general reader.

Yury Tynyanov is represented by its author A. Belinkov as a monograph in literary criticism; its scrupulous documentation and the author's extensive searching through archives are underscored in the publisher's preface. These claims fuel the perception that the entire book caters to a learned audience and is intended for a reader-specialist, the literary scholar.[37] As seen earlier (Chapter II.4), however, *Yury Tynyanov* is in fact an extended essay on the subject of dictatorship and free thought; the book makes extensive use of the artistic devices of Aesopian language, transforming it into a parable about contemporary Soviet life.

During A. T. Tvardovsky's term as editor of *Novy mir*, almost all of the journal's sketches, articles, and reviews evinced elements of Aesopian artistry. An article by V. Kardin entitled "Legends and Facts," for example, was written as a survey of the latest literature on the history of the Communist Party and of the Soviet state, an area which provides propaganda its most formal outlet and one to which the average reader is not ordinarily attracted. However, the archive reports, memoirs, and historians' findings which the author assembled from scattered homes in professional journals and collections were pieced together in such a way that two allegedly historical events could not be fitted into the resulting mosaic: it became obvious that both the salvo from the battleship *Aurora* and the victory of the Red Army over the Germans at Pskov and Narva on 23 February 1918 were myths. More than a revision of historical fact was involved, for "The Salvo from the *Aurora*" and "The Birth of the Red Army" were the two symbolic foundations upon which Soviet mythology had rested for decades. The strength of Kardin's article (a sketch actually, a work of artistic journalism) lay less in the facts it marshaled (whether the *Aurora*'s cannons fired a true salvo or a single blank shot, whether on 23 February the Reds subdued the Germans or suffered a humiliating defeat was not in the end all that important for the further course of Russian history) than in its tacit challenge to an entire system which was predicated upon an ideological lie. Kardin's critical overview turned into an artistic allegory whose centrally featured images were a "cruiser of the revolution" which did not fire and a "triumphant Red Army" which ran from battle; inevitably these images summoned an association with those age-old symbols of Russian backwardness, the "Tsar Kolokol"—a giant bell so flawed that it never rang—and the "Tsar Pushka"—an immense cannon which refused to fire. Kardin's article, conversely, scored such an Aesopian bull's-eye that it provoked a furious backlash from the semi-official press. During the attack one toadying writer, I. Stadnyuk, allowed with rare candor that no facts of

any kind could be permitted to upset the inventions of propaganda:

> It is difficult to imagine such sons for whom everything connected with the life of their mother, with her griefs and joys, her suffering and happiness, would not be sacred. Yet certain of our literary brethren from *Novy mir* are taking almost such liberties. I am referring to Kardin's article 'Legends and Facts,' which with astonishing indelicacy 'investigates' whether, for instance, the fire from the *Aurora* which announced the birth of Communism to the world should be called a shot or a salvo; whether we are right to celebrate Soviet Army and Navy Day on 23 February and not some other day.[38]

A similar Aesopian strategy was used extensively by writers in the nineteenth century as well.[39] And it is this strategy, strictly speaking, which a famous Russian anecdote from early in the last century salutes: one censor, the story goes, deleted a cookbook's instruction to allow such and such a cake "liberal heat." Being conversant with the Aesopian strategy described above, the censor decoded the text such that its addressee, so he thought, was no cook but the Russian public at large.

A work apparently for children, actually for adults.

(Chapter VII is devoted entirely to this type of Aesopian language, which in the Soviet period engendered an entire genre of quasi-children's literature.)

5. *The Poetics of Aesopian Language*

It stands to reason that there are no tailor-made Aesopian rhetorical figures and tropes: all existing expressive means can

and do contribute to the shaping of Aesopian metastyle. However, only those which are used in Aesopian texts with particular frequency, as well as those whose handling in an Aesopian text is peculiar and thus more or less distinct from the treatment accorded them in non-Aesopian texts, are considered below.

Allegory

Soviet propagandistic literature is replete with allegories, especially so in its shorter genres: these include the likes of Boris Polevoy's tale *The Story of a Real Man*, Eduard Bagritsky's poem "The Death of a Pioneer Girl," and two constantly anthologized stories, A. Tolstoy's "A Russian Character" and M. Sholokhov's "The Fate of a Man."[40] It is not coincidence that school books on the history of Soviet literature begin, by way of a prehistory, with two pieces in an allegorical vein—with "The Stormy Petrel" and "The Song of the Falcon," both by M. Gorky.

The hallmark of recent Aesopian allegory in poetry and prose is the greater difficulty which as a rule attends its decoding: the author by design allows a limited circle of readers a fixed means of access to his allegorical meaning. This he accomplishes by drawing his screens and markers either from an area with which only fairly learned readers will be familiar (from classical mythology, for example) or from the idiom of the intelligentsia, with which the censor is believed to be unacquainted.

The following poem by Sofia Parnok, which by its appearance in 1922 numbers among the earliest Aesopian forays into Soviet print, is representative of allegory of the first type:

Беллерофонт в Химеру
низринул ливень стрел...
Кто может верить, веруй,
что меток был прицел.

А я без слез, упрямо
гляжу на жизнь мою,
и древней той, той самой
я когти узнаю,

и знаю, кем придушен
глубокий голос мой
и кто дохнул мне в душу
расплавленною тьмой.[41]

Bellerophon unleashed / a rain of arrows at Chimera. . . / Take it on trust, those who can, / that his aim was on the mark.

But I take a hard look / at my life, without tears, / and I recognize the claws / of that same ancient Chimera.

And I know who smothered / my deep voice, / and who breathed melted darkness / into my soul.

Here it is a fairly commonplace mythological allegory—the match between Bellerophon and Chimera—which is both a screen and marker. The transfer of the poem to an Aesopian plane is, nonetheless, quite deftly effected: as Parnok's biographer S. Polyakova rightly indicates, the homonymic double meaning of the word "chimera" is the stylistic pivot of the poem. While Chimera the monster has traditionally personified malevolent forces (forces which in this instance deprive the poet of the right to create freely), "chimera" is secondly an imaginary and deceptive utopia (such for Parnok is the ideological regime which greets the poet with repression).[42]

Its rich history of Aesopian undertakings notwithstanding, *Novy mir*'s 1971 publication of two poems by the Ryazan poet Yevgeny Markin—"The White Buoy" and "Weightlessness" (see Appendix 2)—was a noteworthy event.[43] The author of "The White Buoy" does not borrow from the classical repertoire, but

rather creates his own allegory about the irrational, yet irresistibly magnetic power which attaches to "the silent buoy-keeper" (who, that is, places river buoys to mark out the main channel for navigation). By the time of the poem's publication, Solzhenitsyn's final break with the system had been accomplished: on 4 November 1969, at a session of the Ryazan branch of which he was a member, Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Writers' Union. This was succeeded by the outbreak of an all too notorious campaign to slander the writer and by a simultaneous rise in Solzhenitsyn's importance as the protest movement's symbolic leader.

У него здоровье слабо –
что поделаешь, бобыль!
У него дурная слава –
то ли сплетня, то ли быль.

Говорят, что он бездельник.
Говорят, что он – того...
Говорят, что куча денег
есть в загашне у него. [. . .]

...как нелепа эта лямка,
как глаза его чисты,

каково по зыбким водам,
у признанья не в чести,
ставить вешки пароходам
об опасностях в пути.[44]

He's in poor health– / what else to expect of a single man! / He has a nasty reputation– / which may be gossip, may be true.

They say that he's a good-for-nothing. / They say that he's–you know what kind. . . / They say he has a heap of money / stashed away somewhere. [. . .]

. . . how senseless this drudgery is, / how clear his vision is,

what a thankless task it is / to place markers on the rippling waters / to warn steamers / of dangers in their path!

The devices of Aesopian language above are, as they are always, ambivalent. One finds, on one hand, workaday details in the spirit of rural writers' prose and poetry; these details are, in addition, reinforced by the trochaic meter which such poetry traditionally observes. On the other hand, Markin reiterates the propaganda charges against Solzhenitsyn and in conclusion pits them against his allegory's central image of placing markers "to warn steamers / of dangers in their path." One detail—the hero's name, which Markin provides in the fifth stanza—is a remarkably daring and successful marker/screen:

Ведь не зря ему, свисая
с проходящего борта,
машет вслед: – Салют, Исаич! –
незнакомая братва.[45]

Why, it's not for nothing / that shipmates–strangers– / hanging off the side of a passing ship / wave after him: 'Hallo, Isaich!'

Greetings by patronymic are the most distinctive feature of village idiom, so that in this respect "Isaich" fits perfectly in the context of a rural record. Yet "Isaich" is also Solzhenitsyn's patronymic, and it is precisely that he is called in the argot of the intelligentsia.

Not unexpectedly, Solzhenitsyn places Markin in the positive camp when he recreates the scene of his expulsion from the Ryazan Writers' Union in his memoir *The Oak and the Calf;* as is not always his inclination, however, Solzhenitsyn even endeavors to excuse the Ryazan poet's partial apostasy.[46]

Fazil Iskander's novel *Sandro from Chegem* offers a rare example of a potent Aesopian allegory, to decipher which neither

a command of the esoteric nor initiation in any group jargon is required. The subject of this tragedy-bouffe is the ruin of the tiny Abkhazian nation's ancient civilization at the hands of Russian colonizers and collectivizers. Inserted into one of the first chapters is the story of a wealthy Abkhazian peasant to whom it has happily occurred to fatten hogs in the acorn-rich oak groves surrounding his native village. This has not been tried before, primarily due to the fact that Abkhazians are Moslems and do not eat pork. In the space of a summer the hogs of the peasant innovator grow so fantastically fat that they are unable to move on their own, making it necessary to load them on mules in order to relay them to market. Iskander's pen transforms the picture of the hog transport into a pointed allegory:

> And when people on the roads of Abkhazia began to meet asses loaded down with swine, long-eared martyrs over whom evilly squealing many-pound sacks of fat were riding roughshod, many of them, especially the old men, saw this spectacle as a dark omen.
>
> 'You're asking for trouble,' they would say to Mikha and stop in the road, following this strange caravan with their eyes.[47]

This allegorical miniature employs speech clichés and metaphors which are known to all: *to ride roughshod over* (with the figurative meaning "to tyrannize"), *asses* (which is both literal and figurative: asses are those doltish enough to allow themselves to be enslaved), and, not the least, *swine* ("Russian swine" being a common term of abuse).[48] Iskander, nonetheless, uses still another marker, "the bad omen," to indicate the allegory outright. What renders this case truly exceptional, however, is the fact of this passage's survival in the Soviet edition of the novel: while the novel as published in the USSR contained no more than 30% of Iskander's complete text, and while whole chapters had been removed, this particular passage escaped the censors' notice.[49] Aesopian language is sometimes that effective.

Parody

A. A. Morozov gives the following classification of varieties of parody:

> 1. Humorous or comic parody. A diminished thrust with respect to its 'second field of vision,' making it akin to comic stylization, is its distinguishing feature; it may be not without a critical stance. [. . .] 2. Satiric parody. It takes clear aim against the object parodied; adopts a hostile or sharply critical position in relation to the original; attacks the ideological and aesthetic essence of a work by the parodied author or of an entire school. 3. Burlesque manipulation. This results from a change of direction, with sights turned upon extra-literary targets. An attack upon the manipulated (parodied) original is either quite absent (in parodies of the classics and writers of the distant past) or is combined with an extra-literary thrust.[50]

It is the parodic manipulation of another's text for social and political aims which bears on Aesopian language.

Already in the first period of the diffusion of Aesopian language into Russian literature, in the 1860s, the use of this variety of Aesopian language was widespread. The parodies of Dobrolyubov, Kurochkin, and the *Iskra* poets contained elements of literary stylization as screens which would conceal their satiric attacks upon such social phenomena as the vestiges of reactionary serfdom and moderate liberalism (among readers of Aesopian satire, the last was especially distasteful). Nonetheless, it was not a rare occasion when the same device served writers of the opposing, anti-nihilist school (cf. the verses of Captain Lebyadkin and, in particular, Liputin's poem-pamphlet "The Student" in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*[51]).

The popularity of parody as an Aesopian device may be observed immediately up to the period which followed the first Russian revolution at the beginning of this century. A. Yevlakhov's poem "The Student," reproduced below, was published in 1906 in *The Scorpion* (No. 1), one of the satiric journals

which abounded in those revolutionary days.[52] ("A student" was as archetypal an image for the Russian revolutionary movement as it was in Dostoevsky's parody; it simply appeared to the former in an opposite light.) Although the poem may hardly be adjudged one of the finest specimens of its class, by virtue of the simplicity and exposure of its central device it provides an excellent demonstration of the mechanism of Aesopian parody. It is a primitive enough parody, organized as a collage: Pushkin's famous poem "The Prophet" provides the matrix into which parodic, or in themselves neutral, words and expressions are inserted (Yevlakhov's insertions are set off below, a dotted line indicating where in Yevlakhov's interpolations there are grammatical forms—case endings, verb inflections—coincidental with the original: here, along with the other markers Yevlakhov enlists, such coincidences are a means of Aesopian marking).

Духовной жаждою томим,
Я в храм науки потащился, —
И шести главый херувим
В моей квартире по явился...
Перстами легкими, как сон,
Моих бумаг коснулся он:
Отверзлись вещие зеницы,
Увидев синие страницы...
Моих ушей коснулся он —
И их наполнил шум и звон,
И внял я неба содроганье,
В Сибирь товарищей полет,
И гад земных "охранных" ход,
И в одиночке прозябанье...
И он к листам моим приник
И понял тайный их язык —

И празднословный, и лукавый...
И жало мудрыя змеи
Бумаги, письма все мои
Скрепил десницею кровавой...
И он мне жизнь пресек пером,
И вот когда я рот разинул
И все еще объят был сном, –
Меня в темницу он водвинул.
Как труп в темнице я лежал,
И Плеве глас ко мне воззвал–
"Сиди, студент, не виждь, не внемли,
Исполнись волею моей –
И, позабыв моря и земли,
Спокойно спи в тюрьме своей".

Parched with spiritual thirst, / *I shuffled off to a temple of learning–* / And a six-*headed cherub* / Appeared *in my rooms. . .* / With fingers as gentle as sleep, / He laid his hands upon my *papers: / With one look at the ink-stained pages,* / The prophet's eyes were opened. . . / His hands fell on my ears– / And they were filled with noise and ringing, / I heard heaven quaking, / *Comrades* winging *to Siberia, / Earth's 'protective'* creatures on the move, / And vegetation *in solitary confinement. . .* / He put his ear to my *papers* / And *understood their secret* tongue– / All idle talk and cunning. . . / With his bloody right hand / *He put his signature, like* the sting of a *vile* serpent, / *On all my papers and letters. . .* / He cut my *life short* with the *pen, / And when, still in sleep's* embrace, / *I opened my mouth, / He* thrust *me into a dungeon.* / Like a corpse I lay in the *dungeon,* / and the voice of *Pleve** called out to me: / *'Sit still, student, don't* see, *don't* hear, / Be filled with my will– / And, *giving up all thought of* sea and land, / *Sleep quietly in your prison.'*

---

* Vyacheslav Konstantinovich Pleve became, in 1902, the minister of internal affairs and the chief of the tsarist gendarmes.

The basic principles of Aesopian parody will emerge more clearly if the words and phrases entered by Yevlakhov are compared with their equivalents in Pushkin's original.

Pushkin	*Yevlakhov*	*Device*
В пустыне мрачной я влачился (I stumbled in the gloomy desert)	*Я в храм науки потащился* (I shuffled off to a temple of learning)	An ironic, downgrading metaphor.
шестикрылый серафим (a six-winged seraph)	*шестиглавый херувим* (a six-headed cherub)	The same, owing to a pun on the homonym "cherub": in its Biblical sense "cherub" would not appear a stylistic departure from the "seraph" of the original; in its ordinary sense of "a plump, rosy person," however, "cherub" suggests six wholesome gendarmes.
ангелов (angels)	*товарищей* (comrades)	An upgrading metaphor.
к устам (to my lips)	*к листам* (to my papers)	A metaphor (as if the pages could speak).
уста замершие (my motionless lips)	*бумаги, письма* (all my papers and letters)	Development of the same metaphor.
мечом (with a sword)	*пером* (with the pen)	Ironic deflation once again (a litotes of sorts).

в пустыне (in the desert)	*в темнице* (in the dungeon)	The same (cf. "temple of learning"–"desert" above; with the result that Pushkin's "gloomy desert"= "a temple of learning" (university) = "a dungeon" (prison).
Бога (of God)	*Плеве* (of Pleve)	The same.
Восстань (Arise)	*Сиди* (Sit still)	An ironic antonym. A parallel with the original is established by repetition of the imperative form and use of its semantic opposite. This operation simultaneously represents a dramatic drop in style–from the elevated, rhetorical *Восстань* to the slang *Сиди* of *сидеть в тюрьме* (to sit in prison).
пророк (prophet)	*студент* (student)	An upgrading metaphor but with a touch of independent irony.

Stylistic deflation with reinterpretation on an ironic plane is the principal device among those which Yevlakhov employs in his substitutions. The regularity with which this device is applied, moreover, and its identical effect in each instance have the further result that even those fragments of Pushkin's text which remain untouched are, when perceived by the reader, subject to the same process of ironic reworking; these fragments become, in effect, Aesopian quotations (see III.5). The reader's injection of irony and puns into the unaltered lines is

a procedure analogous to the original revamping of other lines by Yevlakhov.

Pushkin's Text	*Aesopian Reinterpretation*
Духовной жаждою томим (Parched with spiritual thirst)	An ironic quote.
Перстами легкими, как сон (With fingers gentle as sleep)	(Describing the hands of a tsarist gendarme)—irony, antiphrasis.
Отверзлись вещие зеницы (The prophet's eyes were opened)	An ironic quote.
Моих ушей коснулся он – / *И их наполнил шум и звон, /* *И внял я неба содроганье...* и т. д. (His hands fell on my ears– / And they were filled with noise and ringing, / I heard heaven quaking. . . etc.)	(Describing a blow to the ear)—irony, antiphrasis, and a pun as well: "noise and ringing" represent for Pushkin the bustle of the world, here the blow's aftereffects.
полет (winging)	A pun. Its use in Pushkin is literal, here slang (as in *полететь с работы, в тюрьму, в Сибирь* [to be booted out of work, off to prison, to Siberia]).
гад /морских/ (creatures [of the sea])	A pun. Used in its literal, zoological sense, *гады* is an archaism in Pushkin; in its informal sense, however, it is a commonplace curse. N. B.: the change of *морской* to *земной* reinforces the pun.

ход (move)	Perhaps a pun. It is possible that the author also intended that this word, used literally by Pushkin, be reconstructed as "maneuver" or "subterfuge."
прозябанье (vegetation)	A pun. Pushkin has an archaism meaning "sprouting," while here it has its modern sense of "a pitiful existence."
[грешный мой] язык– и празднословный и лукавый... ([my sinful] tongue–All idle talk and cunning. . .)	A pun. *Язык* is used by Pushkin in both its literal (anatomical) and traditional metaphoric sense (its second meaning being "language"); here it means "Aesopian language." N. B.: both Pushkin's epithets may be understood to play on the two essential characteristics of Aesopian language–its superfluity ("idle talk") and its backhandedness ("cunning"); the change of *грешный* to *тайный* reinforces the pun.
жало [м...] змеи ([like] the sting of a serpent)	An ironic metaphor.
десницею кровавой (with his bloody right hand)	Irony (cf. "*Перстами легкими...*" above).
[рас]сек (cut [open])	Yevlakhov has *пресек* (cut short), a pun made possible by analogy with the legal term *мера пресечения* (cf. Akhmadulina's use of the same expression in Chapter II.3).
водвинул (thrust)	An ironic quote.

[и] виждь, [и] внемли ([and] see, [and] hear)	Yevlakhov has *Не виждь, не внемли* (Don't see, don't hear), an ironically distorted quotation.
Исполнись волею моей (Be filled with my will)	An ironic quote.
И, обходя моря и земли (And, traveling over sea and land)	Yevlakhov's quotation, *И позабыв моря и земли* (And, giving up all thought of sea and land), is ironically inaccurate.

There were an extraordinary number of such Aesopian parodies. In the anthology *Verse Satire of the First Russian Revolution* alone they account for some 32% of the texts. Lermontov's "Cossack Cradle Song" and "After Goethe" ("There stands alone in the untamed North . . ."), as well as Fet's "I brought you a greeting . . ." and "A whisper. A timid breath," were treated repeatedly by parodists; a fitting source from which comic contrasts might be mined was later discovered in the poetry of the Symbolists.[53]

This device subsequently became obsolete: it evidently ceased to be an effective form of protection from the censorship, and in the Soviet era one encounters this type of Aesopian parody relatively rarely. Nikolay Glazkov's poem "Next Question" is one among such rare examples:

Назови мне такую обитель,
Я такого угла не видал,
Где б московский иль горьковский житель
В долгой очереди не стоял![54]

Name me one place, / A nook I haven't seen, / Where a Muscovite or resident of Gorky / Would not wait in long lines!

Thus begun, the poem is in its sixteen remaining lines deliberately stripped (as a marker) of standard poetic trappings: the failure to maintain the Nekrasovian anapest taken up at the beginning, as well as the use of colorless and indifferent language, causes these lines to move in the direction of prose. Yet all of this is also a screen which, by the author's design, should suggest to the ideological censorship that the work in question is merely a civic-minded statement by the poet, in keeping with the officially authorized criticism of "isolated shortcomings" in the running of state trade (in the idiom of the Soviet intelligentsia, satire of this type comes under the heading "The Produce Section's Imperfections" [*неполадки в продпалатке*]). But while the censorship is thus disarmed, Glazkov's tinkering with a widely known text by Nekrasov invests the poem with far greater socially disruptive power than any "critique of isolated shortcomings." All Soviet schoolchildren memorize, and all adult citizens consequently can recall, at least these lines from Nekrasov's "Thoughts at the Front Entry":

Назови мне такую обитель,
Я такого угла не видал,
Где бы сеятель твой и хранитель,
Где бы русский мужик не стонал...[55]

Name me one place, / A nook I haven't seen, / Where your sower and keeper, / Where a Russian muzhik would not moan. . .

Glazkov's ironic quotation evolves into a metaphor which likens the modern Russian ("a Muscovite or resident of Gorky"), who grows weary waiting in lines, with the ancestor who suffered the weight of despotic whims and want under a different guise in the past.

In the literature of the Soviet era it is non-artistic texts—official documents, propaganda journalism, examples of social

argot—which, considerably more often than artistic texts, are parodied for Aesopian effect. Thus the same Glazkov writes:

> – Этот город далекий, но нашенский! –
> Гениально о нем сказал Ленин.[56]

> 'The city's remote, but one of ours!' / Was how Lenin brilliantly put it.

This ironic citation of Lenin's oft-repeated appraisal of Vladivostok parodies a regular element of Soviet writing of whatever sort, the requisite reference to Lenin ("In V. I. Lenin's brilliant formulation . . ." and "As Lenin brilliantly determined . . . " are among its standard versions). Here the conventionality of an "occasional" quotation from Lenin and of the comment by which it is traditionally accompanied serves as a screen, while the semantic disparity between "brilliantly" and the mundane observation which it modifies—the statement "The city's remote, but one of ours" cannot be ranked on a scale of genius or lack thereof—is for the stylistically sensitive reader a marker of Aesopian satire which takes exception to blind Soviet idolatry.

The works of V. Shukshin, V. Aksyonov, F. Iskander, and many other writers who appeared on the literary scene in the 1960s are riddled with elements of this type of parody. During the same period the old brand of Aesopian parody, i. e., the burlesque manipulation of artistic texts, became the property of writers who had adopted conservative positions and who in this sense carried on the tradition of the nineteenth-century anti-nihilist novel (see, for example, V. Kochetov's novel *What Is It You Want?* and its parodic retellings of the works of Bogoroditsky, a character in whom the writer V. Soloukhin is caricatured).

The role of parodic elements in the structure of Aesopian texts will be treated in greater detail in Chapters IV-VII.

Periphrasis.

Bulat Okudzhava sings in one of his songs:

> В года разлук, в года смятений, когда свинцовые дожди
> лупили так по нашим спинам, что снисхождения не жди,
> и командиры все охрипли...[57]

> In the time of separations, in the time of commotions, when the rain of bullets / Pelted our backs mercilessly / and the commanders all went hoarse . . .

One would think that the "rain of bullets" would strike the brave warriors in the chest; what, then, is the meaning of "pelted our backs"? The calamity to which Okudzhava alludes is one which he cannot name outright, thus the shots in the back are not only literal—a reference to the notorious barrage units of the NKVD which were used at the start of the war to block the retreat of soldiers who faced certain death—but figurative as well, a periphrastic description of Stalin's tyranny which, while soldiers fought and died for their homeland at the front, continued in the rear.

Comparable periphrasis appears in one of Aleksandr Mezhirov's war poems:

> Мы под Пулковым скопом лежим.
> Артиллерия бьет по своим. [. . .]
> Недолет, перелет, недолет –
> по своим артиллерия бьет.
> Нас комбаты утешить хотят,
> нас великая родина любит...
> По своим артиллерия лупит.
> Лес не рубят, а щепки летят.[58]

> We're lying in a huddle outside Pulkovo. / The artillery pounds its own side. . . . / A shell undershot, overshot, undershot– / the artillery pounds its own side. / The battalion commanders want to comfort us, / we have the love of our great Motherland . . . / The artillery pelts its own side. / No wood gets chopped, still the splinters fly.

Of interest here is the marker/screen which is an approximation of the proverbial saying "you can't chop wood without getting splinters." Stalin was fond of repeating this adage, which, when vested with his authority, excused as inevitable the sacrifices which accompanied state reconstruction. If, however, "*no* wood gets chopped," then the sacrifices and the terror lose all meaning. The change of the proverb in the final line, which line marks the poem as Aesopian, intimates that the reader should understand the whole poem not as an account of an ill-starred wartime adventure, but rather as a periphrastic exposition of the fate of a generation which put its trust in Communism only to be betrayed by ideologues.

Periphrasis, whereby the hallmark of an object is offered in place of its proper name, may be descriptive ("winding steel" instead of "corkscrew") or euphemistic (when direct naming of the object is taboo). In Aesopian usage the second, euphemistic, type is not uncommon, and indeed it figures in one of the most striking Aesopian ventures of the 1960s, S. Lipkin's poem "Conjunction": while homage to the Jews was not, of course, a topic officially cleared for Soviet print, the poem was nonetheless a panegyric upon the Jewish people and their unique historical calling. A combination of allegory (description of the fictitious people "I") and periphrasis (a detailed recital of their idealized ethnic traits in place of any outright naming of the Jews) is the basis of Lipkin's Aesopian tactics.

> Ты подумай: и смерть, и зачатье,
> Будни детства, надела, двора,
> Неприятие лжи и понятье
> Состраданья, бесстрашья, добра.

И простор, и восторг, и унылость
Человеческой нашей семьи, –
Все сплотилось и мощно сроднилось
В этом маленьком племени И. [. . .]

Без союзов словарь онемеет,
И я знаю: сойдет с колеи,
Человечество быть не сумеет
Без народа по имени И.[59]
(See the complete text in Appendix 3.)

Think of it: the death and conception; / The mundane routine of childhood, a plot of land, and household; / The rejection of falsehood and the understanding / Of compassion, courage, and good;

The breadth, the rapture, and the melancholy / of our human family– / All are fused and powerfully linked / In this small tribe of 'I.' [. . .]

Without conjunctions the dictionary would be speechless. / And I've no doubt: it'd all come undone, / The human race could not exist / Without the people by the name of 'I.'

Here, as is more often than not the case, screen and marker find expression in one and the same word: "I" is both the name of the race invented by Lipkin (and as such a screen) and also the initial of *I*srael. Lipkin is quite artful in his handling of this screen/marker, for when he twice places "I" at the end of a sentence even the punctuation mark (a period) takes on Aesopian ambiguity: is it simply a sign that the sentence is over, or does it also signal an abbreviation of "Israel"?

Ellipsis

Ellipsis is an effective and frequently used form of Aesopian language. As in a number of other instances, however, one must note the movement from clearly designated, straightforward

ellipses in literature before the revolution to veiled and more subtle forms of Aesopian ellipsis during the Soviet era. Such ellipses anticipate the increased Aesopian wariness of the reader.

The journal *Satyricon*, in No. 43 for 1909, offers an example of an entirely obvious Aesopian ellipsis. Three cartoons were set in a row: the first depicted a Young Turk as a hangman-executioner who reasoned, "The more nooses we make, the more knots our renovated ship will cover on the path to progress"; in the second, French president Fallières operated the guillotine while Clemenceau swam alongside in a sea of blood; the third showed the Persian shah on a sinking ship; the remaining space on the page was left blank and constituted an ellipsis. This device set the reader to conjecturing that the Russian ship of state and the methods used to steer it were comparable to the repugnant features of the Turkish, French, and Persian orders. Thirty years later much more was required of the reader's imagination if the Aesopian ellipsis employed in an artistic work were to be recognized and deciphered. In Viktor Nekrasov's novel *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*, a description of the interior of company commander Karnaukhov's dugout in Chapter Four of Part Two includes the following:

> On the wall are a calendar with the days crossed off, a list of radio call signs, a portrait of Stalin snipped out of a newspaper, and one of somebody else—a young, curly-haired man with an open, agreeable face.[60]

It turns out that the "young, curly-haired man" is Karnaukhov's favorite writer, Jack London. Upon the death of Karnaukhov, in Chapter Twenty-four of Part Two, the hero takes certain of his dead friend's possessions as keepsakes: "I hung London's portrait above the table below the mirror."[61] The reader who recalls that there were *two* portraits in Karnaukhov's dugout can draw his own conclusion about the extent of the hero's affection for Stalin.

In the literature of the 1960s this device is, as a rule, employed with greater caution and consideration, even as the message which is Aesopically encoded and designated by the ellipsis becomes significantly more sweeping—more mindful of history and more imbued by the tragic.

Yury Trifonov's story "The Pigeons' Demise" (published in *Novy mir*, No. 1, 1968) describes several years in the life of a certain communal apartment in Moscow. The plot rests outwardly upon the story of Sergey Ivanovich, an elderly worker, and his wife Klavdia Nikiforovna, who take to feeding a pigeon which frequents their balcony. The tamed pigeon installs his family, and the old people become attached to the birds, when the other residents of the building begin to complain: the pigeons bring dirt with them. Several times Sergey Ivanovich tries to drive the birds away; they invariably return, and the old man is forced to destroy them (the picture of the drunken Sergey Ivanovich returning home after he has done away with the pigeons has echoes of Chekhov's story "The Freeloaders").

Relatively little of the text in the story is given to the elderly couple's neighbors in the apartment. Only in the interest of presenting a full slice of life, as it were, are they mentioned: the neighbors are members of the intelligentsia and it is said the husband works "in the most important library." Although one night men arrive and arrest the librarian Boris Yevgenievich, the story treats this episode as marginal, while the clash over the pigeons remains always the focus of the narrative. Later it is similarly mentioned in passing that the family of the librarian has been resettled "somewhere on the edge of Moscow." But then "another summer passed, they declared an amnesty and allotted Sergey Ivanovich a pension." The story comes to a close with a symbolic detail: Sergey Ivanovich is retired on his pension, no longer forms attachments to any living thing; his new hobby is to weave baskets, not from twigs but polyethylene.

All critical junctures in the structure of the story are indicated by ellipses. Once he has returned home, the drunken Sergey

Ivanovich fails to mention what exactly he has done with the pigeons; nor, parallel to this, does the reader learn how the fate of the librarian and his family was resolved. While it is fashioned as a painstakingly detailed chronicle, the story passes over the historical event which preceded the amnesty and the new pension law: the death of Stalin. It is interesting to note, incidentally, how deftly Trifonov manages the indefinite-personal construction "they declared an amnesty and allotted . . . a pension" *(объявили амнистию... назначили пенсию)*: in the mind of the ordinary Russian actions taken by the state occupy an equal footing with natural phenomena, their source seemingly as mysterious as that which dictates the change of seasons; a man is as unable to sidestep arrest and a violent end as he is powerless to resist aging and a natural death, there being no difference between the two; everything is willed by "they" who, their identity undisclosed in this construction, make arrests and announce amnesties, dispense wages and grant retirement pensions.

Vasily Belov's "Carpenter's Tales" also appeared in 1968 (*Novy mir*, No. 7) and, though Belov is aesthetically quite removed from Trifonov, the stories exhibit a comparable use of ellipsis. In Chapters XIII and XIV Avenir Sozonkov recalls his youth in the Young Communist League, recounts how he hurled the bell from a village church tower "and relieved [himself] from up there to boot," and tells how, as an agent of Soviet authority and a collective farm organizer, he was issued a revolver. But the chief concern of his boastful tales is how he wrung free drinks from the peasants, demanding, moreover, that they bow to him, and how he threatened to expose the recalcitrant Fedulenko as a kulak, since "he has two cows and two samovars." Nothing is said about Fedulenko's fate, but Sozonkov, even as an old man, continues to be regarded as the leading village activist and serves as permanent "secertary" *(sic)* at meetings of the collective farm.

Having heard the whole of Sozonkov's story, the author (the narration is in the first person) looks out the window:

> Fedulenko's house, where at one time the farm office had been, looked out of empty, unframed windows. The gate to the small cellar, riddled by gunshot and with a keyhole in the shape of an ace of diamonds, hung even now on a single hinge. A crow with its feathers erect sat and grew stiff on the ridge of the roof, evidently unsure what to do next and where to fly. There was every sign that it had no desire to do anything.[62]

This is an ellipsis: while news of the subsequent fate of Fedulenko and his family is omitted, the reader does know that Fedulenko has not lived in his own house ("where at one time the farm office had been") and that the new owners are a breed apart from the industrious and virtuous Fedulenko—the house has fallen into neglect and been vandalized. The crow which is mentioned at the conclusion of the passage is a traditional Russian symbol of desolation.

Finally it deserves mention that the entire oeuvre of particular writers acquires an elliptical air for no more reason than that these writers, of whom Prishvin and Paustovsky would be examples, consistently abstained from the subject matter and attitudes which the ruling ideology forces upon the majority.

Quotation

As the parodic Aesopian manipulation of Pushkin's "The Prophet" and of Nekrasov's "Thoughts at the Front Entry" have earlier demonstrated, those portions of the original which remain intact not infrequently qualify as Aesopian quotations: the writer using the quotation, that is, imbues it with a content different from that with which it was invested by its rightful author. As in Naum Korzhavin's poem "Variations on Nekrasov," however, such quotation is at times of the straightforward rather than the parodic variety:

...Столетье промчалось. И снова,
Как в тот незапамятный год –
Коня на скаку остановит,
В горящую избу войдет.
Ей жить бы хотелось иначе,
Носить драгоценный наряд...
Но кони – все скачут и скачут.
А избы – горят и горят.[63]
(The words in italics are a direct quotation of Nekrasov's now proverbial characterization of Russian woman.[64])

. . . A century flew by. And once again, / As in that time immemorial / *She'll stop a horse in mid-gallop, / Enter a burning hut.* / She'd prefer another life, / She'd like to wear fancy clothes. . . / But the horses keep galloping. / And the huts keep burning.

In political journalism quotations have been Aesopically manipulated since the nineteenth century by one favored and still widely used method: the stated opinions of the regime's ideological opponents, when quoted, are framed by what from the standpoint of the Russian censorship are ideologically correct counterclaims; these latter arguments, however, take such a deliberately banal form that they are given no credence by the reader and are merely screens.[65] When the twelfth issue of the drab and orthodox journal *Moscow* became an Aesopian bestseller in 1968, this was as much owing to V. Arkhipov's review of *The Icon and the Axe* by the American expert on the Soviet Union James Billington as to the poem, mentioned already in this chapter, which Lipkin had published there. In Arkhipov's review, precious quotations dear to the heart of dissenters gleamed amidst the reviewer's perhaps intentionally bland rebuttals:

. . . [Lenin] was not fundamentally concerned with truth *(правда)* in either of its two meanings of scientific fact *(правда-истина)* or moral principle *(правда-справедливость)*.

> . . . [Lenin deliberately broke] with a belief . . . in the existence of objective moral laws for human behavior.
>
> . . . the open inductive thinking of the modern scientific spirit was totally unfamiliar to Lenin . . .[66]

Here a special strain of Aesopian quotation is at issue, Aesopian language inside-out as it were: while Aesopian language normally relies upon suggestion, such quotations as above make it possible to call things by their proper names.

(This literary phenomenon is directly related to a fact of immense social significance with which all who are concerned with Russian intellectual life in the Soviet period must grapple: given that most of the Russian reading public is denied direct access to source materials, particularly in the areas of philosophy and the social sciences, Russian intellectuals have learned to publish, and to garner much information from monographs and articles which argue, ostensibly or in earnest, *against* Western ideas; books with such titles as *Structuralism: For and Against*, *Existentialism: The Philosophy of Decline*, *Neo-Thomism at the Service of Reaction*, and so on and such like constitute a significant portion of the personal libraries of readers whose sympathies are far from Marxist.)

It seems fitting to conclude this section with an instance of Aesopian quotation which is stamped vividly in this author's memory. The premiere performance of G. A. Tovstonogov's production of Griboedov's comedy *Woe from Wit* at the Gorky Bolshoi Drama Theater in Leningrad began when, lights extinguished, a ray beamed at the curtain revealed these words by way of an epigraph:

> . . . that I be born in Russia with feeling and talent was the devil's curse!
>
> A. S. Pushkin[67]

This was that most rare occasion when the applause of the audience bursts not at the end but at the beginning of a performance, before the actors utter even a single word. Several days later the censorship forbade the theater use of the Pushkin epigraph.

Shifts (сдвиги)

This form of Aesopian language is employed extensively in marking exotic, historical, and fantastic parables; its working is explained and illustrated in the sections which, respectively, take up such parables (see above and, especially, Chapter IV).

Reductio ad absurdum and non sequitur

In a review of Saltykov-Shchedrin in the English magazine *The Academy*, Turgenev accounted for such nonsensical details in Shchedrin as the head of an official made of *pâté de foie gras* (details which a later time would label absurd) as follows:

> It is quite possible that such nonsense is premeditated, in order to confound the suspicious reader or the reading official.[68]

It was not only the censorship but other of Shchedrin's critics as well who were misled by his various stylistic absurdities and eccentricities of plot (see Pisarev's statement in Chapter I): the absurdities were construed as amusing tricks, when they were in fact Aesopian devices, screens and markers. But Shchedrin's strategy apparently also counted upon the newness of his chosen genre: the "suspicious reader or the reading official" was accustomed to associate ridiculous figures and absurd situations in literature with vaudeville comedy and other innocent entertainment genres, whereas until that time satire had kept more to recognizable reality (with the exception, perhaps, of isolated moments in Gogol).

In the Soviet period the absurd was unable to extend openly into adult literature, for Marxist aesthetics branded the absurd

a petty-bourgeois manifestation and evidence of anarchism. A special state, however, obtained in children's literature where, through the efforts of the Oberiu poets and their benefactors Marshak and Chukovsky, the absurd was granted legitimate status as a play element and folklore inspiration. From its very inception children's literature of the absurd began to take on the features of Aesopian writing (this question is the subject of Chapter VII).

For all that it proliferated in children's literature, this form of Aesopian language is rare in literature for adults. The 1960s witnessed one of the few exceptions in the humorous short stories of Viktor Golyavkin. Their history was typical: already a great success in *samizdat* since the mid-1950s, a few of the stories did make it into print much later, after their author had secured official recognition as a children's writer. The censoring agencies evidently perceived the stories as the amusing self-parodies of one who wrote for children. One of them follows in its entirety:

Docks

> At the age of five I casually went for a stroll on the fifth-floor ledge. At home they gave me hell, and even a spanking. I ran away from home and reached the city of Syktyvkar. There I went to work in the dock-yard. I might have been all of five, but I already stood firmly on my own two feet and I could mop up a dock lickety-split. I hardly had enough to eat, yet in a month I was swabbing two docks a day, then three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. In a year I was swabbing two hundred seventy. I was already beginning to run out of docks; they built new ones for me in a hurry, but I managed to mop them up before they had a chance to build them. Matters came to a head when I mopped the docks which were still on the drawing board and those which were not. When he learned of my accomplishments my dear old dad, not concealing his delight, exclaimed:
>
> 'Good going! You've made your way in the world.'[69]

Here one may detect a note of parody, inspired by the constant fuss in the press over socialist competitive zeal and labor's ever-increasing productivity, as well as a motif important to Khrushchev-era propaganda, the school of hard knocks ("getting on in the world"). In and of itself, however, the method adopted by the author is not parody—he makes no attempt to imitate anyone else's style—but reduction to absurdity.

The same holds true for "There and Back," a short story which has reference to Khrushchev's reform of national economic management, whereby the division of supervisory functions between the ministries and regional economic boards resulted in duplication of effort and an administrative muddle. The plot of the miniature tale follows two entirely identical institutions which, for no apparent reason, swap buildings; as a result:

> В ОДНОМ – ДРУГОЕ
> А в ДРУГОМ – ОДНО
> То есть:
> В ОДНОМ – ОДНО
> В ДРУГОМ – ДРУГОЕ[70]

> THE OTHER is in ONE. / And ONE is in THE OTHER. / Which means: / ONE'S in ONE. / THE OTHER'S in THE OTHER.

The peculiar non sequitur in the passage quoted is a consequence of Golyavkin's assigning to the pronouns *один* (one) and *другой* (the other), which are demonstrative, the role of proper names. Information is as a result caught in a vicious circle; the passage lacks sense and is absurd.

There is one other ironic device which is a curious blend of parody and reduction to the absurd: this is the utterance whose unduly primitive form compromises its content. Thus Herzen, parodying the ardent national chauvinism of Pogodin's sketches, writes in *The Travel Notes of Mr. Vaudrin:*

At the outpost was a soldier with a medal and a moustache. I like a medal and a moustache on a fighting man. Good show![71]

(Cf. the lyrics of Lebedev-Kumach in a popular Soviet song:

Мы будем петь и смеяться, как дети,
Среди упорной борьбы и труда...

We will be singing and laughing like children / Through unremitting exertion and toil. . .)

It is one of the devices widespread in Aesopian quasi-children's literature (see Chapter VII).

At times a purely technical non sequitur, failure to observe a poem's rhyme scheme, for example, works to Aesopian ends. Folklore verse is noted for inserting a proper but non-rhyming word where an indecent rhyme is expected; Pushkin does the same in "Excerpt from a Letter to Yazykov":

Но злобно мной играет счастье:
Давно без крова я ношусь,
Куда подует непогода;
Уснув, не знаю, где проснусь.[72]

But fortune spites me: / I've long drifted without a home, / Carried wherever the foul weather blows; / I fall asleep not knowing where I'll wake.

The unexpected and blatantly non-rhyming *непогода* (foul weather) suggests the rhyme which the reality of the censorship made unthinkable, the rhythmically equivalent *самовластье* (despotism).

* * *

Aesopian reduction to absurdity and the literature of the absurd created by Kharms, Vvedensky, Mrożek, or Ionesco

are not identical in the aim of their devices. The absurdity of Aesopian language is, if the truth be told, a false absurdity: depending on the circumstances, the nonsensical figures now as a screen, now as a marker; it either refers the reader to a content which is far from absurd or it keeps the same content from the censor.

The Extravagant Devices of Aesopian Language and Non-artistic Coding

Prior to the revolution *puns* often had the status of a full-fledged Aesopian device, not least because the surname of the tsar (Romanov) lent itself to suggestive rhymes and was easily confused with such an innocent word as "novel" (*роман*, but *романов* when declined):

> Сочинена тобою, Самозванов,
> Романов целая семья;
> Но молвлю, правду не тая:
> Я не люблю твоей семьи романов.[73]

> Imposter, you sired / A whole family of novels; / But I won't hide the truth: / I don't like your novel family.

The last line permits the reading, *Я не люблю твоей семьи, Романов!* (I don't like your Romanov family!); it might be taken that is, as a bold challenge to the tsar.

In the Soviet period, with its more attentive censorship, puns occur only in tandem with other, tactically more subtle devices. Moreover, it becomes less a question of puns of the preceding type than one of the "two in one" quality of elements of the text (as shown, for example, in III.3).

Acrostics. On 22 January 1917 "Etudes" by the noted essayist A. Amfiteatrov appeared in the Petersburg paper *The Will of Russia.* From start to finish the text of the "Etudes" gave the reader the impression either that their author suffered from psittacism (mechanical, "parrot" speech) or that they were an avant-garde experiment along the lines of self-generating prose.

> Рысистая езда шагом или трусцой есть ледяное неколебимое общественное настроение... И, ох, чтобы его, милое, пошевелить или сбить, адская твердость нужна, едва ли завтра явится предсказуемая...[74]

> Icy, unshakeable public opinion is trotting at a walk or a jog. . . And oh!, to get it to budge or throw it off course, the dear thing, one needs an infernal resolve, which, forseeable, will hardly appear tomorrow . . .*

Not every reader managed to guess that the "Etudes" were to be read as an acrostic: *РЕШИТЕЛ/ь/НО НИ О ЧЕМ ПИСАТ/ь/НЕЛЬ/ь/ЗЯ...* (THERE IS POSITIVELY NOTHING ONE IS ALLOWED TO WRITE ABOUT), and so on. It was a bitter complaint about the excesses of the censorship.

Despite the many anecdotes which have always circulated concerning encoded messages filtering into Soviet print, there is only one instance of coding by acrostic in the Soviet period which the author knows to be authentic. Published in January of 1944 in the Leningrad military paper *Guarding the Homeland,* Vladimir Lifschitz' poem "An opening in the front line . . ." had all the marks of typical patriotic wartime verse. Read as an acrostic, however, the poem bemoaned bitterly the wrongs of the regional command.[75]

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* It is, of course, impossible to reproduce the acrostic in English. The literal translation above aims solely to indicate the nonsensical content of the passage.

When applied in such a way, puns and acrostics may be considered Aesopian devices. Both evince the same screen-marker structure as characterizes all other devices of Aesopian language: the screen is in such cases one sense of the pun or simply the irrelevance, given a routine reading, of the sequence of initial letters in a line; a highly unusual subject (as in punning epigrams) or, conversely, an unusually banal one is the marker.

By comparison with other devices, however, they have obviously a weakened role as devices of *artistic* Aesopian language: puns and acrostics have a lesser influence upon the structure of the text as such, they are all but afterthoughts, and if not combined with other elements of Aesopian language they do not make for metastyle. In many respects they belong with the devices of non-artistic coding, devices which rely upon a purely conventional replacement of taboo words by glosses upon which the author and a group of readers have agreed. Chernyshevsky's vocabulary included such substitutions as "historic doings" for "revolution," "the force of circumstances" for "autocracy," and "the best of Hegel's followers" for "Feuerbach." In the *Novy mir* of the 1960s, "personality cult" replaced "tyranny," and "arbitrary rule" was called "libertarianism."

This means of coding, which is in the author's view not Aesopian, is not confined to the working out of a special vocabulary. Rather, euphemisms which perform the role of a smoke screen may also serve its purposes. In this case the writer reckons upon a great educational gap between the censor and the intended reader, a calculation which is frequently vindicated.[76]

* * *

It would seem possible to draw general conclusions from this examination of the structural features, semantics, and poetics of Aesopian language. These conclusions fall into three groups.

1. *General Principles of the Structural Organization of Aesopian Language as a Code*

A. *Synonymy*

In a number of the examples considered above it was clear that if Aesopian language were to be effective, synonymy in the devices of Aesopian language was essential. Only the repeated recourse by political journalists to the devices of Aesopian quotation, for example, accustoms the reader to seek in the quotation the hidden message of the author who does the quoting. Only from a fixed habit of relating quotations from classic works to current conditions could there have been such a stormy audience reaction, before the curtain went up on a Leningrad production, to a quotation from Pushkin (see III.5).

B. *Redundancy*

The majority of examples have likewise shown that while one marker/screen is in principle sufficient to transfer the work to an Aesopian plane, there are as a rule several present. This engenders a peculiar chain reaction, splitting the entire work in two. Thus the Strugatskys have only to use five or six shifts for the reader to re-evaluate the entire text in retrospect as ambiguous and Aesopian.

C. *The Presence of Invariants*

Certain plot invariants are typical of Aesopian language (this holds for both the plots of entire works and microplots—invariant similes, metaphors, and so on). In historical parables, for example, "Ivan the Terrible" and "Nicholas' Russia" most often provide the story line; "Persia," "Spain," and the story of "the ignorant tsar" drawn from folklore figure in exotic parables.

2. *The Influence of Aesopian Language on the Literary Process*

The introduction of Aesopian language renders a work structurally more complex and leads to additional stratification of the text.

Where there is continual recourse to it, Aesopian language plays an important role in the shaping of individual style.

In certain cases Aesopian language prepares the rise of new genres.

(These conclusions are taken up in the succeeding chapters.)

3. *The Influence of the Established Code of Aesopian Language on the Tactics of the Reader and the Tactics of the Censorship*

If in the literature of a certain period certain poetic devices are very often used as Aesopian, the reader learns to be ever alert and quick at deciphering Aesopian language. This, however, is not all: often, as the result of a peculiar momentum, the reader takes to be Aesopian texts in which these devices, or plots similar to those invariant for Aesopian language, are used—though cryptography never entered the author's mind.

When, for example, Apukhtin's poem "A Country Lane" was published in 1859 in No. 9 of Nekrasov's *Contemporary*, the twenty-fifth line read "The muzhik plods on behind a wretched nag . . ." A poet who kept his distance from politics, Apukhtin was distressed that many readers perceived his description of a typical Russian landscape as a liberal poem; years later, when the poem was published in a separate volume, Apukhtin changed the offending line to read, "The muzhik steps briskly forward . . ."[77]

A more recent example is to be found in the misfortunes of the Leningrad young people's magazine *Aurora*. Following the scandal surrounding the poem by Korolyova cited earlier in this chapter (see Section 1), every one of the top editors was sacked,

and the die-hard Party writer Gleb Goryshin was installed as the magazine's new editor. But the momentum of Aesopian reading is such that new embarrassments were all but inevitable. In October of 1981 *Aurora*, like all Soviet publications, devoted the opening pages of its monthly issue to loudly marking the occasion of Brezhnev's 75th birthday; at the end of the issue, apart from the introductory fanfare, was a satirical story about an old hack writer who "lives on and has no plans to die." To make matters worse, the story began on page 75. *Aurora*'s readers, of course, saw the placement of the story as a marker-pun, and they read the story as one about their aging leader.[78]

In a similar fashion the ideological censorship, having once learned to decipher this or that element of the Aesopian code, also begins to "read into" a sometimes perfectly innocent work a hidden meaning. This reaches a point where entire divisions of the plot repertoire come under suspicion. Thus a special directive of the State Committee on Cinematography forbade studios to accept, without special permission, scripts with a historical or fantastic plot—the ideologues had become wary of allusions and parallels.[79]

The excesses of semi-official criticism, however, sometimes provide a convenient excuse for Aesopian forays. Thus following publication of the first part of *The Snail on a Slope*, a provincial Party critic was charged with reprimanding the Strugatskys, which he did with a rather heavy hand in a Buryat journal:

> This work, touted as a science fiction tale, does nothing more than libel our ways . . . The authors do not say in what country the action occurs, they do not say to what stage the society they describe has developed. But the whole pitch of the narrative, the events and exchanges which occur in the tale leave it crystal clear whom they mean.[80]

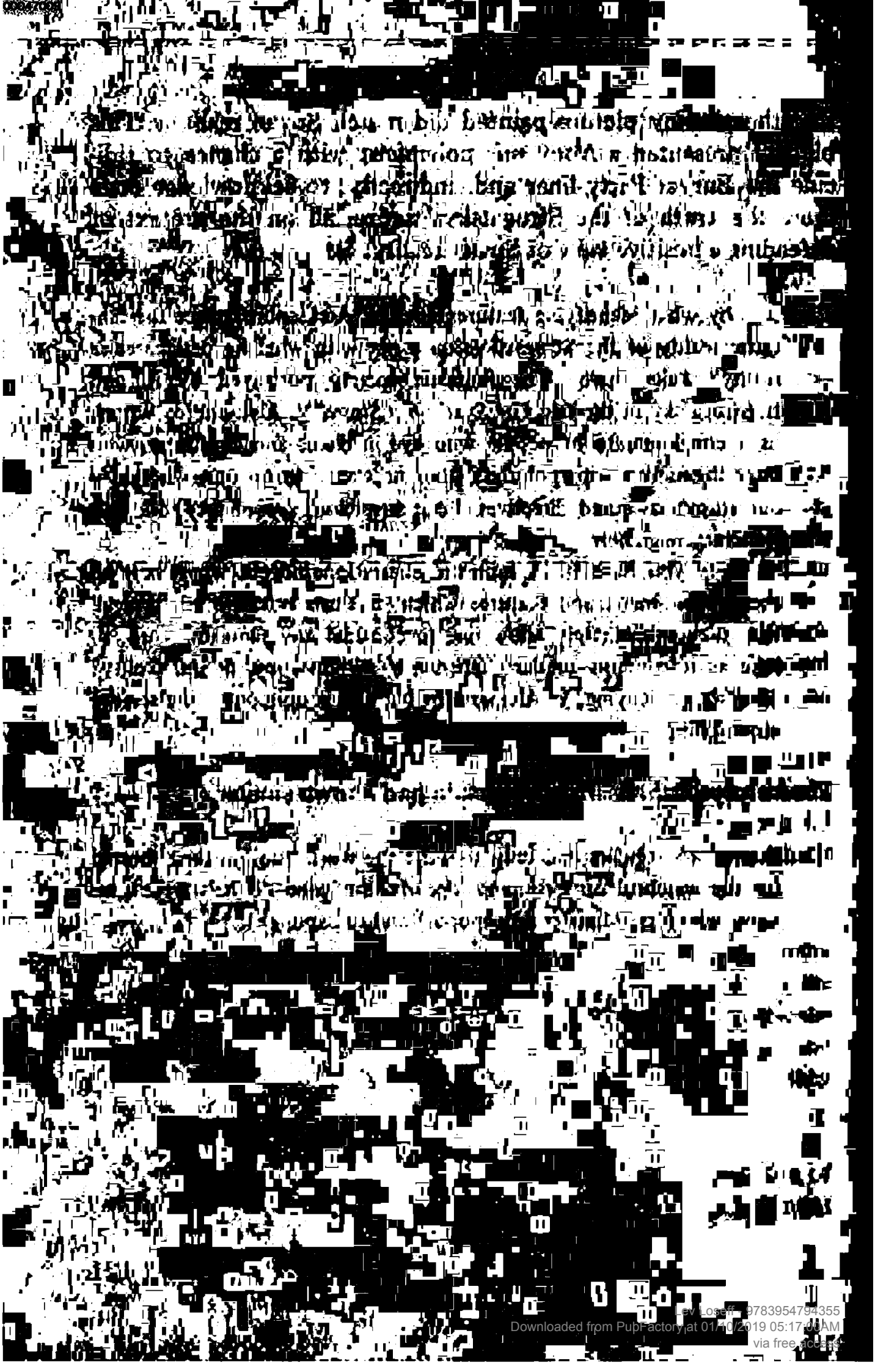
If the shoe fits, wear it: the provincial critic's clumsy exposure of the Strugatskys' Aesopian design was all but an acknowledgment

that the gloomy picture painted did match Soviet realities. This blunder presented a *Novy mir* polemicist with a chance to ridicule the Buryat Party-liner and, indirectly, to acknowledge once more the truth of the Strugatskys' satire, all on the pretext of defending a positive view of Soviet reality.

> . . . by what identifying features does V. Aleksandrov place the fantastic reality of the Strugatskys on a par with what he designates as reality? Take these: 'The fantastic society portrayed by A. and B. Strugatsky in the tale *The Snail on a Slope*,' V. Aleksandrov writes, 'is a conglomerate of people who live in chaos and confusion, who busy themselves with pointless labor necessary to no one, who carry out stupid laws and directives. Fear, suspicion, sycophancy, and bureaucracy reign here.'
>
> There you have it! A fantastic aberration indeed! What, is it all these phenomena and features which, it turns out, are so 'typical' that they immediately allow one to consider any fantastic work, so long as it contains similar elements, a 'carbon copy' of our reality? There is no denying, V. Aleksandrov has a nice opinion of the society around him . . . [81]

The history of the tsarist censorship had known similar cases:

> *Satyricon*'s regulars had only to write the word 'fool' in their journal for the watchful censorship to 'decode' the same—'If he's a fool, we know who it is,' Minister Protopopov—and to expunge it.[82]



PART TWO

In Part One of this study we investigated the means by which the Aesopian intentions of an author are realized; we described various Aesopian manipulations of the text as a system, a meta-style of sorts. We tried, in other words, to remove the quotation marks from the popular expression: instead of an "Aesopian language" we have been describing an aesthetic language.

As it has become clear to the reader, Aesopian language exists not in isolation but as a mode of writing by the author and perception by the reader. To borrow a word from a favorite target of Aesopian satirists, Joseph Stalin, Aesopian language is a "superstructure."

Our study would have been incomplete without demonstrating how the introduction of this "superstructure" affects different aspects of the literary process. Part Two is devoted to an analysis of this phenomenon.

In Chapters IV and V we discuss the influence of the Aesopian element on the structure of literary works belonging to major genres. *The Dragon*, Yevgeny Shvarts' play, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novel *The First Circle* (in two versions) were chosen for analyses.

In Chapter VI we use the poetic oeuvre of Yevgeny Yevtushenko to illustrate the role played by Aesopian language in the shaping of individual style.

Chapter VII is dedicated to the peculiar phenomenon of quasi-children's literature, or to the impact of Aesopian language on literature in general.

Chapter IV

AESOPIAN LANGUAGE AND STRATIFICATION OF THE TEXT

(Ye. L. Shvarts, *The Dragon*, 1943)

Any text, whether artistic or non-artistic, is characterized by its expressive and affective weight; the artistic text is in addition distinguished by its aesthetic value. Thus the text may always be regarded not as a fixed, closed structure, but rather as an open one: the second member of the oppositions "text-reader" and "text-author" is a psychological variable. The reader (whether the same or various readers) is indeed in a state of constant change, contingent upon his level of education, social position, historical reference, and complex of held opinions or leanings at a given moment. The author, for his part, does not attach equal importance to all the elements in his work. He deploys various ideas, motifs, and stylistic means, some of which are treated as primary, others as secondary, including even those elements which serve as no more than filler or "packing material." It is obvious that the reader's hierarchy will rarely coincide with that of the author, and that when such a coincidence does occur, it is far from complete.[1] Thus a work's greater or lesser structural complexity is here understood as the sum of potential interpretations which are in part invested in the work by the author, in part conferred by the reader.

This general posture does not deny one or another approach to a work its historical validity: the aim here is to examine not

all the theoretically possible interpretations of the text (which would be impossible, since the number of potential readings is practically limitless), but only those potentials which have been explicitly realized in past cultural-historical periods. The more structurally complex a work is, the greater number of socially significant interpretations it can support.

One would be mistaken to suppose that a work's structural complexity is necessarily bound up with the reader's increased cultural sophistication. The absurdist works of Kharms and Vvedensky, for instance, may be apprehended only by the most refined and discriminating reader, since apprehension of their poetics requires both heightened sensitivity to semantics and wide erudition from the addressee; one and the other requirement must form a point of reference for the perception of these works. At the same time, however, the works of Kharms and Vvedensky are structurally simple, for they allow perception to proceed by but one route and they permit only one variant of interpretation. For all readers incapable of interpreting an absurdist work in this single fashion, the given text generally forfeits its claim to be regarded as a work of art. This is a situation which is manifested in such commonplace reader's reactions as, "Rubbish! Mumbo-jumbo! Preciosity! A three-year-old could do better!" and the like.

Conversely, even an unpretentious looking children's song may be structurally more complex than a rarefied avant-garde poem, provided the potential for varying interpretations—for instance, a literal and an ironic one—is invested in the song.

Я маленькая девочка,
Играю и пою.
Я Ленина не видела,
Но я его люблю.

I am a happy little girl, / I like to sing and play. / Though Lenin lived before my time, / I love him anyway.

Repeated over and over in every Soviet kindergarten, this anonymous work is on one structural level realized as a sentimental apologia, on another as a satirical parody.

In this connection one may formulate the following rule: the levels of a work are arranged hierarchically and, should a given level be accessible to him, the reader necessarily takes into account all the preceding, lower, levels. (It is because of this hierarchy, strictly speaking, that the term "level"—rather than "facet," for instance—has been chosen.)

It is clear that a way is open for an objective approach to phenomena which are obscurely and subjectively labelled as the "popularity" of a work and the "intelligence" of the reader. One of the most popular works in intelligentsia circles in the 1960s was Yevgeny Shvarts' play *The Dragon.*[2]

Shvarts began work on the play prior to 1941, and he finished writing in 1943 in Stalinabad, where he had been evacuated during the war.[3] In his memoirs, which were published at a relatively liberal moment in Sovlet history, Nikolay Akimov describes as follows the first attempt to stage *The Dragon:*

> [Shvarts] began writing *The Dragon* . . . at a time when complex diplomatic relations with Hitler's Germany, relations entered into in the name of peace, precluded all possibility of mounting from the stage unvarnished opposition to an adequately discerned and already unavoidable enemy.
>
> The fairy-tale form, the personification of the many faces of fascism in the abhorrent image of the dragon, the elusive national identity of the city oppressed by the two-hundred-year dominion of the dragon—all provided an opportunity to challenge the fascist 'brown plague' without risk of diplomatic confrontation . . .
>
> Over two years of work Shvarts was given added fuel for the development of his subject by the unfolding course of events. The delayed opening of a second front and the intricate maneuvering of the Western nations . . . bespoke the fact that . . . the powers which at Munich had consigned Europe to fascist ruination . . . might

afterward prove no lesser threat . . .

Thus was born in the fairy tale the ominous figure of the Burgomaster. In the first act making himself out a victim of the Dragon, the Burgomaster claims credit for the Dragon's defeat so that in Act III he may in full replace the city's oppressor slain by Lancelot.

The principal figures in this symbolic tale embodied accurately enough the main forces which were competing in the world. By remaining a fairy tale—a poetic work—the tale was not transformed into a precise allegory, in which every image categorically yields to precise unraveling. Yet all who read the work prior to production (all the way up the official ladder) discerned clearly the play's allegorical symbolism and esteemed highly its ideological and artistic merits.[4]

Immediately following its premiere in Moscow in 1944, however, the play was banned, because "some overvigilant higher-up of that time saw in the play what wasn't there at all."[5] Only in 1962 was the play staged in Leningrad. The Soviet production was succeeded by others—in Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, England, America, and other countries.

Of all those who have written memoirs of Shvarts, of all Shvarts' friends and colleagues, it is Akimov who was in closest creative alliance with the playwright. The fate of the highly original Leningrad Comedy Theater, the creation of Akimov, as well as the fate of the director himself were for many years in jeopardy. It is enough to recall that from 1949 until 1955 Akimov was in effect banished from his own theater, and that from as far back as the 1930s semi-official criticism had taken him strictly to task for "formalism." For these reasons, the director, taught by bitter experience, takes special pains to align his interpretation of Shvarts' play with the official Soviet version of the Second World War and the succeeding era: why did Shvarts decide upon an allegorical form?—in view of complex diplomatic relations; whose opportunism was the target of satire?—that of the appeasers at Munich. In this Aesopian screen of the memoirist

there are distinct echoes of the excuses pleaded by Akimov before the functionaries of Glavrepertkom and other echelons of the ideological censorship.

Even in this passage, however, which is distinguished by the extreme caution of its author, one may detect a marker reminding the reader that the instincts of the "overvigilant higher-up" did not deceive him. Thus the attention of the thoughtful, "Aesopian" reader would be drawn to the words "the personification of the many faces of fascism in the abhorrent image of the dragon." Why "many"? German fascism had, after all, one entirely frozen countenance.

Ambiguity typifies the bulk of Soviet critical opinion on *The Dragon*. So the Leningrad drama critic S. L. Tsimbal writes in the preface to a collection of Shvarts' plays:

> The satirical fairy tale does not tolerate attempts at a crude and literal deciphering of its images. Such a deciphering diminishes and leaves impoverished the tale's philosophical concept, and it transforms the tale into a primitive and double-barreled allegory. This, it should be understood, applies in full measure to Shvarts' philosophical tales as well: their intent is more vast and profound than are the associations directly summoned by them. The anti-fascist drive of *The Dragon*, however, is so blatant—the poet and satirist so bitterly takes aim at the fascist debasement of man, the malicious and hollow smugness of the bourgeois and professional climber, at obscurantism and militarist demagogy—that even today this play has power to move as a work whose significance is hardly confined to the historical. After all, other progeny of fascism, outfitted now in the garb of the West German *Bundeswehr*, have not yet faded into oblivion.[6]

To whom is this critical tirade addressed, and how may it be read? It is difficult to imagine that the critic hoped to foment rebellion in the ranks of the *Bundeswehr*. It is more likely he had in mind two schematically opposed types of contemporary Russian readers: 1) the reader who is part of the machinery of

official censorship, designated here the Reader-Censor, and 2) the reader who adopts a critical stance toward the regime, here simply the Reader.

These readers have conflicting interests (the Reader-Censor is taken in his official capacity; it is entirely possible that he is in private only a Reader). The concern of the Reader-Censor is with the creation and publication of works extolling the Soviet order and discrediting opponents of the regime; the Reader is interested in truth and constructive criticism. The passage from Tsimbal quoted above is written in such a way as to satisfy both reader-antagonists, each of whom may interpret the text on a different plane:

The Reader-Censor	*The Reader*
The critic insists that *The Dragon* does not allude to Soviet reality. To claim otherwise is to put a "primitive" construction on the play; it is "more vast and profound" than any "direct associations." The critic affirms that the play is "anti-fascist," directed against "climbers and the bourgeoisie."	The critic insists that the play is not a "primitive allegory," that it is "more vast and profound" than its "direct associations," associations, that is, with Hitler. He buttresses his claim by asserting that the play's significance "is hardly confined to the historical."
Not about the USSR and Stalin, but rather about Germany and Hitler.	Not about Germany and Hitler, but rather about the USSR and Stalin.
The play remains topical in view of the danger of revanchism.	The critic makes it known that his anti-militarist invective is camouflage. A thick coating of words and phrases from the stock of official propaganda makes the hint obvious and marks the critic's Aesopian language against the background of the neutral literary tone of the article as a whole.

As Kuzmin said, "Dark alleys give rise to dark ideas"—an ambivalent work begets an ambivalent critic.

The first thematic plane, or structural level, of *The Dragon* is the fairy tale. In conventional terms one may say that this is the level of plot. It is on this level that the play is perceived by a reader/spectator with relatively little advance cultural conditioning, for example, by children.

This level is formed chiefly upon the basis of a story-variant of the traditional plot, "a maiden is sacrificed to the dragon so the community may be saved" ("Perseus and Andromeda"). In keeping with the broadly disseminated European plot, there is set opposite the dragon a hero-liberator, one who in this instance bears the name of a knight of the Arthurian legends—Lancelot. That the play on this level rests precisely upon an invariant fairy-tale motif is underscored by a "laying-bare of the device," by the parodic lines of the Jailer: "Lancelot, alias [St.] George, alias Perseus-the-Knave—every country has its own name for him--has as yet not turned up" (p. 365).

Departing from tradition, the plot is contaminated by the added complication of yet two other widely scattered folklore motifs: "the stolen prize" and "the rescue of the hero by animals." This complication was required, in the first place, to ensure that the succeeding structural level not appear unmotivated by the story. This, however, does not prevent the play from being read on the first level alone: such contaminations are widespread in folklore as well, and even the child-reader/spectator is accustomed to them.

The first level has a definite ideological content which is expressed in the notion of the struggle of Good and Evil, in the idea of Sacrifice and Redemption.

On its second thematic plane *The Dragon* is a morality play. This plane is readily exposed when one examines what it is that separates Shvarts' plot and its folklore prototype.

Attention should first be drawn to the fact that the characters of the play fall into four symmetrical groups:

the outer battle lines	1) agents of Good: Lancelot, Elsa, the Cat, the Donkey, the Boy; 2) agents of Evil: the Dragon, the Burgomaster, Heinrich, the Jailer, footmen, guards;
the center for which the battle is raged	3) victims and prisoners of Evil: Charlemagne, the Gardener, First and Second Weaver, the Master Milliner, the Master Instrument-Maker, the Blacksmith; 4) compromisers with Evil: First and Second Townsmen, First and Second Townswomen, Elsa's girlfriends, townspeople.

One may say that within the first, second, and fourth groups there is complete uniformity with respect to both the function and the speech habits of the characters.

The actions of the characters in the second and fourth groups, the Dragon not excluded, are given emphatically commonplace, realistic motivations. Their speech is based upon everyday popular parlance at varying stylistic levels.

Conversely, the actions of the first group of characters are motivated by ideal, sublime or fantastic, considerations. Their speech is literary, and it is sentimental (there are several notable exceptions in the monologues of Lancelot, exceptions which will be considered below).

Only in the third group is there a hint of a certain subdivision of characters: one may assign to the first sub-group Charlemagne and the Gardener, whose character mixes sacrifical readiness with opportunism and who are given to reflective and sententious utterances; to the second sub-group belong all the skilled craftsmen, characters who are assigned the role of "the hero's helpers"

(in Propp's terminology) and who, in a stylistic regard, are the most neutral and *un*expressive.

Such a distribution of characters mimics a genre which had arisen by this time (the 1940s) and which might partake of or converge with the folk and fairy tale and the adventure story: the Soviet "tale," or *сказка* (e.g. Yury Olesha's *The Three Fat Men*, Arkady Gaydar's "Malchish Kibalchish," "A Tale about Mitya and Masha, the Jolly Chimneysweep, and the Man with the Golden Touch" by Veniamin Kaverin, and Tamara Gabbe's *The City of Craftsmen* among others). What works of this genre held in common was a centrally featured conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors, between workers and those who would exploit them. In view of the ideological task set such tales, the place of action was relieved of all distinctively Russian features (Gaydar's tale is a partial exception) and transported to a conventionalized, flattened European setting with a conventional medieval-feudal atmosphere. However, not only the grouping of characters in *The Dragon*, but the motivations for their behavior as well as the stylistic accents in the speech characterization of each group, also set the play substantially apart from the Soviet *сказка*. The revolutionary motif of the clash of exploiters and exploited is left virtually untouched in the plot and is merely hinted at in the rhetorical outbursts of secondary characters. The attention of the author is instead focused on a moral conflict, on the theme of opportunism. The opposing representatives of Good and Evil fight not for the poor or the rich, not in support of or against social justice, but rather for the souls of men; at each culmination—in the monologue of the Dragon in Act II and in the speech of the dying Lancelot at the close of the same act, in the lines spoken by Lancelot and the Gardener in the final scene—this issue is addressed directly. Thus the drama as it appears on its second structural level is a morality play whose ideological stance is one taken against opportunism.

The ready audience may uncover in *The Dragon* still a third plane (structural level), the plane of Aesopian satire.

On this level the pointed agreement of the plot with its mythological invariant (the first plane) registers as a screen which masks the play's topical content. Emerging as markers are numerous stylistic contradictions ("stylistic" in the sense of usable styles of speech), which as a device of Aesopian metastyle have been earlier designated shifts.

One of the principal stylistic devices characteristic for all Shvarts' tales in general is the distortion, effected by minimal means, of accepted idiomatic phrases. Many idiomatic expressions, for example, are used only in conjunction with a specific grammatical person: "to maintain a pose of total indifference" *(сидеть в позе крайней непринужденности;* used of the third person alone); "the apple of one's eye" *(ненаглядный)*, "tootsie" *(лапушка)*, and other forms of endearment (used, naturally, only of the second or third person). For the stylistic characterization of self-enamoured individuals Shvarts violates these norms: "You grooms, give *me* a pose of total indifference . . ." *(Лакеи, придайте* мне *позу крайней непринужденности; The Naked King), I'm* the apple of my eye . . . It's only about *me*, tootsie, that I'm worried . . ." (. . . *я ненаглядная . . . я только* о себе, *лапушке, и беспокоюсь . . .; Two Maples;* emphasis added). The text of *The Dragon*, too, is saturated with similar shifts, but here they more often than not fulfill an Aesopian function.

The vocabulary and phraseology employed in the text are as a whole dictated by the first and second structural-thematic planes: the vocabulary is that of a pedantic moralizing and sentimental tale, adhering in the first place to the style of widely proliferated Russian versions of tales from the Brothers Grimm. There is in the very designation of the characters a perceptible "German-Grimm" flavor: Heinrich, Elsa, the Burgomaster, characters named according to their professional guild affiliations, the Cat, the Donkey (the last two figure in the most popular of the Grimm Brothers' tales, "The Bremen Town Musicians"). In the tales of Kaverin, Gabbe, and certain others one may detect the same tonality. The stylistic reference of the play is easily

identified by the reader/spectator, and Shvarts avails himself of this background so that Aesopian shifts may stand in clear contrast to it. But what is it exactly that is shifted?

An established stylistic norm mandates the use of a specific vocabulary and idiom, and it excludes the use of words and expressions which lie outside the confines of this code. Like a bit of official jargon in a declaration of love or an obscenity in a government document, in the context of a "Grimm Brothers" tale a specifically Russian turn of phrase, a typically Soviet word, expression, plot situation, or a term linked to the mind-set of the twentieth century will be perceived as a linguistic or cultural malapropism, as a shift into another style. In *The Dragon* these shifts most often take the form of anachronisms or cultural-idiomatic incongruities.

Examples of anachronisms: "[the Dragon] is an amazing *strategist* and a great *tactician* . . . he hurls himself straight down upon the horse's head and withers him with flames, which *completely demoralizes* the poor beast" (p. 317); "[the city] was spared *an epidemic*," "[the gypsies are] enemies of any *system of government*" (p. 318); "Lancelot is a *professional* hero" (p. 331); "answer straight, without *official delight*" (p. 332); "not so long ago I *elaborated* a rather interesting attack by *clawing an N to X formation*" (p. 346).

Examples of idiomatic incongruities: "Cheerio, men!" *(Здорово, ребята;* p. 320); "I congratulate you upon my . . . " *(Поздравляю вас, у меня . . .* ; pp. 327, 328, 329); "*due to the rain or what,* only . . . my damned schizophrenia has *acted up with a vengeance.* I *just* rave, I *just* rave . . . Hallucinations, idées fixes, *one thing or another*" *(Не знаю к дождю, что ли, но только сегодня ужасно разыгралась моя проклятая шизофрения. Так и брежу, так и брежу . . . Галлюцинации, навязчивые идеи, то, се;* p. 330); "may I be struck on the spot" *(. . . вот провалиться мне на этом месте;* p. 332); "And why are the people always up in arms, up in arms, and don't even know what they're up against" *(И чего это народ все сердится, сердится, и сам*

не знает, чего сердится; p. 340); "Two, four, six, eight, the knight stepped out to celebrate . . . When suddenly the Dragon dashes, aims and turns the knight to ashes . . . Poof-poof, ay-ay-ay . . ." *(Раз, два, три, четыре, пять, вышел рыцарь погулять . . . Вдруг дракончик вылетает, прямо в рыцаря стреляет. . . Пиф-паф, ой-ой-ой . . .*; p. 340); here a folkloric children's song is modified only by the insertion of "dragon" and "knight" in place of "the hunter" and "the hare"); "Wrap it up, you cursed idiot . . . I declare this little get-together adjourned" *(Закрывай заседание, старая дура! . . . объявляю заседаньице закрытым;* p. 340); "chained souls, bloodhound souls, damned souls" *(. . . цепные души, легавые души, окаянные души;* p. 342); "you and I don't speak the same language" *(. . . мы с вами говорим на разных языках;* p. 354); "it boggles the mind" *(. . . это уму непостижимо;* p. 361); "an intimate matter, so to speak" *(. . . дело, так сказать, наше личное, интимное;* p. 379); "I was taught that way" *(Меня так учили;* p. 381).

The very redundancy (see Chapter III) and synonymy in the employment of these devices shifts the text, in the perception of a stylistically sensitive reader/spectator, into an Aesopian mood and provokes the reader to impose the play's moral problematics on his own surrounding, contemporary, reality.

One may remark in this category a group of especially effective "sovietisms," that is, ritual formulas which are unique to Soviet cultural-linguistic practice, bureaucratic and slang words and phrases uniquely of the Soviet era: "People positively keep out" *(Людям вход безусловно запрещен;* p. 330; a parody on the ubiquitous entrance board); "overcome by the trust" *(Потрясенные [. . .] доверием;* p. 339; a journalistic cliché); ". . . we have appointed it acting helmet . . . the objects . . . will be extremely conscientious in the discharge of their duties. There was, unfortunately, no knightly armour to be found in our warehouse . . . The certificate given you attests that the lance actually is out for repair, witness the signature and affixed seal" *(. . . мы назначили его исполняющим обязонности шлема . . . вещи . . .*

будут исполнять свои обязанности вполне добросовестно. Рыцарских лат у нас на складе, к сожалению, не оказалось. . . Это удостоверение дается вам в том, что копье действительно находится в ремонте, что подписью и приложением печати удостоверяется; p. 340; a parodic admixture of bureaucratic jargon and legal idiom); "bloodhound souls" *(легавые души;* p. 342; "bloodhound" in its slang usage denotes a "policeman" or an "informer"); "It comes out a sort of ambiguous howl," "I okay this variant" *(получается какой-то двусмысленный завыв . . . Утверждаю этот вариант;* pp. 361-362; a parodic use of stock phrases of ideological censors); "an apartment . . . with all windows facing south" *(. . . квартира . . . все окна выходят на юг;* p. 366; advertising style); "moving expenses, holiday pay . . . official travel expenses . . . a domestic allowance will be issued" *(. . . подъемные . . . отпускные . . . командировочные. . . квартирные . . .;* pp. 366-67; the style of a contract); "I picked up a fish" *(Я достал рыбу;* p. 374; slang); "I declare the marriage concluded with the following confirmation" *(Я объявляю брак состоявшимся с последующим утверждением;* p. 378; parodic officialese); "we would have taken steps" *(мы приняли бы меры;* p. 380; official jargon); "[crimes which] were only slated for completion" *(. . . намечены к исполнению;* p. 381; parodic officialese).

In addition to Aesopian speech devices of this type, the play contains a series of situations (microplots) which parody certain typical phenomena of Soviet culture.

Such, for example, is the stage direction in the first act:

> At this point a middle-aged, but robust, man, looking younger than his years, enters the room. He is towheaded and has a military bearing. He wears his hair in a crew-cut. On his face is a broad smile. Despite its coarseness, his manner is in general not without a certain appeal. (p. 320)

This direction has an Aesopian ambivalence: the portrait of the leading villain is so drawn that it combines traits which may be equally recognized as those of the typical Nazi and the typical Soviet leader of the 1930s—crew-cut hair, military bearing, and in general the pleasantly gruff aspect of a father-commander. However, the opening line of the Dragon which follows the stage direction—"Cheerio, men!" *(Здорово, ребята!)*, a specifically Russian phrase and a shift explained above—nudges the reader toward interpretation of this figure as an allusion to Soviet reality. In the second act the genuflecting Burgomaster addresses an empty chair, appealing to the absent Dragon to act as the meeting's honored chairman. This scene is an undisguised parody on the Soviet ritual of electing an "honored presidium" at ceremonial gatherings, with the goal of demonstrating loyalty to the ruling Politburo.

An analogous parody inaugurates the third act: the townspeople under Heinrich's guidance polish up a choral welcome to the new master. "Greetings to the leaders" are a special oral genre of propaganda, an obligatory component of all Party, Komsomol, and trade-union congresses, ceremonial meetings, anniversary sessions, and the like. Anonymous professional writers compose the texts of these greetings, professional directors manage their staging, but it is Young Pioneers, workers, and peasants who actually perform these prearranged spontaneous demonstrations of love and devotion.[7]

The juxtaposition of the wretched and disenfranchised pre-Soviet past to the Soviet present is a device employed widely in Soviet agitational literature and in the rhetoric of Soviet oratory (particularly in the first three decades of Soviet power). Shvarts holds this device up to parody by employing in the speeches of the Burgomaster and Heinrich such standard Soviet formulas as "in the accursed days of the tsar," "what the capitalists and landowners appropriated now rests in the hands of the working people," "for centuries our people were subjected to . . . and only now. . .":

BURGOMASTER: . . . Do you remember who I was in the days of the accursed dragon? I was a sick man, a madman. And now? I'm fit as a fiddle. (p. 363)

What the dragon brazenly appropriated now rests in the hands of the city's finest people. Put simply, in my hands and, partly, in Heinrich's. (p. 368)

HEINRICH: . . . For four hundred years the names of the unfortunate girls doomed to the dragon have been entered in this book. Four hundred pages are filled up. And as the first on the four-hundred-first page we will enter the name of the lucky girl whom the brave nemesis of the monster [i.e., the Burgomaster who has laid claim to Lancelot's deed–L.L.] will take as his bride. (p. 376)

The plot motif of "the stolen prize" may itself be interpreted as an Aesopian allusion to Soviet historiography, which has tendered one new version after another of the events of October 1917 and the Civil War, and which has gradually erased from history the names of Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, and others to replace them with the names of Stalin and his minions. New editions of *A Brief Outline of the History of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks* or *The History of the USSR* were amended by special commissions: they explained the scope of the anti-revolutionary activity of Trotsky and others of the era's fallen Communists; all the successes of the revolution were attributed to Stalin. In this light one may compare the following speech by Heinrich:

A special commission, set up by the municipal government, has determined the following: the late upstart merely taunted the late monster by wounding him harmlessly. At which point our former Burgomaster, currently President of the free city, heroically threw himself upon the dragon and finished him off for good, having executed various miraculous feats of bravery. (p. 375)

There are in the play parodies on the war communiqués of the Soviet Information Bureau (pp. 355-58) and on the infatuation of Soviet propaganda with Michurin's experiments in selective breeding, experiments which it was expected would yield a solution to the country's long-standing food-supply problem:

> GARDENER: My tea-roses, bread-roses, and wine-roses flowered today [a pun to good effect on the term "tea-rose"—L.L.]. You take one look at them, and you're stuffed and reeling. (p. 352)

There is even an allusion to political terror in the conversation of the Burgomaster with the Jailer in Act III (pp. 363-65).

Among the most interesting instances of Aesopian language are those in which the stylistic mechanisms described above are used not with the goal of satirical parody, but rather for pathetic effect in sentimental parody or tragic grotesque (see Chapter III.1). In these instances Shvarts succeeds, by optimally economical means, in creating a comprehensive image of "a topsy-turvy world" in which elementary standards of moral behavior are outlawed and confused. Thus the Burgomaster, feigning madness, exclaims, "Oh, people, people, love one another! *(Quietly.)* You see what nonsense . . ." (p. 331); Charlemagne pleads, "Take pity on us, poor murderers" (p. 339). Against the background of the twenty-five preceding years' propagandizing of "a new, genuine, Soviet humanism" in contrast to the old "bourgeois, Christian mock-humanism," against the background of derision of "teary-eyed sentimentality" and aphorisms of the type "Pity degrades," the words with which Lancelot concludes Act II read as Aesopian:

> You there! Don't be afraid. This is possible: don't injure widows and orphans. You can also have pity on each other. Don't be afraid! Take pity on one another! Be compassionate—and you will be happy! I give you my word, this is the truth, the pure truth, the purest truth there is on earth. (p. 360)

From the arrangement of screening and marking elements a conclusion may be drawn concerning the strategy of the author. The author plots first to undermine the vigilance of the Censor, luring him to read the play only on the level of its first and second thematic planes; later, increasing the number and intensity of markers, the author seeks to fix an Aesopian reading in the mind of the Reader.

The first act truly does no more than prepare the play to be perceived in an Aesopian light. One encounters in it a series of anachronism-shifts and cultural-idiomatic shifts, but only two "sovietisms" whose tone, moreover, is relatively mild and humorous ("People positively keep out" and the very cautiously ambiguous description of the Dragon's appearance).

The intensification of the Aesopian level begins midway through the play (slightly before the middle of the second act). From this point in the development of the text both anachronistic and Russian idiomatic shifts are less frequently encountered. It is precisely here, however, that the first parodie episode is introduced ("the honored presidium"), and from the second half of Act II "sovietisms" are more and more common. Act II is crowned by Lancelot's tragically grotesque monologue.

Already in the third act mild Aesopian devices are virtually absent. Their absence, however, is offset by a spate of "sovietisms." Moreover, it is also here, approaching the end of the play, that four discrete microparodies are concentrated, each of which is quite pointed: the rehearsal of the ruler's welcome, the theme of "how life has improved since the days of the accursed dragon," the conversation of the Burgomaster and Jailer about *сажание* (a pun on planting seeds and "planting" men in prison), history set straight by Heinrich.

One may suppose that as a consequence of such a convergence of markers toward the end of the play, the Aesopian plane is tightly knit into that final impression of the work which is preserved in the mind of the reader/spectator.

Shvarts's *The Dragon* shows clearly how the introduction of Aesopian language complicates apprehension of a work by the addition of yet another structural level to the text. The many passages from the play which are quoted above demonstrate equally vividly that the Aesopian language thus introduced is realized, for the most part, in the sphere of artistic style, where it is a supplement (or metastyle) to such other stylistic functions as humor, irony, or pathos. But Aesopian language is hardly introduced haphazardly. Rather, Shvarts has recourse in *The Dragon* to an explicit strategy in the use of Aesopian devices: he uses them synonymously and redundantly, and organizes their convergence at crucial junctures. The obvious objective of such a strategy is to fix the Aesopian plane of the text securely in the mind of the reader.

Chapter V

AESOPIAN LANGUAGE AND THE SUGGESTIVITY OF THE TEXT: ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN'S WORK ON THE "WATERED-DOWN" VERSION OF THE NOVEL *THE FIRST CIRCLE* (1968)

The preceding analysis and, in particular, the discussion in Chapter Two may push the reader to the premature conclusion that the reaction which censorship forces from the writer leads in all circumstances to an increase in the artistic quality of the text. Such, however, is not always the case. It is not uncommon for the author (or his editor, which is in this case the same thing, since anyone who alters the text becomes its partial author) to simply eliminate dangerous fragments of the text or to replace passages whose meaning is inescapable with ones broad enough to accomodate many interpretations and ones so stylistically neutral that communication between Author and Reader does not develop on any additional level. It is not unusual for the text to be destroyed in the process, that is, for its overall quality to decline. It is, on the contrary, a daily occurence in literature under censorship. N. Ya. Grot achieved precisely this result in editing Tolstoy's treatise *What is Art?* for the Moscow journal *Issues in Philosophy and Psychology;* according to Tolstoy, "...Grot toned down my expressions, sometimes weakening them; for instance, he replaced the word 'always' with 'sometimes,' 'everyone' with 'some people,' ...'palace' with 'mansion,' and so on."[1]

Alexander Solzhenitsyn waged a relentless fight against censorship in the Soviet Union. Yet, as Gary Kern observed apropos of different editions of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,*

a "restrictive environment may stimulate creative discoveries in an author and the act of censorship itself may contain 'creative moments.'"[2]

There are not, however, so many clear-cut cases in which the interference of censorship has unquestionably positive or negative consequences for a text's artistic quality. The grander the scale of a work, the more complex the author's conception of it, the more variation in the interweaving of what is permitted and not permitted, and the more difficulty, consequently, in determining the cumulative effect of censorship's influence.

> The novel was begun in exile in Kok-Terek (southern Kazakhstan) in 1955. The first draft (with 96 chapters) was completed in the village of Miltsevo (in the Vladimir district) in 1957, the second and third in Ryazan in 1958 (all were later destroyed for reasons of secrecy). There was a fourth draft in 1962, which the author considered the final one. In 1963, however, following the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in *Novy mir*, the thought of the possibility of partial publication occured to me, and separate chapters were picked out and submitted to A. T. Tvardovsky. This idea led next to the complete dismantling of the novel into chapters, the exclusion of those which were entirely out of the question, the political toning-down of the rest, and thus the creation of a new variant of the novel (the fifth version, with 87 chapters) in which the chief plot had been changed: what had been in fact an 'atomic' plot was replaced by a popular Soviet story line of those years – the 'treason' of a doctor who sends medicines to the West. In this form it was considered and accepted by *Novy mir* in June of 1964, but the effort to publish it failed. In the summer of 1964 I attempted the opposite (in the sixth draft) – to amplify and sharpen the 87-chapter variant in all its details. In the autumn a film of this variant was sent to the West.[3]

This is how, in the brief afterword to the "definitive" 1978 edition, Solzhenitsyn describes the writing of *The First Circle*.

In his even briefer forward he writes, "In restoring [the text], however, I made a few improvements..." *(The First Circle /96/*, 1, [7]).[4]

A comparison of the two editions easily shows that the variant readings are owing to cuts and adjustments of two types: concessions to the censorship in the first edition and stylistic changes in the second.

In the second edition of the novel, Rubin mentally takes issue with the SS man Zimmel, thinking, "... we used to be eloquent speakers, what eloquence! but Party committees have stamped it out" (*The First Circle /96/*, 1, 26); whereas in the "watered-down" version (the first edition) this reads, "... there was no explaining to an enemy and a murderer how it was at the time" (*The First Circle /87/*, 1, 19). *The First Circle /96/* describes the Germans as living "on a single hope — that Adenauer would get them out of here" (1, 29); the end of this sentence is simply omitted in *The First Circle /87/*. When Rubin remarks in *The First Circle /96/*, "Listen, that's a plot full of drama," Nerzhin responds sarcastically, "For socialist realism" (1, 38); their exchange in *The First Circle /87/* consists of "Yes, it could become a nightmare" — "Exactly. . ." (1, 32). The unattributed comment of a prisoner concerning the Soviet national anthem playing on the radio — "It's turning my stomach: when will it end? ... A toad has better taste" (*The First Circle /96/*, 1, 96) — is cut out of *The First Circle /87/*. There are a great many such corrections in deference to the censorship in *The First Circle /87/*, all in the way of concessions.

There are considerably fewer places in *The First Circle /87/* (without hesitation, one can say it happens twice) where the author has not simply made concessions, but has fitted the opinions of his characters to the ideological demands of the censorship. In both cases Nerzhin's general critical reflections on the revolution, Lenin, and Communism are, in keeping with the spirit of the Khrushchev era, limited to criticism of Stalin *(паханом)*.[5]

In *The First Circle /96/* Nerzhin makes a note to himself:

> 'The events of 1917 hold no surprises for the mathematician. For a ninety-degree tangent which has shot upwards towards infinity will then and there plummet into the abyss of minus infinity. So Russia, too, having first skyrocketed towards unprecedented freedom, has here and now fallen into the worst kind of tyranny.
>
> 'No one had ever gotten this on the first try.' (1, 41)

But in *The First Circle /87/* Nerzhin treats Marx deferentially and incriminates only Stalin:

> 'I recall a passage in Marx (if only I could find it!) which says that the victorious proletariat will perhaps be able to manage without expropriating the well-to-do peasantry. Which means that Marx saw some economic way of including *all* the peasants in the new social system. In 1929, of course, *the boss* did not seek such routes. But what of subtlety, what needing skill was he ever after? Why should a butcher study to be a therapist?...' (1, 35)

The following exchange between Nerzhin and Rubin occurs in *The First Circle /96/:*

> 'You're an utter fool! At least before you should have read what the big names have to say about skepticism. Like Lenin!'
>
> 'Well, what of it? What did Lenin say?' Nerzhin grew quiet.
>
> 'Lenin said, "among the knights of liberal Russian windbaggery skepticism is a transitional form between democracy and filthy slavish liberalism." '
>
> 'How's that again? Do you have that right?'
>
> 'No mistake. It's from *In Memory of Herzen* and concerns...'
>
> Nerzhin took his head in his hands like a man who had been crushed.
>
> 'Eh?' Rubin relented a bit. 'Catch my drift?'
>
> 'Yes,' Nerzhin rocked his whole trunk back and forth. 'Better not to say it. And I idolized him at one time! ...'
>
> 'And what of it?'

> 'What of it?? Is that the language of a great philosopher? That's how people curse when they can't make an argument. "The knights of windbaggery!" just the sound is offensive. Liberalism is the love of freedom, and for that it's slavish and filthy. But to applaud on command – that's a leap into the kingdom of freedom, right?' (1, 56)

However, in *The First Circle /87/*, Nerzhin's opinion of Lenin's style undergoes a complete turnabout:

> 'Believe your own eyes and not what others tell you!' Nerzhin fought back. 'When I was still a young boy I started his [Stalin's] books after I'd read Lenin's – but I couldn't read them. After that brisk, impassioned, precise style I suddenly got a plateful of mish-mash. Each of his ideas gets cruder and cruder, more and more stupid, and he himself never notices that the most important kernel is lost.' (1, 53)

While this is the general trend of Solzhenitsyn's corrections made in acquiescence to the censorship, there are also numerous stylistic corrections in *The First Circle /87/* which, on the whole, make for a more elaborate language. The overwhelming majority of these changes, however, belong obviously to the sixth draft of the novel — the draft sent to the West — inasmuch as it is difficult to suppose that the author had for some reason to embellish the style of the novel as he "watered it down" for its intended publication in *Novy mir.* The following is an example of one such stylistic change:

The First Circle /96/: [Rubin was] a hefty man with a full black beard (1, 25).

The First Circle /87/: [...] a hefty man with the magnificent beard of a biblical prophet (1, 16).

Other such "magnificent" literary clichés in *The First Circle /87/* are similarly lacking in *The First Circle /96/* (only in *The First Circle /87/*, for example, is it said that "the mark of the executioner had been stamped [on Zimmel's face]," [1, 19]). Conversly, stylistically neutral words, words which

are to be found in any dictionary, are in *The First Circle /96/* replaced by the neologisms characteristic of Solzhenitsyn's later work.

The greatest surprise for the reader acquainted with *The First Circle /87/*, however, occurs immediately in the first chapter of *The First Circle /96/:* there the reader discovers a vital change in the inception of the novel — in the crime commited by the diplomat Innokenty Volodin.

In *The First Circle /87/* Innokenty meddles in a mundane secret police case in an attempt to save an aging doctor, whereas his intervention in a case of historic significance in *The First Circle /96/* is part of an attempt to save western civilization. In order to grasp how crucial a change this is for the literary quality of the novel, the overall structure of the novel should be reviewed.

The interweaving of plot lines, the architectonics of *The First Circle* is a most absorbing subject, but not one to be investigated here. To state the obvious: the idea of circles, of universal entanglement plays a very important role. It is this idea which gives rise to the balanced counterpoint of the novel, its symmetrically constructed story lines, and its abundance of polemical dialogues (as in the novels of Dostoevsky). In the Soviet universe depicted in the novel there are two poles — the Kremlin and the sharashka — and all characters and events are arranged along the lines of force which extend between these two poles. This explains the novel's many meetings and coincidences (something which is again shared with Dostoevsky). There is only one plot line which appears to develop independently of the rest, only one for which both poles have a weak attraction; this plot line is the same one which gives the novel its impetus, its starting point — none other that the story of Innokenty. *In The First Circle /87/* the motivation for Innokenty's fantastic deed is given so quickly at the start of the novel that the reader has almost no time to assimilate it; in *The First Circle /96/* it is almost entirely neglected. Halfway through the novel, it is true, the author attempts to provide some additional motivation (this

he does at greater length in *The First Circle /96/*, where there is a chapter about Innokenty's visit to his uncle in Tver — see 2, Chap. 61), but it is again purely descriptive, hurried, and without that psychological realism which distinguishes every other character in the novel — from Stalin to Spiridon. Innokenty's story, moreover, comes abruptly to an end, with even his final word unfinished in *The First Circle /96/:* "Why must love of country spre..?" (2, 367). There is in the isolation of this plot line from the others a certain symbolism: it is the appearance of free will in a subservient world, after all, which is at issue. But there is more to it.

The image of Innokenty and the plot which traces his development have one other peculiar feature which sets them apart: their literary quality. The suggestively named Innokenty ("Innocent") appears in the novel, with his unrelenting conscience, like a man who has fallen to earth from the moon; to be more precise, he arrives from abroad — like Chatsky, Bezukhov, Rudin, Myshkin, and Stavrogin. The last, it would appear, served partly as a model for Innokenty, the elegant hedonist with an unexpected talent for moral mischief-making. The only explanation for Innokenty's moral regeneration, moreover, is in literature: in his reading of books and journals from the turn of the century, in his grasp of the maxims of his mother and uncle (and of Epicurus). One may say, to use a current metaphor, that if the novel's other characters are shown in three dimensions, Innokenty is given more abstractly in two.

The explanation of this special status, it seems, lies in one aspect of Innokenty's story which qualitatively sets it apart from the other plots running through the novel, the aspect of literary parody. This parody has, beyond its intrinsic meaning, an important function in the overall structure of the work since it is the expression of one of the most important antagonisms and, on a deeper level, one of the most important themes in the novel. The antagonism is that between Nerzhin and Galakhov, and the theme is art.

Both the writer himself and his critics have noted time and

again that borrowing from real life is at the heart of Solzhenitsyn's novelistic method: in his afterword to *The First Circle* Solzhenitsyn writes that "The 'Mavrino sharashka' and virtually all its inhabitants were copied straight from life" *(The First Circle /96/,* 2, [403]). So great is the resemblance of characters to their prototypes that one of Solzhenitsyn's models, D. Panin, even entitled a book of personal reminiscences *The Memoirs of Sologdin*[6]. Nor does Solzhenitsyn conceal the self-portrait in Nerzhin; rather, in *The Oak and the Calf* he freely quotes this praise of *The First Circle /87/* from Tvardovsky: " 'The irony in the self-portrait is good; impossible to paint a good likeness if you're too full of yourself...' "[7].

No reader acquainted with Russian literature of the Stalin era can have any doubt that Konstantin Simonov — poet, prose writer, playwright, journalist, editor (Tvardovsky's predecessor at the helm of *Novy mir*), repeated recipient of the Stalin Prize, and member of the Party Central Committee — served as prototype for Galakhov. Simonov was, above all, one of very few writers in the 1940s whose official recognition was matched by a large popular following and even a certain reputation abroad.

Solzhenitsyn does much to underscore the historical accuracy of his picture of Moscow in 1949, particularly where the literary life of the capital is concerned. Almost every writer and every work mentioned are referred to by their own, and not a code, name. The dim-witted general Foma Oskolupov passes himself off as an electronics professor during an encounter with the real writer Kazakevich, and Kazakevich — taken in — intends to use the general "for a portrait of the contemporary scholar" *(The First Circle /96/,* 1, 103); the sharashka's inmates look with loathing upon actually existing books — Azhaev's novel *Far from Moscow,* a collection of Aleksey Tolstoy's war stories, and the anthology *American Short Stories;* the opening of Vishnevsky's play *Unforgettable 1919,* in fact the talk of Moscow in 1949, is discussed by the Makarygin's guests (*The First Circle /96/,* 2, 110-111); and Galakhov's nemesis is the real-life critic

Ermilov (who appears in *The First Circle /87/* under the pseudonym Zhabov, or "the toady"!). While literary tact compels Solzhenitsyn to remain within the bounds of a *roman à clef* and to refrain from calling Galakhov Simonov, Solzhenitsyn insures that there will be no confusion about his character's identity by having Galakhov sing one of Simonov's most popular songs, "From Moscow to Brest. . . ," and by giving Galakhov a close physical resemblance to Simonov: "Tiny picturesque streaks of white hair already gleamed above his slightly darkish, somewhat puffed-up face" *(The First Circle /96/*, 2, 94; *The First Circle /87/*, 2, 498). Galakhov's story, moreover, mirrors accurately enough the life of Simonov, who during the war years was "an already fashionable writer and front-line reporter" *(The First Circle /96/*, 1, 323) and who subsequently tried his hand, with great success, at all the basic literary genres and received on many occasions the highest rewards *(The First Circle /96/*, 2, 98-99; *The First Circle /87/*, 2, 505). Galakhov's writing, in addition, mimics such features of Simonov's prose as his proclivity for writing about military leaders and his tendency to imitate the style of Lev Tolstoy (the latter is absent from *The First Circle /96/*, eliminated, apparently, in Solzhenitsyn's final revision).

But what in the structure of the novel connects Galakhov-Simonov and Nerzhin-Solzhenitsyn? For in the course of the story there is no direct meeting between them.

It is the Makarygins' apartment which, above all, brings the two writers together. This newly-erected Moscow apartment house, set aside for the Party elite, plays an important role in the novel: the goings-on there provide a social cross-section of Stalinist Russia, and the building itself is a focal point of the injustice of that society. The apartment house becomes a symbol of moral regeneration for some, of a final descent into the abyss of conformity for others.

How does this come about?

The building is first and foremost the construction work of zeks — slaves, people banished to hell and consigned to oblivion, non-beings (during their inspection of their new apartment the

Makarygins pass a zek washing the stairs, but they take no notice of her). The writer Nerzhin is among the zek-construction workers.

Solzhenitsyn is at pains to emphasize the exclusively materialistic quality of the Makarygins' existence in their apartment. Nowhere else in the novel are things described in such detail: all the varieties of crystal collected by Alevtina Nikanorovna Makarygina and the rare cigars and tobacco in her husband's collection, furniture, the apartment's appointments, the food and drink on the table, details of the trim on satin-crepe dresses and blouses. This world of things, which gives the "new class" its life impulse, also embraces two Bashkir maids (who are spoken of as if they were things: " 'One is ours, the other we borrowed from the neighbors for the evening' " [*The First Circle /96/*, 2, 91]).

The Makarygins are at the mercy of the things that they possess, their lives are ruled by the fear of losing those things. But all of those gathered at the party — all who eat and drink what the Makarygins put out, who sit on their sofas, smoke their cigars — fall under the same spell. Revealing the character of one assembled guest after another, Solzhenitsyn demonstrates the impossibility of partaking of the Makarygins' hospitality and remaining a moral man: one either becomes entirely a beast (witness the provincial wife of a district committee instructor, who relates that "in the Zarechensky district ... the children of Party activists are separated from ordinary children the moment they're weaned; they get as much milk and as many penicillin shots as they want" — *The First Circle /96/*, 2, 95) or turns down the Makarygins' invitation, rejecting their material plenty.

If all who steer clear of the Makarygins' apartment — or who at least have a vague sense of alarm when in the apartment — are grouped together, one finds that all these characters have, in one way or another, directly or at second hand, had some unsettling contact with *hell:* the father of a young woman who stops visiting the Makarygins dies in a camp; Shchagov visits the apartment after his meeting with Nerzhin's wife; the aging Marxist

Radovich encounters Nerzhin's colleague form the sharashka, Abramson; Klara's spiritual insight dawns when she meets a zek-charwoman with an "educated and hate-filled" face; Klara's story about the charwoman is also, for the reader, the starting point of Innokenty's insight. Thus the Makarygins' world comes apart; *hell* — into which the writer-inmate Nerzhin has been cast — takes its revenge. The writer Galakhov is the last in line of those who are dimly troubled by the reflection of Nerzhin's hell.

It is no accident that Galakhov is modeled after Simonov rather than after a "writer" of the Makarygin world, where the majority publish their works "in editions with lots of zeros" and "[don't] seek any kind of immortality, deeming their current standing, in the here and now, more important" (*The First Circle /96/*, 2, 99). Solzhenitsyn required a writer, albeit a successful one, albeit a writer who had sold himself: no literary functionary or indifferent hack without a glimmer of talent could be Nerzhin's antipode, could illustrate Nerzhin's hypothetical alternative fate as a writer (cf. Solzhenitsyn's own admission: "I hate to think what kind of writer I would have become [for I certainly would have] had I not been *put away*").[8] Galakhov "had taxed and grounded his flight to immortality," yet there are at least a few of his verses which young girls learn by heart, there is at least some truth which he strives to write —

> at least that quarter, eighth, sixteenth, that – damn it all! thirty-second part of the truth which was allowed, even if it's about kisses or about nature – at least something is better than nothing. (*The First Circle /96/*, 2, 99)

It is instructive to compare Solzhenitsyn's depiction of Galakhov in the novel with his depiction of Simonov and other notable writers in the documentary work *The Oak and the Calf.* There, above all else, Solzhenitsyn describes Simonov as "behind us fifty percent" (*полунаш;* 203). But while Solzhenitsyn's record of events claims to present only the facts, there is in the

retelling and condensation of those events an element of artistic imagination. Hence the obvious satire in the servile and absurd speeches made by Kerbabaev and Sharipov at the meeting of the Writers' Union called to discuss Solzhenitsyn's intransigence:

> KERBABAEV: Why does the author see only the bad side? Do you know why I don't write about the bad side? I try always to write only about the bright side. It's not enough that he has disowned *The Feast of the Victors.* What would take courage would be to disown *Cancer Ward* – and then I'd embrace him as a brother.
> SHARIPOV: I wouldn't make any allowances for him, I'd expel him from the Union! His play puts everything Soviet, and even Suvorov, in a negative light. I agree completely: let him renounce *Cancer Ward.* Our republic has reclaimed virgin and long-fallow lands and is enjoying success after success.[10]

Compared with these comments, Simonov's speech is in Solzhenitsyn's transcription all the more curious:

> SIMONOV: I find *The First Circle* unacceptable and am against its publication. As for *Cancer Ward,* I favor publication. Not everything in the story is to my liking, but there's no rule that it must make everyone happy. The author should perhaps accept some among the critical observations being made. But to assent to all of them is of course impossible. We are also obliged to refute the slander concerning him. The book of his short stories should be issued – the preface will be a good place to give his biography – and this way the slander will fade away of its own accord. We can and must put an end to the false accusations – it's not up to him to do so on his own. I haven't read *The Feast of the Victors* and I haven't any desire to read it, since the author prefers that I not.[11]

In the novel, however, there is no such direct confrontation between Solzhenitsyn and Simonov. Instead, their fictional counterparts conduct their polemical dialogue through intermediaries, as it were (Galakhov speaking through Rubin, Nerzhin through Innokenty):

Rubin (speaking first) – Nerzhin

'...the front! – the front came back to me! – so real, so sweet... Listen, whatever else there is, there's a lot of good in war, wouldn't you say?'

'I ran across all that in the German soldiers' magazines we sometimes picked up before I ever heard it from you: purification of the soul, *Soldatentreue...*'

'You scoundrel. Still, if you like, it makes sense at bottom...'

'Can't allow yourself that. Taoist ethics say, "Arms are the instruments of unhappiness, not nobility. The wise man conquers unwillingly." ' (*The First Circle /96/*, 1, 47)

Galakhov (speaking first) – Innokenty

'War is a subject etched on my heart.'

'Well, you've made it into masterpieces.'

'And it, perhaps, will always be my subject. I'll return to it until the day I die.'

'But maybe you don't have to?'

'I do! Because war elevates man's soul...' *(The First Circle /96/*, 2, 96).

Galakhov and the other of the Makarygin guests walk on a floor across which Nerzhin has crawled on his hands and knees, conscientiously laying parquet. Early in the novel in Chapter 6 (of the 96-chapter version only) Nerzhin has made a connection between the parquet and "socialist realism" —

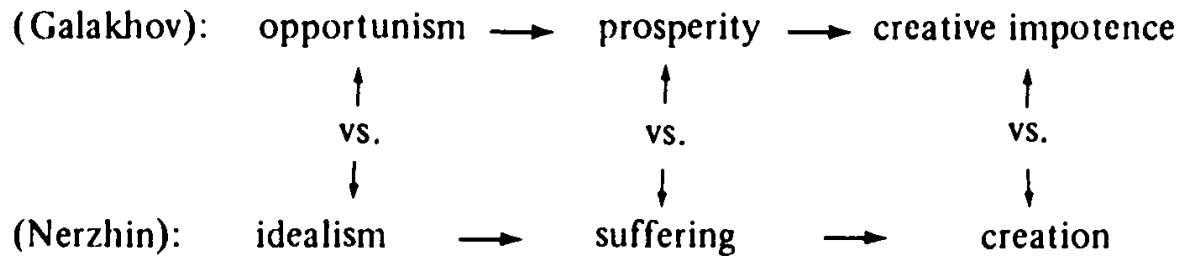
(Nerzhin speaks first, Rubin responds)

'And I've begun to be tormented by, well, simply my workman's good conscience or, if you prefer, the matter of my prestige: do my floors there squeak or don't they? After all, if they squeak, it means it's a hack floor job. And I'm powerless to correct it!'

'Listen, that's a plot full of drama.'

'For socialist realism.' (*The First Circle /96/*, 1, 38)

and thus this word echoes through the chapters (62-64) on the Makarygins' banquet. Rubin's interpretation of what is for Nerzhin ordinary conscientiousness as drama (of the sentimental Soviet loyalist kind: an unjustly aggrieved prisoner diligently builds socialism) is reminiscent of the interpretation of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* which was offered by Communist critics. In all this "socialist realism," however, Nerzhin senses something false. In the wider scheme of things, Rubin here belongs to the same category of people as Galakhov—opportunists who prefer not to see reality, who strive to find some justification for it. Thus the brief rejoinder " 'For socialist realism' " marks once more one of the important themes and oppositions in the novel, one which can be expressed by the following paradigm:



In a statement to a meeting of the Secretariat of the Soviet Writers' Union on September 22, 1967, Solzhenitsyn commented, "many writers would not care to repeat today some of the speeches and books which they wrote in 1949."[11] Among those to whom Solzhenitsyn addressed this remark was Simonov, about whose 1949 play *A Foreign Shadow* even an apologetic critic could only write:

> Among Simonov's works the play *A Foreign Shadow* (1949) is very typical of its time and of Simonov himself during this time. Labored and without emotion, the play is infected with an air of suspiciousness. When in the play Soviet scientists unexpectedly turn into spies, this not only fails to surprise the other characters but, on the contrary, even gives them a certain dismal satisfaction.[12]

A Foreign Shadow is a characteristic drama of the Cold War period, one in the same category as Boris Lavrenyov's *The Voice of America* (1949), Nikolay Pogodin's *Missouri Waltz* (1949), Nikolay Virta's *Conspiracy of the Doomed* (1949), and another Simonov play, *The Russian Question* (1947). Some such plays exploited motifs of the national chauvinism and spy-mania which swelled during the Cold War and employed plots wherein renegade Soviet scientists sell Soviet discoveries to the West. Along with Boris Romashov's *The Great Power* (1947) and Alexander Shtein's *The Trial of Honor* (1948), *A Foreign Shadow* belongs to this genre.

The content of *A Foreign Shadow* may be briefly stated.[13]

Professor Trubnikov is the director of a bacteriological institute in a Russian university town. In December of the year in which the action takes place the institute completes its work of many years on the creation of a vaccine against numerous acutely infectious diseases, beginning with the plague. Only the final tests, which the play's characters wish without fail to conduct on themselves, remain. (A scientist's infecting himself with the plague for experimental purposes is a heroic deed encountered already in Simonov's early lyrics: *Он умер в тридцать лет, привив себе чуму, / Последний опыт кончив раньше срока* [He died at thirty: gave himself the plague, / concluding his last experiment prematurely].[14]) At this moment another microbiologist, Professor Okunev from Moscow, arrives in town. Playing upon Trubnikov's ambition, Okunev persuades him to release a description of the technological process by which the new vaccine is manufactured; the description will be passed on to the professors' American colleagues, Okunev says, in the spirit of scientific exchange. However, no sooner does Trubnikov give his consent than all around him rise in protest. Trubnikov's sister, daughter, and co-workers lecture him on treason and on aiding and abetting imperialism, while the most determined among them, Trubnikov's brother-in-law Makeev, goes to Moscow

to intercept the materials and prevent their penetration to the West. He is, of course, successful, and Okunev, unmasked as a spy, commits suicide. Trubnikov repents and is allowed on the very highest authority to continue his work. (The seed of this plot was, evidently, furnished by the highly publicized "affair" of Professor G. I. Roskin and his wife N. G. Klyueva, who were charged with passing research data on the biotherapy of cancer to their American colleagues and who were tried by a "court of honor" in Moscow's Column Hall.)[15]

Written while Stalinism was in full flower, Simonov's play displays all the features of Stalinist mythology, including of course the complete deification of the leader and even elements of the miraculous.

The basic premise of the play—the creation of a vaccine "against all disease"—does, in fact, stretch the imagination. Only in a society where the biologist Lysenko based his experiments in selective breeding on the class struggle among plants, where the Academician Oparin arrived by the laws of dialectical materialism at a homunculus in a test tube, where the Academician Lepeshinskaya discovered the secret of eternal youth in soda baths could such a possibility be seriously entertained.

Another characteristic feature of this society was a hypocritical puritanism in matters of sex, and it too is mirrored in *A Foreign Shadow:* it is an amusing reflection of this aspect of Stalinist mores that the man and woman in each of four couples in the play are separated one way or another. The young Lena Trubnikova cannot meet with her beloved Grigory Ryzhov, the institute's Party organizer, because he has won the right to be injected with the plague and is kept in an isolation ward; Lena is united with him only when he is on the brink of death. Trubnikov's sister Olga marries the engineer Makeev only when she is forty; what is more, the newlyweds live in different cities. Makeev comes to visit his wife for twenty-four hours but, when he learns of the scientific document being transferred, leaves the very same evening for Moscow to do battle with American

spies. The elderly Savateev couple have for some reason no children of their own: the Party organizer Ryzhov is their foster son, and they intend to adopt yet another child, a daughter. Even the spy Okunev's conversation with his wife emphasizes that for some time now the two have lived as strangers in the same apartment.

(It should be noted that in the moral system erected by the aging dictator heavy drinking is no vice. Simonov's positive heroes offer not a word of protest against the downing of some "splendid rusk vodka" [466].)

There is a great deal of talk about the western world, and America in particular, as a source of espionage and intrigue. And again not one of the characters is struck by the absurdity of the charges. Instead they are all outraged at the "revelation" that in exchange for Florida hurricane data collected at the end of the century American meteorologists have attempted to obtain more current information on winds in the Arctic Ocean—as if climatic conditions in such enormous areas could change dramatically in fifty years.

The scientific achievements of the West are greeted with scorn: the West needs vaccines "to make . . . money, which they already do a fine job of with their penicillin and streptomycin" (475).

Those in the West "dream in a revolting way about . . . war" (439).

But it is the antiquated moral values of the West which Simonov's characters particularly assail:

> TRUBNIKOV: . . . That language [i.e., the language of humanism], it seems, is going out of style.
>
> LENA: You know why? Where I've just come from every third word is 'humanism.' . . . There's no shady business that the word 'humanism' can't cover up. (445)

This same daughter says about her father:

> During the night he was so upset, both angry and miserable at the same time, that in the first instant I felt sorry for him. But I've thought all day today, and *here, of course, there is no room for pity.* (456; emphasis added; cf. Lancelot's monologue in Chapter IV)

But while one's own father is deserving of no compassion, the "father of the peoples" and everything about him is esteemed as unfathomably exquisite. This is true even of his physical defects (see the description on p. 411 of Ryzhov's pock-marked but nonetheless "handsome face"--it was no secret that Stalin's face was also scarred).

All of Simonov's heroes are given to making public speeches wherein they reveal an almost comic selflessness:

> SAVATEEV: . . . I can't stand when it's someone else. I like when I'm the one. Infect yourself, and your soul's at peace. (432)

In this as in any other quasi-religion, the most hallowed notions are taboos. For the characters in *A Foreign Shadow* this means that Stalin's secret police and Stalin himself cannot be called by their own names. Speaking of the denunciation he has made to the MGB, Makeev says, "I took certain measures" (501; cf. the analogously employed expressions "to report to the proper quarters" and "the appropriate agencies will attend to it," and so on). The absolution granted the errant Trubnikov takes the following form:

> 'Despite all Trubnikov's errors, the government has faith in his integrity and does not doubt his ability to atone for his wrong and complete the work he started.' That's how the minister put it to me, *and I could tell from his eyes who had told him what he told me.* (507) (Emphasis added)

There are two reasons for dwelling on the elements of Stalinist culture which are assembled in Simonov's play. They remind

one, in the first place, of that cultural setting, or ideological context, in which the action of *The First Circle* unfolds; it is this culture, moreover, which is the subject of a polemic between the novelist and his characters. Secondly, it is only in connection with Solzhenitsyn's general polemical purpose that the true meaning of his openly parodic motifs can be appreciated.

Solzhenitsyn's parodying of Simonov's play is more evident in *The First Circle /87/* than in *The First Circle /96/*, a discrepancy which the author himself mentions briefly in his afterword to the 1978 edition: "the chief plot had been changed: what had been in fact an 'atomic' plot was replaced by a popular Soviet story line of those years—the 'treason' of a doctor who sends medicines to the West" (*The First Circle /96/*, 2, 403).

In addition to the parallels already cited, *The First Circle /87/* contains still a few other vital elements which correspond parodically to elements in Simonov's play. In both works the time of year—New Year's eve—plays an important role. And the intrigues of both Okunev and Volodin revolve around the telephone: both men accomplish their "criminal activities" over the phone; Okunev later attempts to save himself by unplugging and not answering the telephone (482-91), while a tapped phone proves Volodin's undoing.

But there are more substantial parallels than these details. Okunev and Volodin share, for example, the appearance of a "Moscow playboy"—this according to both the author and all the positive heroes of *A Foreign Shadow*, and to Rubin in *The First Circle (The First Circle /96/*, 1, 374). (The very word "playboy," *стиляга*, is, incidentally, an unquestionable anachronism in Solzhenitsyn's novel, for its earliest use is circa 1952.) But what is possibly the most significant parallel is that between Simonov's Makeev and Solzhenitsyn's Abakumov. The chief spy-unmasker in *A Foreign Shadow* gives this explanation for turning informant:

> . . . I took certain measures which our general state of alarm dictated. I assumed the responsibility for any mistake, being of the opinion that it was better I be mistaken and in a difficult position than that I leave even a one per cent chance of disaster. (501)

Problems of state security are solved in an analogous, "arithmetical" fashion in Solzhenitsyn: the individual and individual freedom are entirely absent from consideration. Abakumov and his underlings, moreover, are even more liberal than Makeev with their figures. Makeev is ready to ruin a man even given odds of a hundred to one, while Solzhenitsyn's security men discuss the possibility of arresting seven instead of one (*The First Circle /96/*, 1, 102) and in the end arrest two—the truly guilty Volodin and the innocent Shchevronok.

The parody in Solzhenitsyn's use of Simonov's plot lies in the fact that Solzhenitsyn turns all the components of that plot inside out. The telephone which effectively keeps Okunev secure becomes the tool for keeping Volodin under surveillance. The fir tree for New Year's which in Simonov is brought straight from the forest—"as in the good old days"—must in Solzhenitsyn be cleared with officials of the MGB. The parodying of more significant motifs is self-evident.

However, before proceding to the Aesopian elements in Solzhenitsyn's plot, the role of his parody should again be qualified: parody is only one aspect of the plot of *The First Circle*, and those elements of the text which parody Simonov's play have other, more vital meanings in the structure of the novel as well. Here the parodic element has been singled out because it will facilitate the understanding of Aesopian language in Solzhenitsyn.

As has been stated earlier, there were in fact more versions of *The First Circle* than those which the author has designated *The First Circle /96/* and *The First Circle /87/* (the "watered-down" version). For today's reader of Solzhenitsyn there are at least three variants: 1) *The First Circle /96/-1*, its existence known

from the author's testimony; 2) *The First Circle /87/*, which circulated in *samizdat* and which was published abroad in 1968 (and reprinted in 1969 and 1971); and 3) *The First Circle /96/-2*, published in the first two volumes of Solzhenitsyn's 1978 *Collected Works.* The highly significant stylistic corrections made in the novel *after* the creation of the "watered-down" version force one to distinguish *The First Circle /96/-1* from *The First Circle /96/-2.* The most significant structural distinction, however, is between *The First Circle /96/* and *The First Circle /87/.* And of principal importance here, so it seems, is the change in the story, and in particular in the initial situation, which proceeds from the crime of Innokenty Volodin. The two versions are compared below.

Solzhenitsyn, it seems, found a prototype for *The First Circle /96/* in the 1962 case of Oleg Penkovsky. A Soviet spy who worked under the "cover" of an official of diplomatic missions, Penkovsky passed to the West intelligence of exceptional importance for the security of the western nations. For this he doubtless had ideological motives. The story of Oleg Penkovsky's life coincides in many of its important details with the biography which Solzhenitsyn has invented for Innokenty Volodin.[16]

There is, however, no such notorious prototype for the Innokenty of *The First Circle /87/.* This version of the novel contains instead a parody on those socialist-realist plots which strain credulity; unlike such far-fetched dramas, *The First Circle /87/* attempts to show how it *really might have been.*

Innokenty's motives in *The First Circle /96/* are, for the most part, rational and ethical. Having become acquainted with the worldview of his uncle and deceased mother, having read a number of books, newspapers, and journals, and having analyzed his own experience in the light of what are for him new ways of looking at things, Innokenty makes a decision of global import—a decision to save civilization from the atomic threat of Soviet totalitarianism. In *The First Circle /87/,* on the contrary, Innokenty is guided chiefly by emotion and private concerns. Having

learned by chance of the danger threatening Doctor Dobroumov, Innokenty relives deeply private childhood sensations—of close attachment to his mother and of the "children's world" in which Doctor Dobroumov played a significant symbolic role (*Добро* and *Ум* mean "Good" and "Intellect"; the same symbolism explains Abakumov's remark, " . . . phoned some professor, never can get his name . . ."—*The First Circle /87/*, 1, 106).

And just as his motives are altered, so too does the form of Innokenty's crime change from one version of the novel to the other. In *The First Circle /96/* Innokenty betrays a Soviet intelligence ploy by a phone call to the military attaché of the American embassy, thus causing enormous injury to the Soviet state. This is a state offense. But by calling to warn the wife of Professor Dobroumov in *The First Circle /87/*, Innokenty simply damages one of many run-of-the-mill "affairs" fabricated by the MGB. This is official malfeasance.[17]

Where invariant plots are concerned, Innokenty's crime in *The First Circle /96/* and the one which he commits in *The First Circle /87/* belong to different literary traditions, or even, one might say, to different literary genres. Innokenty's deed in *The First Circle /96/* is a part of Romantic tradition, where supermen stand alone against the world (in this context Innokenty is in the company of Prince Kurbsky, Aleko, and the Comte de Montecristo, among others). The other version of the novel *(The First Circle /87/)* continues one of the dominant traditions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian "realistic" literature: "the revolt of the little man against the leviathan of the state" (Pushkin's Yevgeny, Gogol's Akaky Akakievich, and some characters of Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Olesha, and Platonov all do the same).

This shift in literary allegiances is responsible also for a shift in Innokenty's psychological make-up. In *The First Circle /96/* Innokenty is purposeful and courageous; he is endowed with a sense of duty and is able to overcome his fear. His name has in this instance no symbolic significance (he is in fact "not-

Innocent"). In *The First Circle /87/*, however, Innokenty is a frightened, vacillating, and impulsive man, and it is not for nothing that he is called "Innocent."

Variations in the dominant image of Chapter One, moreover, underscore the sharp differences between these two Innokentys. Innokenty is in *The First Circle /96/* described as a torpedo:

> . . . the grey-black nine-story hulk [of the MGB building on the Lubyanka] was a battleship, and its eighteen pilasters towered like eighteen gun turrets on its starboard side. And Innokenty, the solitary, unsound boat, was simply being drawn under the prow of the heavy, fast-moving ship.
>
> No, he wasn't being drawn like a boat—he had launched himself at the battleship like a torpedo! (1, 15)

The image of the human torpedo is developed further:

> He, it seems, described a circle on his torpedo, putting himself into a little better position. (1, 15)

> Now the doomed man lost sight of his battleship, but his chest was bursting with a radiant despair. (1, 16)

Even the title of the first chapter is "The Torpedo."

The First Circle /87/ compares Innokenty only to an unseaworthy boat. A traditional and somewhat archaic image, the boat is a metaphor for the fragility and vulnerability of human existence (cf. "a wretched skiff" in *The Bronze Horseman* or Mayakovsky's "wrecked boat of love"). Of the passages quoted above, only the first remains, and that only up to the words "fast-moving ship." The title of Chapter One—a quotation from Innokenty's conversation with the wife of Dobroumov, "And Who Are You?"—is certainly not just ironic but a philosophical query as well.

Due to the drastic change in the opening situation of the novel, basic plot lines appear in an entirely different light in the two

versions of *The First Circle.* And this is so even without significant alteration of the succeeding text.

In *The First Circle /96/* Rubin is an uncompromising, idealistic Marxist, who without reservation takes the side of the state against Innokenty: "He's off again—to his post! He's off again—to defend the world revolution!" (1, 274). Nerzhin is a foil to Rubin, challenging him, for the most part, on ideological points. The other characters are treated likewise—they are the products of their ideology.

In *The First Circle /87/,* however, Rubin is caught between his Marxist ideals and the surveillance and spy-mania which on first reaction he finds unacceptable:

> And with every sentence Rubin's face lost its ready, cruel expression. He even looked perplexed. My God, this wasn't at all what it was supposed to be, it was some kind of wild nonsense . . . (1, 273)

Rubin, in other words, is presented as a torn and psychologically complex personality.

This treatment of Rubin in turn affects the treatment of both Nerzhin and the other characters: they are psychological rather than ideological beings.

There is little room for symbolic interpretation of *The First Circle /96/* along the lines of the parable of the revolt of the individual against the totalitarian state which is traditional in Russian literature. The opportunity for decoding the novel as a *roman à clef,* conversely, is potentially great: Innokenty's prototype (Penkovsky) is easily guessed, and the reader will set about deciphering the remaining prototypes in accordance with this design of the author (cf. "*what had been in fact* an 'atomic' plot was replaced by a popular Soviet story line"—*The First Circle /96/,* 2, 403, emphasis added).

It is *The First Circle /87/* which is easily interpreted as the traditional parable: a modern two-bit official, a Yevgeny, an elegant Akaky Akakievich raises his fist to the Bronze Horseman.

The deeply private and personal (childhood, mother, and doctor) collides with the totalitatian state (cf. Yevgeny's dream "to build a house" and Akaky Akakievich's longing for an overcoat). All that is personal, everything that is *allzumenschliches* is in direct opposition to the state and is headed for destruction. Even the slightest manifestation of purely human feeling within the machine of the state (and Innokenty's desire to help the good doctor of his childhood is no more than this) sets in motion the entire punitive apparatus of the state—from the nameless (in *The First Circle /87/*) phone-tappers to the all-powerful dictator. In this parable one may also discern a parody, the turning inside out of one of the most popular parable motifs in Soviet literature—the necessary sacrifice of personal sentiment for the sake of revolutionary Soviet activity.[18]

From this survey of the differences between the two variants of *The First Circle* one may arrive at the following conclusion. Generally speaking, *The First Circle /96/* is closer to "what had been in fact," while *The First Circle /87/* presents the reader with a more suggestive panorama. The traditional parable which is reworked in *The First Circle /87/* permits a symbolic interpretation and a wider range of social generalizations than does *The First Circle /96/.*[19]

The necessity, under censorship, of resorting to Aesopian language has resulted in increased suggestivity in the text of *The First Circle.* Solzhenitsyn eschews the elements of a dated *roman à clef* to create a lofty artistic parable.

Chapter VI

AESOPIAN LANGUAGE AND THE SHAPING OF INDIVIDUAL STYLE

(Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *The White Snows Are Falling...*, 1969)[1]

> To outwit the massed opposition with unlooked-for feints and fancy footwork, and then to plant a 'dead' goal in the net between the impotently outstretched arms of the goalkeeper—this seemed to me, and still seems to this day, very like poetry.
>
> Soccer taught me a great deal.[2]

With this vivid metaphor Yevtushenko defines in his *Autobiography* the most distinctive feature of his own poetry, a quality which was not heralded by Russian poetic tradition. Common practice had been to discriminate in the received tradition two poetic strains (or principles)—the Apollonian and the civic (e.g, Pushkin's "Until Apollo calls the poet" and "Oh, Muse of fire-breathing satire!"). These two tendencies had served to distinguish contemporaries, such as Nekrasov and Fet, and to describe different strains in the work of an individual poet, such as Mayakovsky.[3] Aesopian verse had never been more than a sideline in the oeuvre of various poets. What is new in Yevtushenko's declaration, and what is furthermore symptomatic of the post-Stalin era, is the proclamation of an Aesopian ambiguity as the basis of poetic creation.

That Yevtushenko, the proponent of a double-edged Aesopian style, should be hailed as the central poetic force of the post-Stalin period was fully warranted by the historical situation, by

the efforts of a new generation of leaders (Khrushchev and his adherents) to disown the abuses of the preceding generation yet leave intact the regime's ideological foundations. It was owing to his outspoken temperament and his theatrical intuition that Yevtushenko won over a wide audience, an audience made up primarily of young people. His verse afforded this group of readers a necessary catharsis: it eased their consciousness of the burden of myths impressed upon them in the schoolroom; it proffered freedom from the deification of leading public figures, from the mind-set of "cogs" in the machine of the socialist state, and from puritan moral strictures. In this way Yevtushenko promoted the development of a new type of *Homo soveticus*, one who was more enterprising and better suited for the age of scientific and technological revolution, one who was pragmatic in his loyalty to the ruling bureaucracy.

The new ideological policy of the post-Stalin leadership was itself ambiguous in nature, for it signaled not a radical break with the old ideology but only a certain modification of it. Hence the "secrecy" of Khrushchev's speeches addressing ideology and the erratic alternating spells of liberal "thaw" and reactionary "freeze" in the party-line policy of the overseers of art and literature. Within certain limits the ambiguous ideological content of artistic texts was an entirely accurate mirror of the nation's newfound political atmosphere.

This is not to suggest that Yevtushenko contracted with the state apparatus for his literary service. It was rather an unpremeditated coincidence: by virtue of his personal characteristics this poet naturally proved the most appropriate figure to take on a role as champion of youth, a role tacitly condoned by the country's leaders. Even such ideological excesses as Yevtushenko's admiration for the Jews, cosmopolitanism, and defense of "free love" only made him more inviting for political manipulation: even as these excesses were vociferously denounced in semi-official criticism, they gained Yevtushenko a reputation for independence. And an independent man's backing of the government in such

vital matters as fidelity to Leninism, the Party program for economic advancement, and irrational "my country right or wrong" patriotism exercised a far greater influence upon readers than did the propagandizing of the same notions by writers who were in no measure distinguishable from the regime.

This chapter will examine how "unlooked-for feints and fancy footwork"—that is, a system of Aesopian devices—became the basis of Yevtushenko's individual style and left their mark on his poetics as a whole.

In the collection *The White Snows Are Falling . . .* there are relatively few poems—only some ten per cent—which, if taken separately and stripped from context, might with certainty be labeled Aesopian. (A precise count of exactly how many of the 183 poems are Aesopian has not been attempted: not only is an Aesopian reading often the result of what is in retrospect the cumulative influence of context upon individual poems, but it is also not uncommon for a long poem by Yevtushenko to contain an Aesopian fragment).

Those poems which are without any doubt Aesopian will be examined first.

Following the scheme given earlier for the use of Aesopian genres (see Chapter III.3), one may single out three variants which are favored by Yevtushenko: 1) parables which are premised upon an exotic plot, 2) parables which rely upon an historical plot, and 3) allegory.

Deming Brown characterizes the tactics of Yevtushenko as follows:

> Extremely prolific, he surrounds his politically provocative poetry with reams of verse that is 'safe.' When he goes globetrotting, he often writes friendly, appreciative verse about many features of the countries he visits, but pays for his passport with politically orthodox commentary on other features.[4]

This statement, however, requires elaboration: Yevtushenko's "politically orthodox" verse about the West tends to be ambivalent.

The dramatic form used in most of these poems is in itself highly indicative—they are almost without exception cast as monologues or as veiled dialogues with silent interlocutors: "Monologue of an American Poet," "Monologue of a Broadway Actress," "Monologue of Doctor Spock," the fragment of monologue in "Corrida" ("I am a Spanish poet . . ."), the dialogue concealed in "Senegal Ballad." Given such a formal structuring the mandatory lyric hero (the lyric "I") does not vanish from the poem, but as it were assumes a mask within full view of the audience—the mask of a South African poet, a Spanish poet, an American poet, an American social activist, and so on. This device surrounds the plot with an aura of double meaning: when the reader sees the poet dress his lyric hero—"the poet Yevtushenko"—in a mask, this is a literary event which automatically demands an interpretation from the reader. Such masking may, of course, be interpreted as an act of empathy, whereby the blessed Soviet poet penetrates the internal world of his not so fortunate American counterpart. And such precisely is the interpretation offered by those Soviet critics who are well-disposed to Yevtushenko. But other interpretations are also possible. Thus, for example, the overt masking of the lyric hero may be construed as an admission of the universal problems which confront artists without regard for geographical and historical divisions, or as a means of speaking out on problems brewing at home (Aesopian language).

For the sake of comparison it might be recalled that those who preceded Yevtushenko on poetic voyages to America and other exotic countries did not resort to the form which Yevtushenko so favors. Both in Mayakovsky *(Poems about America)* and in Simonov *(Friends and Enemies)* the lyric "I" is always identified as a poet-Communist, an envoy of the Soviet nation who is

staunchly committed to the USSR and firmly opposed to the "capitalist encirclement."

Just as a feeble stimulus will set off the crystallization of an over-saturated solution, so in Yevtushenko's work the slightest Aesopian detail is sufficient to precipitate a fully fraught Aesopian poem. It is chiefly linguistic and socio-cultural shifts of various orders which are enlisted toward this end. Thus "Senegal Ballad" begins:

> Сенегал,
> я ныряю на дно кабаков без советчиков и
> стукачей... (p. 338)

> Senegal, / I dive to the depths of bar joints free from counselors and snitches...

The word "snitch" *(стукач)*, taken over from prison-camp slang, was widely admitted into the idiom of the Soviet intelligentsia and there designated the undercover informants of the KGB. This word occurs in no other context in contemporary Russian. Such related words as "agent," "spy," "spook," "collaborator," "silent eye," "snooper," and "informer" are, moreover, reserved in the literary language for the designation of secret agents of foreign police and intelligence services. The word *советчик* (a Soviet or a counselor) is even more suggestive. *Советчик*, in combination with "snitch," reflects the widely known fact that Soviet citizens abroad—and members of the arts in particular—are usually accompanied by representatives of the authorities who are officially represented as *советники* (counselors). (They may be *советники* of the embassy, a ministry, the Writers' Union, and so on; they may sometimes also be referred to as "advisers" or "consultants.") In the spoken language the word *советник* may be recast as *советчик*, but this gives to the word a pejorative flavor (as in the expression *в советчиках не нуждаюсь!* [I don't need an

adviser!], and by analogy with *молодчик*, *налетчик*, *валютчик* [tough guy, gangster, currency speculator], and other words which similarly make use of the suffix *-чик)*. Moreover, this word has simultaneously a second, likewise pejorative, meaning as "a representative of the Soviet Union" (this use is to be encountered chiefly among Russian émigrés; it finds a corresponding use in the Soviet press in the word *антисоветчик* (an anti-Soviet), which occurs especially often with the epithets "inveterate" and "rabid").

The two lines of Yevtushenko quoted above are preceded only by the title "Senegal Ballad" and by the subtitle "The Story of My Friend, a Poet from the Union of South Africa," that is, by elements which are in the reader's mind distinct from the primary text. Given this fact and the true beginning of the poem with the words *Я ныряю на дно кабаков без советчиков и стукачей*, the futher utterances of the lyric hero are by no means perceived in an African context *(На руках у меня, / на ногах у меня — кандалы...* [My hands, / my feet—are in fetters . . .], *Настоящей свободы — / ее ни у нас, / ни у вас...* [Neither you / nor we / have real freedom . . .], and so on). One may well imagine how the hidden content asserts itself with much greater force when submitted in the author's reading to the full range of expressive nuance, when in the consciousness of the audience the dispassionately delivered title and subtitle (screens) yield to the ensuing monologue.

In "Monologue of an American Poet" it is again the title and the dedication—to Robert Lowell—which serve as screens: the poem contains no other American particulars. Conversly, the poem does evince vulgarisms from contemporary Soviet popular speech, shifts which act as markers: "chums," "noggin," "snot" *(кореша, башка, сволочь)*; the last occurs, in keeping with contemporary usage, as a modifying adjective in "the snot-wall" *(сволочь-стена)*. There is in addition a socio-cultural shift, one which also plays a significant role in the poem's construction: "The indifferent doorman just switches the portraits on it [the wall]." This phrase, like any Aesopian utterance, is ambivalent:

wall-posters are, after all, replaced not only in Russia but in America as well—for instance, from one election to the next. However, the *doorman (дворник)* changing the portraits is a typically Russian scene which suggests a Russian content: in the USSR switched portraits always betoken power shifts within the ruling oligarchy. Thus the passage

> Помнится –
> клялся я страшной божбою
> о стену башку проломить
> или стену – башкою.
> Башка поцарапана, правда, но, в общем, цела,
> а что со стеной?
> Ухмыляется сволочь-стена, –
> лишь дворник на ней равнодушно меняет
> портреты... (p. 345)

> I remember– / I took a terrible oath // to break my noggin against the wall / or the wall with my noggin. // True, my noggin got scratched, still it's basically in one piece, / and how did the wall make out? / That snot-wall, it's smirking– / the indifferent doorman just switches the portraits on it . . .

and the remainder of the poem which follows becomes a parable, the Aesopian confession of a Russian and not an American poet. (One might compare the monologue of the Spanish poet in "Corrida," in which shifts perform the same service. See Chapter II.1.)

Against the background of such clearly marked Aesopian monologues, the relatively poorly marked "Monologue of Doctor Spock" may be read in the same key of Aesopian ambivalence. The marker *и весь наш строй* (our entire system), a phrase which appears frequently in Soviet publicistic writing, is its only shift. The absence in the poem's eight consecutive stanzas of any particular of American life whatsoever is yet a second marker. If one

imagines that a spectator might enter the hall exactly as Yevtushenko were to utter from the stage the line *И весь наш строй, все наше государство* (Our entire system, our entire government), then the effect upon the latecomer of these words, delivered during a public reading and before a Soviet audience, would be a shattering one:

И весь наш строй, все наше государство,
зазнайство наше и самохвалеж –
преступное бездарное знахарство,
опасная безграмотная ложь.

О, боже мой, – ведь даже в наши школы,
уже не говорю я о кино,
ведут детей, как будто на уколы
той лжи, еще не спасшей никого.

Исчезла Цель. Живые люди – цепи.
И если, как с довольством говорят,
система наша – это панацея,
то что тогда venenum, то есть яд?

Прописывают сволочи и дуры,
не вдунув жизнь хотя бы в пару щек,
пилюли страха, подлости микстуры
и оптимизма сонный порошок.

В правительство врачей не пригласили.
Напрасно! Заседанья допоздна
похожи на консилиум бессилья,
когда, глотая дрянь, больна страна.

Невежда, говорящий кругло-кругло,
какое бы он кресло ни урвал,
опасен, будто в должности хирурга
дорвавшийся до власти коновал.

Ну как они учить кого-то смеют,
когда нормальны сами не вполне?
Рецепты выдают, а не умеют
поставить даже градусник стране.

Клещами лечат, гайками, тисками,
и кто-то, знаю, к божьему стыду,
хотел бы излечить кровопусканьем
от совести оставшейся страну. (p. 361)

Our entire system, our entire government, / our conceit and self-applause are all / one criminal, inept quack cure, / a dangerous, ignorant lie.

Oh, my God: our children even go to school, / to say nothing of the movies, / as if for injections of that lie / which has yet to save a soul.

The Goal has vanished. Human beings have become chain links. / And if, as the smug claim goes, / our system is a panacea, / what then is *venenum*—that is, poison?

Bastards and fools, who haven't blown life / into even one pair of cheeks, / prescribe fear pills, servility syrup, / and a soporific of optimism.

No doctors were invited into government. / What a mistake! Their late-night meetings / resemble consultations of impotence, / while the country is sick from swallowing rubbish.

Whatever position he grabs, / a smooth-talking ignoramus / is dangerous—as if a vet / had snatched the power of the surgeon.

How do they presume to teach anyone / when they themselves are not quite normal? / They dispense prescriptions, but cannot / even take the country's temperature.

They cure with pincers, screws, clamps, / and I know that, God forbid, there is someone / who would like to bleed the country / to cure it of its remaining conscience.

The admission of an Aesopian subtext into all manner of exotic plots bred a momentum which was for Yevtushenko apparently so compelling that one or two Aesopian allusions may be encountered even in poems which are entirely apolitical in intent. "Backstreets of Barcelona," for instance, treats a comic spectacle in the spirit of neo-realist cinema, yet the benign description of the Spanish city's impoverished tenements—with their filth, racket, and domestic squabbles—shifts abruptly into a familiar Aesopian key:

И пока фашистская цензура
топит мысли, как котят в мешке,
кто-то на жену кричит: "Цыц, дура!" –
правда, на испанском языке. (p. 366)

And while the fascist censorship / drowns ideas like kittens in a sack, / someone yells at his wife: 'Can it, stupid!' / only in Spanish, of course.

It is the same in "An Oath to Free Expanse," a poem which paints the landscape and extolls the beauties of Siberia. A suggestive hint suddenly obtrudes into the text:

Здесь плюнешь –
залепит глаза хоть на время
в Испании цензору,
а может, другому –
как братец, похожему – Церберу.
(p. 398)

Spit here– / and it'll blind a Spanish censor, at least for a while,// or perhaps another– / who, like a brother, looks like Cerberus.

At the end, too, there is an unexpected Aesopian image, outfitted once again with the slang coinages in which Yevtushenko customarily

clothes his allusions to Soviet realities. It is in a *Siberian* setting that the poet does his musing about the imprisoned, employing in those reflections a vocabulary which is best known to the reader from Solzhenitsyn:

Диктатор в огромном дворце,
словно в клетке затюканно мечется,
а узник сидит в одиночке,
и мир у него на ладони.
Под робой тюремной
в груди его –
все человечество,
под *стрижкой-нулевкой* –
простор, утаенный при *шмоне.*
(p. 400; emphasis added)

At the end of his rope the dictator / paces his spacious palace as if it were a cage, // while the prisoner who sits in solitary / has the world in his palm. / His breast / beneath its prison garb / has room for all humanity; / no *body search** stripped him / of the wide open space inside his *bare-shaved*** head.

The attraction of literary-historical plots for Yevtushenko is as parables which illustrate the conflict of free-thinking artist and dictatorial authority ("A Ballad about Lermontov's Poem 'On the Death of the Poet' and about the Chief of Police," "Lermontov," "When Lorca was Slain," "About Tyko Vylka," excerpts from "The Pushkin Divide" and *Bratsk Station).*

The means that are used to attain the quality of parable in quasi-exotic plots are by and large also instrumental in historically-drawn plots. "A Ballad about Lermontov's Poem. . ." affords the most striking example: here the manner in which Yevtushenko depicts the response of Nicholas' gendarmes to Lermontov's celebrated seditious poem allows the contest between the modern poet (who, it may be presumed, is the author himself) and the higher reaches of contemporary

* In the original a slang word which has no equivalent in English.

** Same as above.

ideological censorship to break visibly through the plot. Locutions which are of particularly recent currency again fulfill the role of markers: "befuddlement," "those snakes," "leading ideologist," "imbeciles," "bullshit," *(обалденье, эти гады, главный идеолог, идиоты, бодяга)*. Use of the initial in spoken language ("M. Lermontov") is peculiar to the jargon of modern officialdom.

In addition to lexical devices, rhetorical generalizations as well are employed by Yevtushenko as markers. Such generalizations mark the close of "A Ballad about Lermontov's Poem . . ." (". . . But forever . . .") and of "Lermontov" (". . . In Russia poets are born / with D'Anthès' bullet in their chests"). In "The Pushkin Divide" it is the modal auxiliary "must" which effects the generalization: there mention of Pushkin and Griboedov is succeeded by the line "And there must be no surrender . . ." There are other similar examples.

References to previous literary heroes and Aesopian quotations of other varieties are all encountered:

Когда, плеща невоплощенно,
себе эпоха ищет ритм,
пусть у плеча невсполошенно
свеча раздумия горит.

Каким угодно тешься пиром,
лукавствуй, смейся и пляши,
но за своим столом – ты *Пимен*,
скрипящий перышком в тиши.

И что тебе рука царева,
когда ты в келье этой скрыт,
и, как лиловый глаз циклопа,
в упор чернильница глядит! (p. 162)

When, in the throes of incarnation, / the age searches for its rhythm, / let the candle of contemplation / burn unflickering at your shoulder.

Feast as you like, / play the sly one, laugh, and dance, / but back at your desk–you are *Pimen,** / scratching with your quill amid the silence.

What do you care about the tsar / when, in your monk's cell, you're hidden beyond his reach / and the inkwell stares straight at you / like Cyclops' violet eye!

...увижу я, как будто страшный сон,
молчалиных тихоньствующих сонм
и многоликость рожи *Скалозуба.* (p. 182)

. . . as in a nightmare, I'll see / a swarm of mincing *Molchalins** / and *Skalozub's*** mug in its many disguises.

...здесь безнаказанно смеются
над платьем *голых королей.* (p. 217)

. . . here they laugh with impunity / at *naked kings'* new clothes.

Where there occur in Yevtushenko's quasi-historical poems elements of stylization after semi-official literary criticism, these are particularly effective markers:

Пора уже давно сказать, ей-ей,
потомкам правду чистую поведав,
о "роли положительной" царей,
опалой своевременной своей
из царедворцев делавших поэтов. (p. 183)

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* A legendary chronicler of Russian history.

** Molchalin and Skalozub are characters in Griboedov's play *Woe from Wit.*

Truly, it's high time to talk, / and insure that posterity will know the whole truth, / about the 'positive role' of the tsars who, / by their timely disfavor, / turned courtiers into poets. (Compare the poem by Korzhavin in Chapter III.3.)

An even more striking example of a similar shift may be found in "The Execution of Stenka Razin" (an excerpt from *Bratsk Station*):

Дьяк мне бил с оттяжкой в зубы,
приговаривал,
ретив:
"Супротив народа вздумал!.." (p. 252-53)

My examiner beat me across the teeth, // and kept repeating, / zealous as he was: // 'So you decided to turn against the people! . . .'

The accusation that the seventeenth-century Stepan Razin has turned "against the people" is, of course, a deliberate anachronism; it carries an allusion to the infamous "enemy of the people" and to the charges of which even Yevtushenko had his share during campaigns of vilification.

Я держался, глаз не прятал.
Кровью харкал я в ответ:
"Супротив боярства –
правда.
Супротив народа –
нет". (p. 253)

I stood my ground, didn't lower my eyes. // I spat blood in reply: // 'Against the boyars– / yes. // Against the people– / never.'

There is yet one other type of Aesopian quotation which is characteristic of Yevtushenko, a poet who more than once has

been accused of narcissism: self-quotation. Passages from such works as his *Autobiography*, "Babi Yar," or "The Heirs of Stalin," which have been severely criticized and officially banned from republication, are quoted or cited by periphrasis in new works. Thus "Cinderella" quotes from "The Heirs of Stalin" by means of word-play on *наследники-наслежены* (heirs-scuffed up):

> ... [она] полы истории скоблит.
> В альковах сладко спят наследницы,
> а замарашке –
> как ей быть?! –
> Ведь если так полы наслежены... (p. 266)

> . . . [she] scrubs the floors of history. // The heiresses sleep sweetly in their alcoves, // but what is she to do, / the grubby child, // if the floors are so scuffed up . . .

The construction "I am Anna Frank" from "Babi Yar" had particularly provoked the orthodox critics, and it is repeated in "Till Eulenspiegel": "I am a Russian. A Frenchman. A Pole. A Jew . . ." (p. 228)

Yevtushenko's allegorical poems—"Idol," "Cinderella," "The Mark of Cain," "The Decembrist Larches"—do not exhibit an equal wealth of markers. In certain of them the intratextual markers are in general but dimly discernible: in "Idol," for example, the phrase "It was generally held that he did everyone's thinking for them" is distantly associated with Stalin. However, in contrast to the parable—in which the title is at times integrated into a series of markers which cloak the genre—in allegory it is precisely the title which announces the genre. Yevtushenko's allegory always takes for its title words or expressions whose allegorical Aesopian usage has already gained currency in contemporary Russian speech: "idol," "the mark of Cain," "Decembrist." Only in such cases as when the allegorical image contained in the title is not sufficiently definitive ("Cinderella") must there be additional marking of the Aesopian content.

Time-honored imagery appears frequently in Yevtushenko's allegories, as it does, for example, in "The Decembrist Larches":

Нас мотает в туманах проклятых.
Океан еще где-то вдали,
но у бакенов на перекатах
декабристские свечи внутри. (p. 385)

We're dangling in the damned fog. / The ocean is still somewhere in the distance, / but Decembrist candles burn / inside the buoys on the shoals.

(The same "buoy," a popular image, is used also by Markin—see III.5. Both in Yevtushenko and in Markin this image is strictly speaking but a variant of the "guiding light" which figured in classical allegory.) "Idol" in many respects closely resembles Zabolotsky's "Mars in Opposition":

И над безжизненной пустыней
Подняв ресницы в поздний час,
Кровавый Марс из бездны синей
Смотрел внимательно на нас.
И тень сознательности злобной
Кривила смутные черты,
Как будто дух звероподобный
Смотрел на землю с высоты.[5]

Above the barren wasteland at a late hour / Bloody Mars raised his lashes / And gazed intently at us / From the deep blue abyss. / The shadow of an evil intuition / Distorted his clouded features, / As if a brute-like spirit / Were looking down on earth from above.

In Yevtushenko:

Но чудится мне: ночью
в своем лесу глухом
он зажигает очи,
обсаженные мхом.

И вслушиваясь в гулы,
пургою заметен,
облизывает губы
и крови хочет он. (p. 237)

At night in his dense forest, / so it seems to me, / he lights up / his moss-rimmed eyes.

And, lashed by the blizzard, / he listens intently to the rumbles / and smacks his lips; / it's blood he craves.

Following the example of Zabolotsky and numerous other poets, Yevtushenko once more employs for his allegory a traditionally allegorical image ("the vile pagan idol") and thereby has no need of further markers.

It has been noted that an Aesopian chord sounds in "An Oath to Free Expanse" and "Backstreets of Barcelona" by virtue of a peculiar momentum in the author's style—as if without heed for the design of the poem as such. Such a momentum is generated, however, not only by the style of the author but also by the perception of the reader. Any sufficiently protracted exposure of the reader to an author's individual poetics—by attendance at a reading by the author, or by acquaintance with the more extensive texts of long verse narratives and entire collections—is for the reader a process of instruction, a process of gradual comprehension of the stylistic and metastylistic systems peculiar to the given author. Thus in the case of the two poems mentioned above, the reader who is "schooled" in Yevtushenko's system of Aesopian coding will, upon receiving the signal "Spanish imagery," decode the entire poem in the usual Aesopian fashion, and he

will have prepared his own imagination to compensate for any material omitted by the author.

The poem "Suffering is tired of being suffering . . ." may be read in precisely this manner. Outside the context of the collection this elegy suggests nothing more than an abstract philosophical content: "there is no joy without suffering." The poem is built on a simple didactic construction—on successive illustrations in each of the eight stanzas of the poem's basic proposition: an ox bears a yoke, but munches the grass; a soldier braves the frost, but warms himself with tea, and so on. However, in the sixth stanza the author strays back to the familiar image of the "Spanish prisoner":

> Что нестрадавшим роскошь роз в Крыму?
> Но заключенный ценит подороже
> в Мадриде на прогулочном кругу
> задевший за ботинок подорожник. (p. 424)

> The Crimea's opulent roses are nothing special to those who've never suffered. / But to a prisoner in Madrid / the plantain which grazed his boot in the exercise yard / is even more dear.

"Madrid" is unavoidably perceived as one signal from Yevtushenko's Aesopian code. The illogicality of the antithesis is surely another marker: a natural contrast would involve the juxtaposition of the congenial Crimea not with equally balmy Madrid but rather with the harsh Kolyma, with Siberia. And this is the correction which the practiced reader carries out: the reader enters "Siberia" in the place of "Madrid," and the Spanish prisoner is transformed into a Soviet convict.

This operation sets the sixth stanza apart from the others and endows it with a special status within the structure of the poem—the status of a marker-stanza: in the light of this double-edged stanza all musing on happiness and suffering acquires a measure of tangibility, for this is precisely the attitude taken toward

suffering by the poet's fellow-citizens (on the order of "For all that we modern Russians may suffer, we know how to treasure simple joys").

It must be understood that the Aesopian content which falls into this category is fluid and nonspecific in the extreme. However, the distinguishing feature of Yevtushenko's work partakes of this very circumstance: Yevtushenko draws no precise line between style and metastyle. *Ambiguity* is the dominant, focusing component of his work.

This in turn conditions the reader's perception of even those poems in the collection which exhibit none of the devices of Aesopian encoding proper. If there is available even the slightest opportunity for an Aesopian reading, an irresistible momentum will frequently enjoin the reader to decode all tropes and rhetorical figures in an Aesopian way.

The poem "Grannies," in which Yevtushenko describes with open sentiment the cares and burdens of elderly women, concludes with the lines:

> ...у России зубы вновь прорезываются
> в руках у грустных бабушек ее... (p. 172)

> . . . Russia in her sad grannies' arms / is cutting a new set of teeth . . .

If one were to again dislodge the poem from its proper context in the collection, it would be fully admissible to treat this ending as synecdoche which relays the sentimental substance of the poem: it is the kindly old women who raise the new generation. In the stylistically equivocal context of the collection, however, the reader also discerns a pun in "cutting a new set of teeth." Which is to say that through the efforts of the old women (who are symbols of tradition) there is maturing a new "sharp-toothed"—that is, critically minded—generation.

Such arguments as whether Aesopian language was decisive for Yevtushenko's style or the poet's style receptive to Aesopian

language—or even whether Yevtushenko's stylistic propensities and ideological searchings acted in tandem—are hopelessly circular and cannot be resolved here. One may with certainty presume only that the expressed preference for Aesopian language over "Juvenalian satire" as well as the identifying features of Yevtushenko's style are rooted in the poet's own psychology and traits of character. It may be established only that the duality upon which metastylistic devices rest is the same as underlies the devices which are favored in Yevtushenko's style as a whole. It is precisely for this reason that one may speak of Aesopian language as the dominant poetic value in Yevtushenko's individual style.

So that this claim will not remain uncorroborated, the stylistic features characteristic of Yevtushenko will be explored finally on the example of non-Aesopian works drawn from *The White Snows Are Falling* . . . The most popular and often repeated of Yevtushenko's lines have been chosen for this purpose:

Добро должно быть с кулаками...
("Malice"; p. 239)

Good should have punch . . .

Я разный —
я натруженный и праздный.
Я целе-
и нецелесообразный.
Я весь несовместимый,
неудобный,
застенчивый и наглый,
злой и добрый...
("Prologue"; p. 61)

I'm diverse— / I work to the bone and don't lift a finger. // I'm ex- / and inexpedient. // I'm entirely incongruous, / disconcerting, // shy and insolent, / mean and kind . . .

Белые ночи – сплошное "быть может"...
Светится что-то и странно тревожит –
может быть, солнце, а может, луна.
Может быть, с грустью, а может, с весельем,
может, Архангельском, может, Марселем
бродят новехонькие штурмана.
("White Nights in Arkhangelsk"; p. 298)

White nights–an unrelieved 'maybe' . . . / Something gleams and is oddly alarming– / maybe the sun, maybe the moon. / Newly graduated navigators wander about– / maybe in Arkhangelsk, maybe Marseille, / maybe in low spirits, maybe in high.

For all the variation in their genre and subject matter, these poems are manifestly unvaried in structure: all are built upon antithesis.

Antithesis is the rhetorical device which is most favored by Yevtushenko. Oftentimes the entire plot of a poem is consolidated on antithesis as, for example, in "Weddings": the hero wants to weep, but instead he must dance. (For variation, in "A Ballad about Sausage" a hero is shown who, when he wants to cry, must sing.)

Very often antithesis is the underlying motivation for the introduction of particular details: "a 'Heroic Mother' medal / pinned on a ragged gypsy woman" (p. 47). An antithetical effect is likewise achieved in a description of the Russian skyline: "Palaces of Culture. Tearooms. Barracks. / District Committees. Churches. Traffic checkpoints" (p. 261).

Among tropes it is oxymoron which is observed most frequently in Yevtushenko: "they loved . . . bitterly and joylessly" (p. 95); "a superfluous miracle," "they flew in place," "the soft-heartedness of malice" (p. 102); "stasis provides the best getaway," "children babbling . . . in bass voices" (p. 11); "already silent I [say]" (p. 114); "not forgiving evil for its good deeds," "with stony gaiety" (p. 121); "silently I echo you" (p. 127); "deadly sweetness" (p. 144); "[your enemies] nod cordially" (p. 146);

"radiant torments" (p. 225); "they keep silent aloud," "they give careful thought to smashing [one's] mug" (p. 223); "sweetly villainous" (p. 33); "black rainbows" (p. 354); "blessedly wise stupidity" (p. 360); "to stoop to victory, to rise to defeat" (p. 419). The examples quickly multiply.

One other preferred grammatical-stylistic device should yet be noted. At issue here are such grammatical constructions as "and I run after me myself" (p. 57), "I was embarrassed by myself" (p. 59), "I'm diverse" (p. 61), "I am older than me by . . ." (p. 90), "I'll attach . . . myself . . . to a chain" (p. 101), "the bread ate them" (p. 188), "millions . . . of myselves watched me" (p. 277), and so on. From the standpoint of semantics, Yevtushenko violates in these examples the sensible rule which in most cases prohibits the equation of one participant in an action with another (the subject and object, for example, cannot have the same referent). Where these grammatical constructions appear in Yevtushenko's work, the object is a metaphorical one: "a second I," a kind of "not I."

Yevtushenko often allows himself another infringement upon grammatical prescription, an infringement which operates very much like the violation cited above. This second grammatical transgression is realized in antitheses of the following type: "you're nice, but still you're disgusting" (p. 72); "he's the one, for he isn't him" (p. 74); "I cherish, although I'm not able" (p. 88); "in your injustice you are also just" (p. 144); "they'll filch from . . . thieves" (p. 147); "there was no superiority . . . in their supremacy" (p. 151); "infraudulence is fraud" (p. 155); "paying up an unpayable debt" (p. 173); "a brow missing a forehead" (p. 236); "a hunt is not a hunt at all" (p. 283); "Lorca was not slain when they slew him" (p. 364). The logical predicates of these utterances are stripped of positive content, and the entire substance of the statement is reduced to a certain "not."

One may say that it is the quality of oxymoron which is held in common by all Yevtushenko's favorite stylistic maneuvers: everywhere in Yevtushenko there is upheld the principle of the

association in one image of antithetically opposed qualities (on the pattern of Derzhavin's "A tsar—a slave—a worm—a God!").

It is furthermore typical that, in contrast to Derzhavin's model, the fact of antithetical contrast is by itself not of such enormous consequence for Yevtushenko. For example, in order to highlight the basic construction of the aforementioned antitheses, precisely those words which soften the contrariety were in some instances omitted. It is very common for Yevtushenko to temper his antitheses with an array of modal qualifiers: "maybe" and "might" are recurrent in the poem "White Nights in Arkhangelsk"; "sort of"—as in "I sort of drank, I sort of didn't" (p. 49)—is another such repeated qualification. This vagueness is often underscored by certain of the plot's details: white nights, "the Patriarch Ponds are *a blur*" (p. 78); "everything looked strange and *blurred*" (p. 82); "*either* a god *or* a sinner" (p. 229); "*midway between* wax and metal" (p. 257); "*no* longer tipsy, *but not* sober *either*" (p. 334); "*a bit* a rebel, *a bit* a teacher" (p. 335), and so on.

Possibility but not finality, permissibility but not obligation—it is toward these blurred oppositions that Yevtushenko's style is oriented. Owing to specific historical circumstances, which have been indicated at the beginning of this chapter, such a style was fairly widely practiced. Even coincidences of plot are not infrequent among Yevtushenko and his contemporaries. (Akhmadulina's "Saint Bartholomew's Night," for example, may be compared with Yevtushenko's "The Mark of Cain.") An oxymoronic quality colors Yevtushenko's entire poetics, including even the notorious assonant "Yevtushenko rhymes" which, from the standpoint of traditional Russian rhyming practice, "are maybe rhymes, but maybe not."

Given that the breach of predictability is here accepted as the basis of artistic style (see Note 1 to Chapter II), it may be said that Yevtushenko's verse is abundantly marked—in the areas of both style and metastyle (Aesopian language)—by antithesis and oxymoron. Both built upon contrast, antithesis and oxymoron are devices which are easily understood by a wide range of

readers. And it was this that established Yevtushenko as a popular poet—even though his pointed Aesopian subject matter alone would have guaranteed him a large audience. Still, that popularity declined once Russian poetry in the 1970s had returned to its traditional civic and Apollonian models.

Chapter VII

AESOPIAN LANGUAGE AS A FACTOR IN THE SHAPING OF A LITERARY GENRE

(From the Experience of Children's Literature)

In Leningrad in 1968 a literary scandal broke which rapidly assumed widespread notoriety. In the preface to a two-volume anthology, *Masters of Russian Verse Translation*, Efim Etkind attributed the upsurge in Russian translation activity in the Soviet era to a heightening of ideological censorship which had pressed serious writers out of original writing and into translation; translation remained for many writers their only livelihood, as well as in its own way a means of self-expression and sometimes even an indirect vehicle of protest (see Chapter III.3). Although publication of this part of the preface was at the last moment stayed, a flood of harsh repressive measures was unleashed upon Etkind.[1]

In the wake of this episode no one further dared draw attention to the analogous, and perhaps even more revealing, situation in Russian children's literature to which, ever since the 1920s and by reason of similar imperatives, the most prominent writers had extended their energies: Yesenin, Zoshchenko, Mandelstam, Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Platonov, Prishvin; members of the avant-garde group Oberiu—Vvedensky, Zabolotsky, Kharms—and such like-minded writers as Vladimirov, Oleynikov, and Shvarts. It was on the strength of the peculiar quality of their talents that the majority of these writers, consciously or unconsciously,

sought even as they embraced children's literature to retain their adult reader. Such an aspiration enjoined writers to orient their language toward ambiguity. Yet, in contrast to adult literature, the plots and styles of writing commonly available to children's literature are for the most part rather simple and straightforward. And so a dual orientation—toward both ambiguity and simplicity—made parody, particularly Aesopian parody, the preferred genre of this new literary trend.[2]

K. I. Chukovsky is properly regarded as the founder of modern Russian children's literature. A critic of impeccable taste and fiery temperament, Chukovsky had already in the years prior to the revolution embarked on a personal crusade against the commercialization of children's literature. Nor did he relent in the aftermath of the October Revolution, when unassuming hack writers were supplanted by a sudden incursion into children's literature of scribblers with propagandistic pretensions.

Chukovsky bolstered his position with his own psycholinguistic investigations into the development of speech and poetic faculty in children (see his repeatedly reprinted *From Two to Five*). Chukovsky's findings left intact none of those stereotypes on whose authority crudely didactic and saccharine works for children had been allowed to proliferate. It was he who first discerned a connection between the more advanced poetic theories of the literary avant-garde and aspects of the growth and development of the child's consciousness. For instance, word-creation carried out in the manner of Velimir Khlebnikov proved to be in essence quite consonant with the word-creation performed by children.[3] (Compare the "child's psychology" in Pasternak's work, as noted by Yu. Tynyanov in his article "The Interlude."[4])

What Chukovsky advocated for modern Russian children's literature was that it dispense with moronic oversimplification, with gushing sugar-coated moralizing, and that it begin to play by the reader's own rules, that is, by the laws governing children's language and thought.

However, no sooner had he taken upon himself the role of

"playing coach" than Chukovsky discovered the inherent ambiguity of such games, their, so to speak, dual-purposiveness. Not only the folkloric rhythms of child's play and unhampered word-creation, but parody as well proved to be an essential element of unfettered writing for children.

The devices of parody are amply represented already in the first of Chukovsky's verse narratives for children, "The Crocodile" (1917).

In Chapters I, V, and VI of Part Two, the popular song "Kamarinskaya" is parodied:

Говорит ему печальная жена:
"Я с детишками намучилась одна:
То Кокошенька Лелешеньку разит,
То Лелешенька Кокошеньку тузит.
А Тотошенька сегодня нашалил:
Выпил целую бутылочку чернил".[5]

His poor wife says: / 'I'm pooped out being alone with those kids: / Either Kokoshenka swats Lyolyoshenka, / Or Lyolyoshenka punches Kokoshenka. / And today Totoshenka acted up: / He polished off a whole bottle of ink.'

(It should be noted that among popular songs "Kamarinskaya" enjoyed an exclusive status: while it was in one respect exceptionally liked among the populace, it was in another not infrequently regarded as a symbol of the extreme degradation and suffering of the Russian people; it was with this latter connotation in mind, for instance, that M. I. Glinka incorporated

the motif of "Kamarinskaya" into a well-known orchestral scherzo. Chukovsky took over the metrical pattern of the second half of the song, with its masculine endings [*Ах, ты, сукин сын, камаринский мужик, / Ты к такому обращенью не привык...* (Ah, you Komarin muzhik, son of a bitch, / You're not used to being treated such)], its trochaic hexameter typically saturated with pyrrhics, its rhymed couplets, and he parodied its plot motifs: the brawling, the swilling of "whole bottles," the women's lamentations, and so on.)

Chapter IX of Part Two is a transparent parody on one of the most famous works of Russian Romanticism, Lermontov's narrative poem "Mtsyri":

И встал печальный Крокодил
И медленно заговорил:
"Узнайте, милые друзья,
Потрясена душа моя.
Я столько горя видел там,
Что даже ты, Гиппопотам,
И то завыл бы, как щенок,
Когда б его увидеть мог."[6]

> The downhearted Crocodile rose / And slowly started in: / 'Dear friends, let everyone see, / My soul is shaken. / So much sorrow did I witness there / That even you, Hippopotamus, / Would howl out like a pup / If you could see it.'

(Compare in "Mtsyri": *Я мало жил, я жил в плену. / Таких две жизни за одну, / Но только полную тревог, / Я променял бы, если б мог* [I've lived little, and in captivity. / I'd exchange two such lives / For one full of disturbance / If I could].[7] It should be recalled that Chukovsky's Crocodile relates the tribulations of the wild animals "in captivity"—in a zoo.)

In Chapter VI of Part Three any among Chukovsky's contemporary readers would unmistakably have recognized a parody on the civic motifs of the Symbolists:

Нет, ты разбей эти гадкие клетки,
Где на потеху двуногих ребят
Наши родные мохнатые детки,
Словно в тюрьме, за решеткой сидят!

В каждом зверинце железные двери
Ты распахни для плененных зверей...[8]

No, you smash those abominable cages, / Where our own woolly babes / Sit behind bars, as in prison, / For the amusement of two-legged youngsters.

Throw open the iron doors / To the caged animals in every zoo . . .

(Compare the very popular poem that Bryusov wrote at the beginning of the century, "The Bricklayer" [— *Каменщик, каменщик в фартуке белом, / Что ты там строишь? кому? / — Эй, не мешай нам, мы заняты делом, / Строим мы, строим тюрьму... / — Каменщик, каменщик, долгие ночи / Кто ж проведет в ней без сна? / — Может быть, сын мой, такой же рабочий . . .* etc. ("Bricklayer, you bricklayer in the white apron, / What are you building there? And for whom?" / "Hey, get lost, we've got work to do, / We're building, we're building a prison . . ." / "Bricklayer, bricklayer, / Who'll spend long sleepless nights there?" / "Maybe my son, a workman like me . . .")[9]]; *плененные звери* (caged animals) is a direct quotation from Sologub: *Мы — плененные звери, / Голосим, как умеем. / Глухо заперты двери, / Мы открыть их не смеем* [We are caged animals, / We whine as we can. / The doors are sealed tight, / We don't dare open them][10]).

In Part Three one can also detect motifs from Nekrasov's dactylic idylls, "Grandpa Mazay and the Hares" and "Sasha."

Thus this first creation of modern Russian children's literature was by its very nature ambivalent: for children, it was both game and story, stimulating awareness and liberating the imagination;

for adults, it was a satirical, Aesopian parody (see Chapter III.5). The parodying of popular works of Russian literature and folklore served here as the screen, while the object of satire was that political opportunism of the intelligentsia which had always disguised itself in splendiferous rhetorical reminiscences from Russian literature of the past and present.

Chukovsky did not author all that many works for children, yet he probably commanded an audience wider than that of any other modern Russian writer: his children's books were printed and reprinted in tens of millions of copies and each of those copies had at least two readers—a child, who did not actually read but rather listened, and an adult, who performed the actual reading. It was thus that Chukovsky enjoyed an unparelleled opportunity to nurture generations of Aesopian readers, and he devised and elaborated this method of recounting tales to children in such a way that adults too were captivated, inspired, or put to shame.

The nurturing of a future adult reader is in all times and places a very important social function of any literature for children. The overwhelming majority of modern readers have been *trained* to read one way or another, they approach the reading of this or that work with a fixed set of expectations, and they willingly permit the author to play with their perceptions so long as the author proceeds within the bounds of the code familiar to them.

Chukovsky prepared generation after generation of future Russian readers to search out a subtext in the works which they read. In particular, he accustomed them to the fact that popular images and motifs appropriated from Russian literature or folklore were often the signs which signaled the subtext.

Not many Russian authors in the Soviet era are known to have registered their opposition to Stalinism as a repressive authoritarian system. Apart from the anonymous transmitters of folklore and the unknown authors of a few epigrams, there are maybe three or four writers who may be mentioned by name: Pilnyak *(The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon)*, Shvarts *(The Dragon*

as well as, in part, *The Naked King* and *The Shadow),* Mandelstam ("We live, deaf to the land beneath us"), and Bulgakov (See Chapter VIII). Pilnyak and Mandelstam perished, Bulgakov was condemned to the status of non-being, and while Shvarts survived the Stalinist terror, never during the author's lifetime was *The Dragon* set before the footlights.

There is, however, every justification for adding to these individual instances of heroism the products of an entire genre of successful anti-totalitarian Aesopian satire, conceived on the basis of children's literature.

In his second narrative poem for children, "The Big Bad Cockroach" (first published in 1923), Chukovsky painted an allegorical picture of the political situation in a nation brought to heel by the dictatorship of a trifling political faction, at once feared and loathed by the majority of its citizens. Among the several nicknames with which Stalin was tagged (see Chapter II.3), "the cockroach" was one given permanence by the pen of a children's writer. Although Stalin had only just put out feelers at the time Chukovsky was composing his verse narrative, the work intended a specific target: it took aim not at a concrete ruler so much as at that authoritarian system of rule which later in the century would be designated "Stalinism." At the beginning of the 1920s there were still several mustachioed contenders for the role of dictator, but already from the beginning of the 1930s the title "the cockroach" was uniquely Stalin's. (Three decades later, in a popular performance based on Chukovsky's "The Big Bad Cockroach" at the Leningrad Young People's Theater the title character was played as an undisguised caricature of Stalin.)

If one is to investigate the aesthetics of verbal art, however, it will not suffice to establish the mere fact of political satire. Rather, one must discover the stylistic mechanisms which assure the psychological and social efficacy of literary images.

The plot of "The Big Bad Cockroach" is quite simple. In the midst of the tranquilly idyllic animal kingdom there suddenly

appears a *страшный великан . . . Тараканище!* (A dreadful giant . . . A big bad cockroach!)

Он рычит, и кричит,
И усами шевелит:

"Погодите, не спешите,
Я вас мигом проглочу!
Проглочу, проглочу, не помилую".[11]

He snarls, and he rages, / And he twitches his mustache:

'Wait a minute, not so fast, / I'll devour you in a wink! / I'll devour, I'll devour, I won't show any mercy.'

All the large and mighty wild animals *По лесам, по полям разбежалися, / Тараканьих усов испугалися* (Scattered across forests and fields, / Afraid of the cockroach's mustache).

И сидят, и дрожат под кусточками,
За болотными прячутся кочками.

Крокодилы в крапиву забилися,
И в канаве слоны схоронилися.

Только и слышно, как зубы стучат,
Только и видно, как уши дрожат.

А лихие обезьяны
Подхватили чемоданы
И скорее со всех ног
Наутек.[12]

They sit trembling under bushes, / Lie concealed behind the swamp hills.

The crocodiles have found a refuge in the nettles, / And the elephants are holed up in a ditch.

There's no sound but the chattering of teeth, / No movement but the quivering of ears.

The nimble monkeys / Grabbed their bags / And, faster than their legs would carry them, / Bolted.

The cockroach mounts an atmosphere of terror in the animal kingdom, and the animals are persuaded to converse only in whispers, even when exchanging their woes. They are at last delivered—by a tiny impetuous sparrow:

Взял и клюнул Таракана –
Вот и нету великана.[13]

He just pecked the cockroach– / There you have it, no more giant.

The image of the tyrant-cockroach created by Chukovsky, it is here suggested, owes its unusual popularity to a folklore source, to the fact that the cockroach is an image deeply rooted in the Russian folk consciousness.

In Russian folklore the cockroach is a frequent visitor. There is a sarcastic proverbial saying "Sure, there's not a cockroach in Moscow!" *(Не видала Москва таракана!)* which is widely known.[14] Jakobson links the etymology of the Russian word "cockroach" *(таракан)* with the Turkic word for "dignitary" *(tarkan).* This Turkic "dignitary-cockroach" *(tarkan-tarakan)* is encountered in a series of Russian epics where he goes by the name of Torokanchik, the representative of an alien and hostile power.[15] At the same time, insofar as the Russian cockroach is endowed with a mustache (in contrast to the English cockroach, which has neither a mustache nor whiskers but rather antennae), this word not infrequently appears as the nickname for any

man possessed of a thick, and especially a coarse and bristly, mustache.

Those ironic nicknames for Stalin which were associated with his mustache (he is "the old boy with the mustache" [*батька усатый*] in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich)* have been cited earlier (Chapter II.3). The contamination of "mustache" *(усы)* and "cockroach" *(таракан)* in a single image for the depiction of coercion and unlawfully acquired power is not fortuitous. The word "mustache" was in use up to the nineteenth century as a slang term for "thieves." In a well-known cycle of folk ballads there appear "mustaches" *(усы)* who pillage and inflict torments upon the peasants *(мужики)*, the simple people.[16] This associative richness is contained within the Aesopian pseudonym which Chukovsky gave to his character, and it is such a resonance which Potebnya termed "the internal form of the word."

(There is no question that this word-picture is used in its most powerful and condensed form in Mandelstam: "His cockroach whiskers leer" [*тараканьи смеются усища*]; appropriately, in one variant of the same poem reference is also made to Stalin as a "peasant-slayer" [*мужикоборец*].[17] It is to Chukovsky, however, that precedence belongs in the literary use of this parodo-folkloric Aesopian image; Chukovsky accomplished this, moreover, within the framework of a tale for children.)

An example of Aesopian anti-authoritarian satire veiled as apologia is to be found in the work of the prominent satirist M. M. Zoshchenko. While Zoshchenko's short stories about Lenin are frequently cited in Soviet criticism as evidence of the writer's loyalty to the regime, the critics who make such claims evidently act from either conscious deceit or insensibility wherever stylistic matters are concerned. Parodic motifs run through all of Zoshchenko's prose, and the *Stories About Lenin* are in this respect no exception. In his *skaz* skillfully availing himself of the role of a "storyteller for children," one who is obliged to simplify and to accommodate himself to a child's level of understanding,

Zoshchenko parodies such a major staple of Soviet propaganda as the apologetic literature of "Leniniana."

The story "How Lenin Was Given a Fish" may be considered by way of illustration.[18]

In the first four paragraphs, which provide an account of the hardships of the Civil War years, a stylistically neutral tone is maintained. There is in this opening exposition but one stylistic shift: "And the populace fed themselves on whatever was at hand. All were issued a teeny weeny piece of bread to last them the entire day." Here the distinctively official locution "the populace fed themselves" is at sharp variance with the juvenilely affected "a teeny weeny piece." Such is the first signal to the reader that he is confronted not by apologetics as such but rather by a parody of them.

At the close of the fourth paragraph Zoshchenko reinforces this device when it is said of the "starving" Lenin: "he even drank his tea not with sugar but with rock candy *(карамельки)*." The placement of the word *карамельки* is so chosen that it receives the strong intonational emphasis which is conditioned by the adversative construction "not with . . . but with" and also concludes the initial account of famine and tribulations which, as is the rule in Soviet hagiographic tradition, the great leader suffers equally with his people. This word *карамельки*, with its mawkish diminutivizing suffix, deprives the entire preceding picture of all sense: from the reader's, and above all the child's point of view, *карамельки* are better than sugar.

In the course of the story's development its satirical motifs become entirely obvious. At one point Lenin's anger has been aroused: "And suddenly the fisherman saw Lenin's hand going for the bell. 'Holy smokes,' the fisherman thought, 'now what did I do?' " The fisherman's terror at the sight of the dictator's hand reaching for the bell cannot, of course, be reconciled with the figure of "good ol' grandpa Ilyich" *(добрый дедушка Ильич)*.

There is, consonant with the demands of the genre, a happy ending when Lenin has the fish sent off to the starving children.

Here there is no question of a parody within the parody, for the venerable Lenin not only parodically assumes the attributes of Christ, but he even excells Him in miracle-working: Christ fed the hungry by filling their baskets full with fish, while Lenin intends to do likewise with but a single fish.

In such a way has Zoshchenko constructed his satiric parody of the propaganda "gospel according to Ilyich."

Not Communist hagiography alone, but every other genre of propaganda as well became an object for satirical parody in evasive Aesopian children's literature. The poets of the Oberiu group, who in the 1930s had congregated about the children's magazines *The Hedgehog (Еж)* and *The Siskin (Чиж)*, were particularly frequent exploiters for purposes of parody of the Soviet "popular song" and "patriotic wartime verse": they raised and intensified to the point of absurdity the pitch of exalted optimism, dutiful rapture before one's leaders, and overconfident presumption of swift and easy victory which were peculiar to these semi-official genres.

In the pages of *The Hedgehog* and *The Siskin* satirical pieces of this type, in which the cliches of conventional patriotism are carried to absurdity, are to be encountered continuously. Thus as far back as the first issue of *The Hedgehog* for 1930 one may find the following, signed by A. Vvedensky:

Возле леса на опушке
Притаились наши пушки.
Если враг подойдет –
Застучит пулемет,
Пуля пчелкой зажужжит,
Струсит враг и убежит,
Убежит трусливый враг
и запрячется в овраг.

Near the verge of the forest / Our guns lie out of sight. / If the enemy advances, / The machine gun'll begin to rattle, / The bullets'll start

buzzing like bees, / The enemy'll chicken out and turn tail, / The chickenhearted enemy'll turn tail / And hole up in a ditch.

Or consider the following example. It is traditional for every Soviet periodical to print each May verses glorifying the "international day of workers' solidarity." The fifth issue of *The Siskin* for 1941 carried such a red-letter-day poem—it had come from the pen of Daniil Kharms and bore the title "A May Song":

Да, сегодня раньше всех,
Раньше всех,
Да, сегодня раньше всех
Встанем я и ты
Для того, чтоб нам попасть,
Нам попасть,
Для того, чтоб нам попасть
В первые ряды.

Мы к трибуне подойдем,
Подойдем,
Мы к трибуне подойдем
С самого утра,
Чтобы крикнуть громче всех,
Громче всех,
Чтобы крикнуть громче всех:
"Сталину – ура!"

[...] Потому что если враг,
Если враг,
Потому что если враг
Вдруг и нападет,
Ворошилов на коне,
На коне,
Ворошилов на коне
В бой нас поведет!

Yes, today ahead of everyone, / Ahead of everyone, / Yes, today ahead of everyone / You and I'll get up / So that we'll get a place, / Get a place, / So that we'll get a place / In the front rows.

We'll get to the reviewing stand, / We'll get there, / We'll get to the reviewing stand / First thing in the morning, / So that we'll shout the loudest, / Shout the loudest, / So that we'll shout the loudest: / 'Hooray for Stalin!'

. . . Because if the enemy, / If the enemy, / Because if the enemy should suddenly attack, / Voroshilov on a horse, / On a horse, / Voroshilov on a horse / Will lead us into battle!

Before the reader is a work displaying all the hallmarks of the genre which it holds up to parody, the military-patriotic song. The metrical pattern and arrangement of stanzas peculiar to such a song are imitated, along with the song's typical repetitions—which are as if in satisfaction of a melodic structure—its vigorous expletory affirmations ("Yes, today . . ."), and, of course, its characteristic vocabulary and favored imagery—the military review, the commander astride his horse, and so on.

It is common knowledge that when printed on its own the text of a song is perceived as somewhat odd: the repetitions and enjambments which are occasioned by the melody appear awkward. The text of a song seems cruder and more obtrusive than the text of a poem.

Kharms has turned these peculiarities of the song genre to advantage, skillfully drawing upon them for his screen. The inertia of the relaxed demands for logical consistency which the presumed censors would place upon a song text ensured that Kharms' poem would slip through and into print. For the Aesopian reader, however, with his keen stylistic sense, there were markers of the poem's real—satirical—content: the exaggerated urgency of the repetitions (were the repetitions eliminated each eight-line stanza would be reduced to four lines, e. g.,

Да, сегодня раньше всех / встанем я и ты / для того, чтоб нам попасть / в первые ряды) and the exaggerated illogicality of the content, disproportionate even by the standards of the more typical of such songs—the lyric hero thirsts not to accomplish heroic feats but merely to shout a "hurrah"; his faith in the invincibility of the USSR is based on nothing more than that Voroshilov will lead the Soviet army into battle ("on a horse"!).

The accuracy of Kharms' satire was confirmed with almost lightning speed by the developing course of events. By the time the next issue of *The Siskin* was due to appear, "the enemy" had already penetrated deep into Soviet territory and Voroshilov, charged in the first days of the war with the defense of Leningrad, had pulled the city into a tragic siege by the Germans.

A peculiar type of self-parody was also employed toward Aesopian ends by Kharms and his Oberiu confederates: this they accomplished by the application of devices of absurdist poetics—in particular trans-rational language *(заумь)*—in works for children.[19] The stylistic strategy of Russian practitioners of the absurd rested upon the willful dismantling of the text's semantic coherence. An outwardly logical and, to all appearances, propagandistic poem, Kharms' "A Million" (Appendix 4) has nonetheless been relieved of any semantic burden. How Kharms has effected this operation will be traced below.

"A Million" is regarded by Soviet critics (and by the ideological censorship) as a tribute paid by Kharms to the Leninist youth movement. And it is most certainly true that when it appears on the printed page, attended by the routine illustration of a troop of Young Pioneers toting drums and banners, the poem does not at first glance distinguish itself from the great bulk of Pioneer songs and verse. But a careful reading shows that "A Million" is a more equivocal work than it might appear.

The plot of "A Million" is minimal: a marching troop of boys meets with a parading troop of girls; the two groups combine and together they merge with a large sea of children gathered in a square. There is an unusual aspect to the plot, however,

in the author's inordinate preoccupation with arithmetic which, it would seem, is of no relevance. Where the propagandist writer would normally invoke such standard emblematic details as the flags, bugles, and drums of the Young Pioneers, Kharms—not content with any simple word-play on the march command "Step, two, three, four!"—ventures into mathematical equations: 40 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 4 x 4 + 4 x 4 + 4. In the place of "plot development" Kharms breaks to the reader the astonishing news that 80 = 40 + 40; and with the revelation that 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + + 4 x 4 + 104 x 4 + 150 x 4 + 200000 x 4 + 4 = "nearly a million," the plot attains its climax.

It is possible to read these calculations metaphorically as expressions of precision and ultralogic; they may be regarded as crowning examples of the system of imagery which is here open to exploitation by Kharms. At the same time, however, these computations are entirely arbitrary, inasmuch as 40, 80, and "nearly a million" may all be represented by an infinite number of arithmetical operations. Thus Kharms parodies "logical" poetry.

There is in the fourth stanza a shift which arises from a subversion of the usual speech pattern "not A, not B, not C, but D," in which B is greater than A, C greater than B, and the final element D greatest of all (for example, "not one ruble, not ten, not a hundred, but a whole thousand!"). In order that such a sequence be realized in speech, the enumerated objects must of necessity belong to the same lexical-stylistic category. The shift effected by Kharms consists in the shuffling of two stylistically opposed categories, one informal and drawn from popular speech (a few → a band → a throng → nearly a million), the other formal and borrowed from military parlance (a squadron → a battalion). Rather than a normal progression, Kharms admits an absurd one: "not a band, / not a squadron, / not a throng, / not a battalion, / and not forty, / not a hundred, / but nearly / a MILLION!"

The poem is written in trochaic tetrameter, a march meter. The graphic organization of the poem, whereby full lines are splintered into brief segments, dictates that the poem be

declaimed and almost every individual syllable stressed. Such a reading precludes pyrrhics and spondees, and it subjects each word to an unnatural fragmentation.

The first and second lines in each of the first three stanzas have masculine endings, while the first line of stanza four has an unexpected feminine resolution. This metrical shift abruptly introduces the rhythm of the drinking song "The Society Lady" into a Young Pioneer march (compare *а на площадь / повернули* [they turned / onto the square] with *а барыня заболела* [the society lady fell sick]). The new rhythm is in comic contrast with the drum-beat precision of the other lines. (The reader is partially prepared for the appearance of "The Society Lady" by the vernacular and dialect form *встретилися* in the third stanza.)

Of the fifteen rhymes, twelve are homonymic, that is, both members of the rhyme contain the same word or an identical root: *четыре-четыре, вдруг-вдруг, отряд-подряд*. Again the fourth stanza is exceptional: the first two lines are left without any rhyme *(повернули-стоит)*, the third line forms only a partial rhyme with the fifth *(рота-сотня)*, and the fourth and sixth lines are rhymed on non-Russian suffixes *(батальон-миллион)*. Thus all the rhymes are weak and may be regarded as parodic and non-rhymes.

In the regular first, second, third, and fifth stanzas 29 of 96 stresses fall on the vowel *ы*. Moreover, nowhere in the poem does *ы* appear in unstressed position. Such circumstances ask that one be reminded of the somewhat special status of *ы* in Russian: this vowel, which is assumed to have been taken over from the Turkic languages, is frequently admitted in words of a pejorative cast—*грымза, дылда, быдло, рыло* (pruneface, beanpole, meathead, kisser), words which are also West Slavic borrowings. In addition, this vowel figures widely in onomatopoetic interjections which also have a negative connotation: *гы* (goo, gaga—an imbecilic laugh, in place of the normal "ha-ha-ha," "ho-ho-ho," "he-he-he"), *ых* (yipe—which replaces "ah," "oh," and "eh" for any half-witted exclamation of dismay), and so on.

Although Kharms might have used any real numbers for his mathematical computations, he expresses a definite preference for the numeral "four" and its derivatives. (Compare the refrain "forty-four merry siskins" in the poem "The Merry Siskins," jointly authored by Kharms and S. Marshak.[20]) An immediate association arises with Russian folklore, particularly with folklore "gibberish": the untranslatable *четыре-четырки — две растопырки*, "forty barrels of prisoners" *(сорок бочек арестантов)*, "four if you go around, six if you go straight" *(около четыре, а прямо шесть)*, and so on. The extra-metrical conclusion of the poem—*ВСЕ!*—also has a folkloric quality to it.

One may say in summary that alongside a screening official-sounding plot Kharms' "A Million" evinces an elaborate system of markers which bespeak the work's genuine, satirical, content. Operative on all the poem's various levels (meter, rhyme pattern, sound instrumentation, lexicon), these markers are of a uniform type: all are premised upon expansion to absurd dimensions and liberation from semantic constraint.

As in the 1930s, so in subsequent decades the primary target of Aesopian children's literature was the beguiling optimism of official propaganda.

Dating from Mayakovsky, the exclamation *Хорошо!* (Great!)—which one of Mayakovsky's verse narratives bears as its title—has been prescribed for fullest possible use in works of propagandistic intent. The following shows typically its use in songs for children:

Эх, хорошо в стране советской жить!
Эх, хорошо страну свою любить!
Эх, хорошо страной любимым быть,
Красный галстук с гордостью носить...

Если солнце печет – хорошо, хорошо!
Если дождик идет – хорошо, хорошо!
Если холод и снег – будет лыжный пробег,
Нам, спортсменам, всегда хорошо!

Oh, it's great living in a Soviet nation! / Oh, it's great loving your country! / Oh, it's great to be loved by your country, / To wear a red necktie proudly . . .

If the sun's baking–it's great, great! / If it showers–it's great, great! / If it's cold and snowy, there'll be skiing, / We sportsmen always have it great!

Against this background the children's humoresque "How I Wrote Verses," by Viktor Golyavkin, reads as a pointed Aesopian composition:

Once I was making my way through the Pioneer camp and singing in time with my steps whatever happened into my head. I noticed that everything came out in rhymes. There, I thought, that's something new! I had found my talent. Off I ran to the editor of our wall-newspaper.

Vovka the editor went into raptures.

'Why it's remarkable you've become a poet! Write, but don't let it go to your head.'

I wrote a poem about the sun:

A ray of sun pours
On my head!
Oh, my head
Has it great!

'It's been raining today since morning,' said Vovka, 'and you write about the sun. There'll be snickering and all the rest of it. Write about rain. You can say that rain is nothing, that no matter our spirits are up, and all the rest of it.'

I began to write about the rain. True, for a long time nothing took, but at last it caught hold:

The rain pours
On my head.
Oh, my head
Has it great!

'You have no luck,' Vovka said, 'the rain's just stopped, that's the problem! And the sun hasn't come out yet.'

I sat down to write about intermediate weather. Again it didn't take right away, but later it did come:

Nothing pours
On my head.
Oh, my head
Has it great!

Vovka the editor said to me:

'Look over there, the sun's out again.'

Then at once the point dawned on me, and the next day I turned out such a poem:

A ray of sun pours
On my head,
The rain pours
On my head,
Nothing pours
On my head.
Oh, my head
Has it great![21]

The remark "Then at once the point dawned on me . . ." from the story quoted above became a catch phrase for literary conformity.

Viktor Golyavkin restored and extended the tradition of a parodic edge in children's literature. There appeared in his wake a flood of children's writers who exploited the same system of double-edged writing: Vassily Aksyonov *(My Grandfather is a Monument),* Yuz Aleshkovsky, Vladimir Maramzin, Igor Yefimov, and many others.[22] The works of these writers, like those of the writers who first developed the new Soviet genre of Aesopian children's literature, count hidden parody and heightened absurdity as their principal devices. The parody concealed in the children's literature they author is, as earlier in the century, always a satirical

parody (see Chapter III.2), that is, it takes as its subject the linguistic or literary phenomena indicative of that social reality which the writer critically exposes. Their Aesopian works for children are addressed, no less than were those of Chukovsky or Zoshchenko, to two categories of readers: to children and to adults. The function of Aesopian literature with respect to the former is, of course, the gradual nurturing of a future Aesopian reader.

CONCLUSION

Chapter VIII

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR AESOPIAN LANGUAGE?

Anyone who weighs logically the problem of Aesopian language as a whole is eventually and inescapably confronted by the question which heads this chapter. (It is a question which has no doubt occurred more than once to the reader as well.) The modest record of Russian literary scholarship given over to Aesopian language, indeed, bears witness to this inevitable impasse. It would appear that all who have probed this field, the present author not excluded, have proceeded from an initial presumption that Aesopian language is necessary and have conceived their task as an investigation into the code of Aesopian language. This code has proved structurally ramiform, subject to specific laws; it has been possible to analyze the code into an entire series of finely nuanced elements among which there exist regularly constituted relationships. Classification and analysis of these elements have permitted the elaboration of methods for decoding Aesopian language (at which the reader arrives empirically).

However, one has only to remove inquiry to another plane—namely, what is the Aesopian *content* (message)—for two regular features to appear which reveal the enormous disproportion between the structural sophistication, the multiplicity of the code's forms and the restricted scope, monotony, and customary vagueness of the content.

Indeed an analogy may be ventured with that coding and decoding which is practiced by underground movements or in espionage. From the standpoint of information transfer such

an analogy is entirely proper, for in both cases a certain filter stands (or is presumed to stand) between sender and receiver: the censorship is equivalent to enemy counter-espionage. Should two members of the Soviet intelligentsia with oppositional leanings speak on the telephone, their conversation may take the following form:

– Hi. What's up?

– Nothing. How about you?

– Not much either. Just a little bored. You wouldn't have anything good to read, would you?

– I might. What about one of the classics–have you read Gorky's "Old Man Arkhip and Lyonka"?

– No, but I've been wanting to. Thanks . . .[1]

The Aesopian model of this exchange differs in no respect from analogous models in an artistic text. Here there is a series of screens: stereotypical phrases of everyday intercourse, reference to "the classics" and to Gorky, mention of one of Gorky's stories; and there are markers: the improbability of offering a listless friend a widely anthologized story which everyone has long since known backward and forward, and the punning allusion to the title of Solzhenitsyn's literary work, *The Gulag Archipelago (*"*Дед Архип и Ленька*" — "*Архипелаг ГУЛАГ*"*)*. What distinguishes the passage above from a structurally analogous Aesopian utterance in an artistic text is *the specificity of its Aesopian content:* at issue is the concrete act of exchanging a concrete book.

In espionage the situation is the same. When a Soviet intelligence officer transmits to Moscow coded information concerning the anti-aircraft defense system in the District of Columbia, it is a specific message which is encoded: "missiles of such and such a type are based in such and such a place in such and such a number, and so on."

Likewise the *roman à clef,* in which are encoded actual events from the lives of actual persons.

But when the poet Markin composes his poem about "the buoykeeper Isaich" (see Chapter III.5), it is not specific but only the most general information which is relayed to the reader, of the type "Solzhenitsyn is a good writer, vilification of Solzhenitsyn is without basis." Moreover, Markin *tells the reader nothing which the reader would not have known beforehand* and without his help. On the contrary, all that is Aesopian in literary art rests precisely upon the joint possession by author and reader (sender and receiver) of one and the same piece of information. Otherwise not a single one of the Aesopian devices examined earlier (screens and markers) would succeed: one may suppose that the reader who knows Solzhenitsyn as "Isaich" *already* shares the poet Markin's position toward "Isaich"; the reader who is unfamiliar with this alias (presumably the censor), but who manages to "break the code," registers only a very unspecialized message.

Aesopian literary texts, which from a pragmatic standpoint are devoid of informative content, offer glaring confirmation of the general thesis of the Formalists, of Bakhtin and Vygotsky: in art, form (code) is content.[2]

This formula restricts the field of action of those who would analyze the text by probing its "how"; for those who approach literature as it is understood here, however—literature not as a collection of texts but rather as a process extending through society and history—this formula does not diminish the urgency of the question "why?"

What is it which in principle distinguishes the *Novy mir* of the 1960s, for example, from those branches of the American press which specialize in sensational exposés of bureaucratic corruption, corporate excesses, and the like? In other words, wherein lies the difference between Aesopian writers and muckrakers in the mold of Jack Anderson, whose articles the Soviet press is so fond of reprinting? While Jack Anderson ferrets out and divulges incriminating information to his readers, the Aesopian writer alludes to information, or rather a body of information,

which is already known to the reader by experience, rumor, or such other channels as foreign radio broadcasts. In 1906, for example, one of the satirical magazines carried Shmidov's fable "The Swine, the Oats, and the Muzhik":

Свинья в овес случайно забежала,
Дурного сделав там немало...
Пришел мужик и, взяв дубину, –
Без думы дальней выгнал он скотину.
Нравоученье хочешь знать –
Свиней повсюду надо гнать.[3]

It happened the swine strayed into the oats, / Making more than a little mischief* there . . . / The muzhik came around and, seizing a club, / Drove the beast out without a second thought. / The moral, if you want to know: / Swine must everywhere be evicted.

If the reader was already aware that Minister of Internal Affairs Durnovo had been implicated in illegal speculation in oats and that, on the report of this activity submitted to him, Emperor Nicholas II had scribbled the instructions, "Remove the swine," then this reader could appreciate the fable's allegory. Yet if the reader already knew, what possible purpose was there in writing the fable? Why, in the journals of the time, all those countless puns on the name and office of the Russian autocrat: *колюшка* (a slight fish and a pejorative diminutive form of the name Nicholas), *Самозванов* (an imposter, which rhymes with "Romanov" and suggests the unlawfulness of the autocracy), *автор романов* (the author Romanov or an author of novels), and so on and so on? The reply which Chukovsky gives to the question "why?" is rather naive:

---

* The form of the Russian word for "mischief" used here *(дурного)* is a pun on the surname of the tsar's minister, Durnovo.

> Until the ninth of January many among the Russian people were sympathetic toward Nicholas, considering him a decent man if also weak and hapless. After the ninth of January contempt and hatred took the place of love. Since they were forbidden to write about the tsar, newspapers and magazines took to all manner of subterfuge *in order to nail Nicholas.* (Emphasis added)[4]

Chukovsky, to be sure, is incorrect. The point and rationale of Aesopian art are to be found rather in the conclusion of Vygotsky's classic analysis of Krylov's fables in *The Psychology of Art:*

> . . . an emotional deadlock and its resolution in the short-circuiting of contradictory emotions constitutes the true nature of our psychological reaction to the fable . . . . This is what Schiller meant, did he not, when, speaking of tragedy, he said that the real secret of the artist lies in the obliteration of content by form? And in the fable doesn't the poet, via the artistic form and structuring of his material, extinguish the emotion which the very content of his fable arouses?[5]

Indeed, what is the *subject* of Russian Aesopian works? It is neither more nor less than that which products of the opposite, propagandistic, genre take as their theme: the power of the State in all its manifestations. Propaganda defends this power, Aesopian literature attacks it. In the aesthetic and ideological system of propaganda the subject is a sacred one, to the extent that certain of its ingredients are taboo (prerevolutionary censorship laws, for example, forbade discussion of the person and activities of the tsar and members of his family; not criticism but discussion in general was prohibited[6]). At the same time, as the preceding section has shown, the Aesopian devices most often applied toward the most sacred element of the theme of power are parody, punning, and rhyme play—devices, that is, which are by nature the least solemn, the most prankish, and deflating; they are what Bakhtin calls carnivalesque devices: in the consciousness of the reader they topple sacred notions from the "lofty" to the vulgar "lowly," and thus effect a comic catharsis.[7]

Bakhtin's contention is excellently illustrated by a series of anecdotes about Lenin which have proliferated in the last twenty years. The distinguishing formal feature of the bulk of these anecdotes is a primitivism which is not typical of the genre, a primitivism which may extend to a total absence of story and of that sharp twist in the plot which is ordinarily prized in the anecdote. The absence of a story and the focus on the stylistic element preclude the translation of such an anecdote as follows:

> Lenin taps at Krupskaya's door: knock, knock, knock.
> – Who's there?
> – It's me, *Вовка-морковка* (Vovka-the-carrot-stick).

Here there is no plot which one might possibly retell in another language. The catharsis which is experienced by the anecdote's Russian audience rests upon a sudden stylistic plunge: the sacred "Lenin-Krupskaya" are plummeted into that extremely vulgar stylistic sphere in which erotic titillation is gleaned from words and phrases from the speech of children.

The Lenin anecdote is offered here as a graphic example. The anecdote is in general, however, a genre which only verges on the Aesopian, which is not entirely Aesopian because its subject (for instance, the "Lenin" theme as above) is frequently stated directly rather than by indirection. Yet one may discern in principle the same mechanism of catharsis in the reader's reaction to an Aesopian text. Thus in Voznesensky's poem "Shame" a portrait of the Aesopically encoded Khrushchev ("a country's king") is admitted into an extremely base plot ("unwashed feet").[8]

The structure of the Aesopian text thus unfolds in its proper perspective: 1) the surface level of articulated content; 2) the level of veiled allegorical content (a level which is as a rule trifling); 3) the deep content of a socio-psychological cast, catharsis. Again and again in a society where ideological censorship prevails the reader will animatedly follow this dangerous game in which

intellect bests authority; again and again the reader will participate, albeit passively, in the game, not analyzing or responding emotionally to the text so much as *celebrating* it as he would a mythical ritual.[9]

It is clear in this perspective that even the prohibitive censorship of the State has an essentially ritual character. And this applies not to ideological censorship alone. The State's exercise of the censoring function is not a matter of pragmatism, but rather an end in itself, necessary as one attribute of the myth of power. It is precisely this situation which explains such seeming absurdities as the fact that the films of Andrey Tarkovsky or certain of the works of Aksyonov were cleared by Soviet government agencies for distribution abroad while their domestic circulation remained an impossibility; that in technical libraries foreign journals reporting the latest in technology are secreted away; that, as Solzhenitsyn describes in the novel *The First Circle*, multistage filters of secrecy envelop an institution (the "sharashka") which employs, among others, captive Germans who are scheduled for imminent release to their homeland, some of them to West Germany.

Every publication of an Aesopian text in circumvention of the all-forbidding State is joyously celebrated by the intellectual portion of society. Chekhov vented this joy in a letter of 1886:

> Read Shchedrin's story in the Saturday issue [of *The Russian Gazette* for 15 February]. A charming piece. You'll be delighted and throw your hands up in amazement: in its boldness this tale is a complete anachronism! . . .[10]

In the light of these notions of comic catharsis, Mikhail Bulgakov's play *Batum*, published only recently, emerges as a risky Aesopian gamble on a grand scale.[11]

The composition of a play-panegyric for the occasion of Stalin's sixtieth birthday in 1939 was a venture suggested to Bulgakov by well-meaning friends and one which was undertaken

by the writer as an attempt to save himself amid the thickening political terror.[12]

The play appears on the surface to follow the pattern of Soviet "hagiography": Stalin, depicted in his youth and early manhood, is from beginning to end an unimpeachable hero who commands exceptionally high authority among the working masses and who unceasingly dispenses pearls of wisdom. Conversely, the "class enemies"—from the police informant to the governor and Tsar Nicholas himself—are drawn as ludicrous imbeciles.

The author of *The Master and Margarita* was, however, evidently incapable of writing a truly servile play. Perhaps unwittingly Bulgakov submitted his leading hero to Aesopian deflation, using by now familiar devices and in the first instance peaked absurdity. Absurd are the ease and dispatch with which Stalin implements his schemes; the conduct and deliberations of the representatives of authority are absurdly primitive. The parodic primitivism of Bulgakov's style in this work ought to have stood out sharply in the context of his entire dramatic output, which included *The Days of the Turbins, Flight, Zoyka's Apartment,* and *Ivan Vasilievich*—plays and comedies which rested upon subtle psychological evolution of character.

At certain moments in the play Bulgakov nudges his potential reader toward an Aesopian reading with quite conspicuously displayed absurd screens and markers. The following stage direction from Scene vi is of this kind: "CHIEF OF POLICE (Having turned white as a ghost, he bolted) . . ." (p. 177). In the drama directions of this type are considered meaningless, since the playwright may not prescribe what the average actor cannot perform: "he bolted," "wringing his hands," "guffawing" are all appropriate directions, but to demand that an actor represent uncontrollable physiological reactions—"he blanched," "he blushed," "sweat poured down his face"—is absurd. An author as experienced in the theater as Bulgakov, of course, was well aware of this, and it was by design that he violated the first rule of his trade.

Of particular interest, however, is the treatment of the image of Stalin himself.

The play begins with an extended monologue, which is on the whole the play's longest, by the rector of the theological seminary from which Stalin is being expelled. Although the monologue parodies theological oratory, in the context of the period—when mention of the dictator in Soviet literature was permitted only within the narrow confines of apologia—certain phrases have an unexpected ring as they are applied to Stalin:

> Those crazed people clanging the cymbal of their barren ideas . . .
>
> . . . one of such wrongdoers . . .
>
> . . . human society proclaims an anathema on the noxious tempter . . . (p. 141)

One forms the impression that this is not a simple parody of the style of a cliché-bound cleric, but rather a parodically sustained Aesopian quotation (see Chapter III.5).

A similar device is applied even more openly in Scene iv, where it is a police document which is quoted in a description of the criminal Dzhugashvili: "The usual head . . . The appearance of the person in question makes not the slightest impression" (p. 163).

And, finally, Bulgakov adopts a very delicately veiled internal quotation in order to equate his imbecilic Nicholas II and Stalin. There is in Scene ix a chat between the emperor and his minister concerning a report of a workers' demonstration organized in Batum by Stalin. Their dialogue is so constructed that the demonstration is touched on only in passing; for the most part the feeble-minded tsar and toadying minister, like two common provincials, discuss the illnesses of their families and acquaintances and various *miraculous* cures. In the tsar's contributions to this conversation, moreover, the style of cheap pamphlets addressed to such "miracles" is especially parodied:

> . . . The empress had exactly the same ailments and they vanished completely after one dip in the Sarov pond. And I myself, after bathing, I personally received total physical and mental relief (p. 201).
>
> Simply rub the sore spot with it [with holy water–L.L.] gently, and then bandage it with an old piece of flannel. In the process it doesn't hurt to hold a service to the newly-revealed righteous servant of God, the venerable Seraphim, the miracle-worker of Sarov (pp. 201-02).

The tsar tells further of one other *miracle* cure, following which the conversation switches to a trained canary:

> MINISTER: . . . And what *miraculous* bird have we here?
> NICHOLAS: It was a gift from a Tula postal official. He coached it for a year.
> MINISTER: A staggering phenomenon! (Emphasis added; p. 204)

In the succeeding, and final, scene Stalin tells his friends how during his escape in Siberia he fell into the icy water; the style of his account gradually takes on a suspiciously familiar tonality:

> . . . and I nodded off and slept for fifteen hours, I woke up and I don't see anything. Since then I haven't coughed once. *An event bordering on the miraculous* . . . (Emphasis added; p. 209)

There is one other ambiguous breach of the stereotype fixed for depictions of Stalin when at the close of Act III Stalin is shown being thrashed by his jail keepers. A beating on the stage is utterly foreign to the style of Bulgakov's psychological, Chekhovian dramas, and it prompts instead a direct association with the folk street farce, in which it is a virtual requirement that the rogue Petrushka receive jabs from the police officer.

It should be understood that Aesopian catharsis is far from always a comic catharsis. Tropes and figures which dignify

rather than deflate may be used as screens and markers; Lenin, in other words, may be depicted not as a comical "*Вовка-морковка,*" but rather as a tragic figure like Ivan the Terrible or Torquemada, for instance. But this type of Aesopian plot as well merely conceals an inner, socio-psychological plot which is of the same order as in the comic variant, namely the cat-and-mouse game of author and censor. The complex of readers' impressions may in this case be compared to the experiences of a circus audience watching a tightrope-walker flirt with danger: will he fall? will he be badly hurt? will he make it to the end, executing, what is more, all manner of leaps and somersaults along the way?

If the reader's awareness of the peril posed by the censorship gives Aesopian reading the sharp edge of experiences which are normally reserved to detective and adventure stories, the heightened suggestiveness of Aesopian allegoric texts makes them similar in principle to texts with an erotic content. (Understood here as erotic are those artistic texts whose poetics rest upon the enciphering of an erotic motif, such that namely the act of deciphering becomes the work's inner content, as is the case also in Aesopian literature. Should the erotic be given directly—and it is, of course, not extra-literary pornography which is described here—then the erotic ceases to be in itself the subject; in this case, as for example in D. H. Lawrence, the author conceives his subject more broadly as "family," "love," or "social mores," for instance.)

If the methods given here for the analysis of Aesopian texts are applied to such a purely erotic work as M. Kuzmin's poem "The Clarinetist," a quite familiar model emerges: all the musical imagery of this poem proves functionally a screen, while the fevered utterances concerning the clarinet and its details are markers which suggest a phallic symbol.[13] The gap between literary erotica and extra-literary pornography is analogous to that which separates Aesopian literary works from political journalism: artistic systems (Aesopian language and erotic allegory)

and those which are extra-artistic have different subjects and different aims. The artistic are directed at psychological results, at kindling in the reader an experience of purification; the intended result of the non-artistic is not psychological, but physical—an erection—or political—an insurrection.

* * *

This study has been devoted to an investigation of the structure of the Aesopian text; an historical view of the development of Aesopian language in Russian literature was not counted among its tasks. In conclusion, however, it seems appropriate to return Aesopian language from the laboratory vacuum to the living air of social history.

Mention has been made earlier of the process by which the reader is taught Aesopian language. Eventually the moment arrives when the mass of trained Aesopian readers becomes critical. Gripping the entire thinking portion of society, the ritual Aesopian game becomes an end in itself and, acting like an anarchic all-consuming negation, loses its positive philosophical content. In such a period the leaders of the new intellectual wave launch a literary battle against Aesopian language. In his prescient description of a literary carnival in *The Possessed*, Dostoevsky grotesquely depicted a society in which Aesopian language has supplanted all remaining forms of creative thinking. It should be noted that the vivid caricatures in the passage below embody all the basic elements of Aesopian poetics.

> 'Honest Russian thought' was represented by a middle-aged gentleman in spectacles, tails, gloves, and–fetters (real fetters). Under his arm he carried a portfolio filled with some 'case.' An open letter from abroad peeped out of his pocket and for the skeptical bore witness to the honesty of 'honest Russian thought.' All this had already been let out by the organizers, because the letter which stuck out of his pocket could not be read. In his slightly raised right hand 'honest Russian thought' held a wineglass, as though he wished to propose a toast.

> Flanking him on either side minced two close-cropped lady nihilists, while *vis-à-vis* danced another gentleman, also middle-aged and in tails, but with a heavy cudgel in his hand, and ostensibly represented a menacing, but not a Petersburg, periodical: 'I'll beat you to a pulp' . . . Suddenly there was a loud burst of laughter at the antics in the quadrille: the publisher of 'the menacing, not Petersburg, periodical,' who was dancing with the cudgel in his arms, felt without question that he could not bear the bespectacled gaze of 'honest Russian thought' and, not knowing where to turn, suddenly, in the last figure, advanced standing on his head toward the spectacles which, incidentally, was to have symbolized the continual turning upside-down of common sense in 'the menacing, not Petersburg, periodical.' . . . The roar of the crowd, of course, greeted not the allegory, in which no one had any interest, but simply a man in a dress-coat with tails walking with his feet in the air.[14]

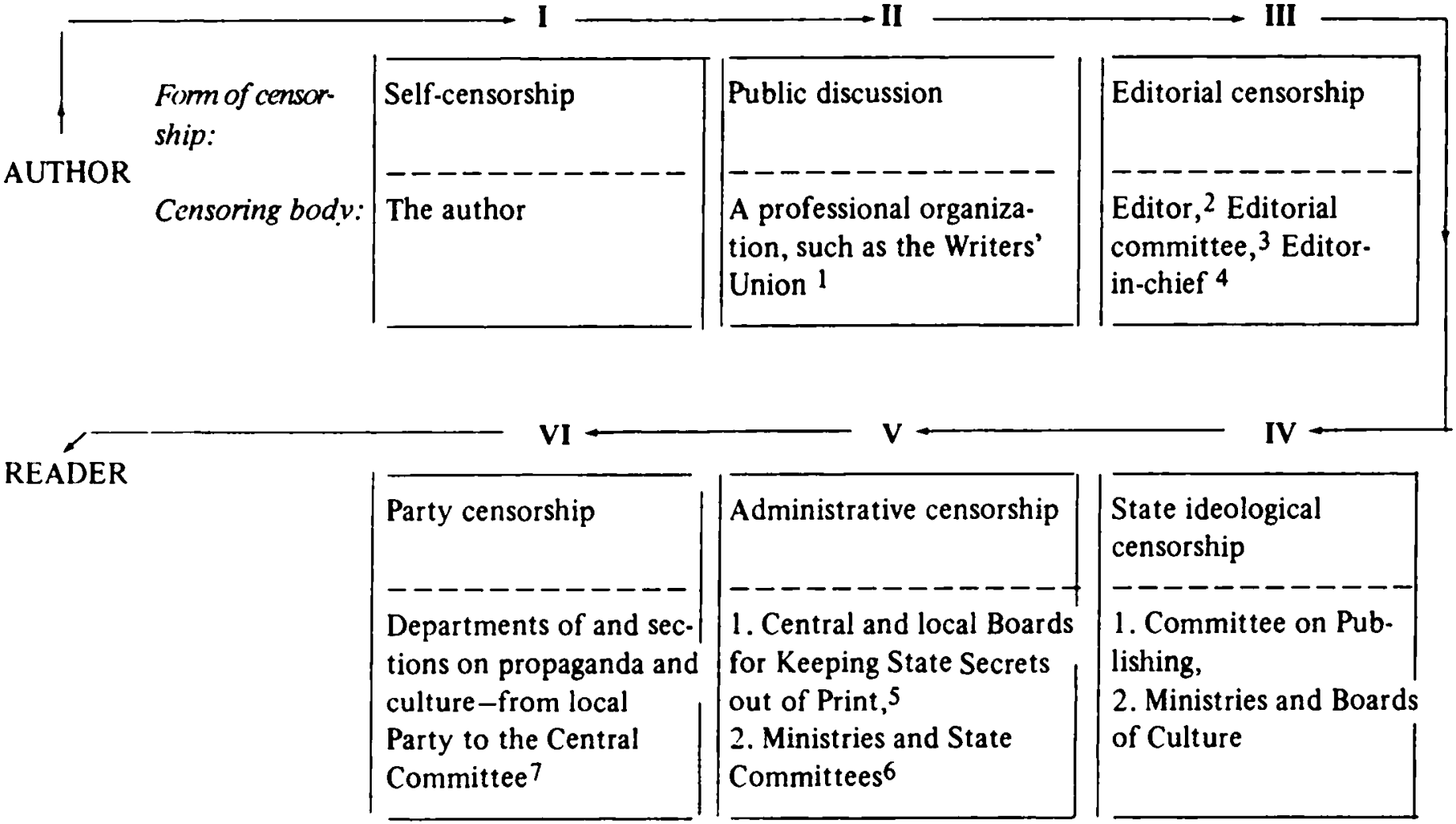
Dostoevsky, who as always penetrates clearly to the heart of psychological processes, follows a thoroughly depicted series of Aesopian allegories with the assertion that the success of the ideological masquerade hinges not on the substance of the allusions but rather on "the ability to walk head over heels." Not only the ideology, but also the aesthetic behind Aesopian language is not to Dostoevsky's liking.

Now, one hundred years later, after almost twenty years of a flourishing Aesopian literature in the USSR, a similar period has evidently arrived. An ever greater number of writers whose leanings are toward the opposition prefer to publish their writings abroad or to circulate them in samizdat, but are not inclined in their work to revert to Aesopian language. It is, moreover, also symptomatic that the ideological censorship, whose reaction is always slightly delayed, has trained its attention precisely upon Aesopian language. The very expression "Aesopian language," until quite recently, was used in the Soviet press only in a positive context, with respect to the work of Saltykov-Shchedrin, Chernyshevsky, and other writers officially proclaimed

as precursors of the current prevailing ideology. Lately, however, the semi-official press has begun to brandish the term as an accusation: it was precisely with the use of Aesopian language that the critic A. Mikhaylov charged the editors and contributors to the literary miscellany *Metropol.*[15]

These Aesopian writers and the ideological censorship are drawn into a never-ending game which has all the character of a ritual. And while mass absorption in Aesopian language may currently have rendered it obsolete as a popular metastyle, its return is certain. For catharsis is the inner content of an Aesopian literary work, a catharsis which the reader experiences as a victory over repressive authority.

APPENDICES



Appendix 1

Notes to Appendix 1

The Filters of Ideological Censorship

[1] These so-called "creative discussions" do not always perform a censoring function: sometimes it is the writers themselves who organize such airings of their new work in the hope of obtaining the organization's recommendation to a publisher. At times, however, discussions such as the one conducted by the secretariat of the Union of Soviet Writers and described by Solzhenitsyn in *The Oak and the Calf* are true clean-up operations.

[2] In no circumstances can the ordinary editor of a publishing house be considered a privileged member of Soviet society. He is often considerably better educated than his superiors and has his authors' interests at heart, but for all practical purposes it is on his underpaid shoulders that 90% of the censor's work falls. "They won't let it by" is his constant refrain.

[3] Highly-paid specialists who are always Party appointees make up this committee (a representative of the Party's agitprop section, however, is always automatically included). Thanks to the relatively high intellect of its members, it is precisely the editorial committee which very often turns up some heresy which at other stages of censorship would pass unnoticed.

[4] His is a Party appointment, and he is always especially watchful inasmuch as he bears the heavy burden of responsibility for any ideological blunder.

[5] This is, strictly speaking, the stage at which censorship formally occurs. The official censorship has in recent years been given the added responsibility of safeguarding the purity of socialist realist aesthetics.

[6] In individual, specially prescribed cases a work must undergo additional censorship by one or another government department. Should the plot touch on border guards or an intelligence service, for instance, the work must be cleared by the KGB; if an army enters in, the Ministry of Defense must give its approval. On an editor's instructions, this author had once to

obtain permission to publish a children's tale from the Ministry of the Fishing Trade of the USSR: it was stated in passing at one point in the tale that the main character's father was a fisherman and that he did his fishing in the North Atlantic.

[7] In practice, censorship by the Party occurs at every step: beginning with the editorial office, the Party organization is represented in each of the censoring agencies. The Party committees' agitprop and cultural sections, moreover, keep a constant watch on the work of the other agencies and have the final say in any dispute.

Appendix 2

Yevgeny Markin (*Novy mir*, No. 10 [1971], pp. 96-98)

Белый бакен

По ночам,
когда все резче,
все контрастней свет и мгла,
бродит женщина у речки
за околицей села.
Где-то гавкают собаки,
замер катер на бегу.
Да мерцает белый бакен
там, на дальнем берегу.

Там, в избе на курьих ножках,
над пустыней зыбких вод,
нелюдимо, в одиночку
тихий бакенщик живет.
У него здоровье слабо –
что поделаешь, бобыль!
У него дурная слава –
то ли сплетня, то ли быль.

Говорят, что он бездельник.
Говорят, что он – того...
Говорят, что куча денег
есть в загашне у него.
В будний день, не тронув чарки,
заиграет песню вдруг...
И клюют седые чайки
у него, у черта, с рук!

Что ж глядишь туда, беглянка?
Видно, знаешь только ты,
как нелепа эта лямка,
как глаза его чисты,
каково по зыбким водам,
у признанья не в чести,
ставить вешки пароходам
об опасностях в пути!

Ведь не зря ему, свисая
с проходящего борта,
машет вслед: – Салют, Исаич! –
незнакомая братва.
И не зря,
боясь огласки,
ты от родичей тайком
так щедра была на ласки
с неприкаянным дружком.

Это только злые сводни
да угрозы старых свах
виноваты, что сегодня
вы на разных берегах.
Никуда ты не схоронишь
все раскаянье свое,
что польстилась на хоромы
да на сытое житье.

Ты теперь как в райской пуще.
Что ж постыл тебе он вдруг –
твой законный,
твой непьющий,
обходительный супруг?
Видно, просто сер и пресен
белый свет с его людьми
без былых раздольных песен,
без грустиночки в любви!

Сколько раз в такие ночи
ты кричала без стыда:
– Перевозчик, перевозчик,
отвези меня туда!
Перевозчик не услышит,
не причалит, не свезет...
Просто месяц, чуть колышась,
легкой лодочкой плывет.

Все бы реки, все бы глуби
ты бы вплавь переплыла!
Лишь тому бы
эти губы
ты навеки отдала!
Что ж так горько их кусаешь,
коль давно не держит стыд?
Все простит тебе Исаич,
лишь измены не простит!

Никуда тебе не деться!
Левый берег – он не твой!
Лучше б в девках засидеться!
Лучше б в омут головой!
Не страшна тебе расплата,
да удерживает то,
что в тебе
стучится свято
безвиновное дитё.

Ни надежд уже, ни права...
Ты домой идешь с реки.
Он на левом,
ты на правом –
две беды и две тоски!
Как тут быть – сама не знаешь.
Вот и пой, как в старину:
– Не ходите, девки, замуж
на чужую сторону!

1970

The White Buoy

At night, / when light and darkness // are set in harsher contrast, // a woman wanders by the river // on the village outskirts. // Somewhere dogs are barking, // an engine trails off on the double. // And there on the far bank // a white buoy glimmers.

There, in a hut which sits on chicken legs // above the empty expanse of rocky waters, // the silent buoykeeper lives, // aloof and all alone. // He's in poor health– // what else to expect of a single man! // He has a nasty reputation– // which may be gossip, may be true.

They say that he's a good-for-nothing. // They say that he's–you know what kind . . . // They say he has a heap of money // stashed away somewhere. // Without hitting the bottle, he'll start singing out of nowhere // while he works . . . // And the gray seagulls // eat out of his, the devil's, hands!

Why, woman, are you looking over there? // It's no secret that you alone know // how senseless this drudgery is, // how clear his vision is, // what a thankless task it is // to place markers on the rocky waters // to warn steamers // of dangers in their path!

Why, it's not for nothing // that shipmates–strangers– // hanging off the side of a passing ship // wave after him: 'Hallo, Isaich!' // Nor was it for nothing that, / afraid of others' talking, // you kept the caresses // lavished on your shiftless beau // a secret from your kin.

It's only wicked go-betweens // and the threats of aged matchmakers // which are to blame // for your being today on opposite shores. // There is nowhere you can bury // all your repentance // for yielding to the temptation of a fine house // and a life without want.

You live now as if in a forest of Eden. // So why has he suddenly become hateful to you, // your lawful, / your sober, // genteel husband? // Without the old uninhibited songs, // without just a trace of unhappiness in love, // the world with its inhabitants, it's clear to see, // is simply drab and has no spice.

How many times on such nights // have you cried with no shame: // 'Boatman, boatman, // ferry me across!' // The boatman doesn't hear, // doesn't moor, doesn't take you . . . // Only the moon, heaving slightly, // sails on like a light craft.

You'd swim across // any river, any deep bed! // To give / your lips / to him alone forever! // So why do you bite them so bitterly, // when the time for shyness is long past? // Isaich will forgive you everything, // it's only betrayal he won't forgive!

You have nowhere to go! // The left bank isn't yours! // Better to have stayed unmarried! // Better to throw yourself in head first! // Retribution doesn't frighten you, // but the innocent child // who beats holy / inside you // holds you back.

You haven't hopes left, nor the right . . . // You head home from the river. // He's on the left bank, / you're on the right– //each with his misfortune, each with his yearning! // You yourself don't know how you'll get on. // Sing, then, as in days of old: // 'Girls, don't go over to the other side, // after a husband!'

N. B.: To complete the picture, it should be mentioned that the "ferry" used in the poem is not simply a popular folklore motif but the very one which was repeatedly exploited in the poetry of Alexander Tvardovsky, Sozhenitsyn's staunchest supporter and editor-in-chief of the journal *Novy mir,* in which the poem appeared.

Невесомость

Я знаю, что такое невесомость!
Тот радостный восторг и потрясенность,
когда пацан, отчаянный бесенок,
я в речке кувыркался колесом.
И вот когда неведомые силы
в осколках мрака, золота и сини

меня со дна под солнце выносили,
я был тогда, конечно, невесом.

А то еще познал я невесомость,
когда,
судьбой в глубинку занесенный,
над рукописью мучишься бессонно, –
и ни строки!
Несчастный рифмоплет...
И вдруг в окно увидишь:
с юга – гуси!
И образ – есть!
И ни тоски, ни грусти!
Звенят, звенят малиновые гусли...
О вдохновенья благостный полет!

Но знаю я иную невесомость:
стоишь –
а человечек невеселый,
развязывая петельки тесемок,
из папки вынимает документ.
А там – донос!
Там клевета на друга.
Ты что суешь на подпись мне, подлюга?
Мы победим, хоть другу будет туго!
Как жаль, что я покуда невесом!
Но нам еще по светлым рекам – плавать!
А нету вдохновенья – так не плакать!
Нам воплощать величье наших планов,
людей бесчестных челюсти дробя.
Земля, земля!
К тебе лишь тяготея,
вбираю я могучий дух Антея.
И до того прирос уже к тебе я,
что страшно оторваться от тебя!

Weightlessness

I know what weightlessness is! // It's that joyous delight and reeling // I knew when I was a boy, an awful imp, // turning somersaults in the river. // When mysterious forces // in the patches of black, gold, and blue // raised me from the bottom and carried me to the sun, // I was, of course, weightless.

I had a second brush with weightlessness, // of the kind when, / planted by fate in the middle of nowhere, // you agonize without sleep over a manuscript– // and can't write a line! / Wretched rhymster . . . // When suddenly you see out the window: // the geese are returning! // You've got your image! // Anguish and sadness vanish! // The melifluous *gusli* resounds and resounds . . . // O blissful flight of inspiration!

But I know a different weightlessness: // there you stand– // and a somber-faced man // unties the loops of ribbon around a file // and pulls out a document. // It's a denunciation! / It slanders my friend. // What's that you're slipping me for my signature, you bastard? // We'll come out on top, even if my friend'll have it rough! // What a pity that, for the moment, I don't carry any weight! // But we still have radiant rivers to swim! // We won't weep if we're at a loss for inspiration! // We'll see our grand schemes to fruition // and break the jaws of dishonorable men. // Earth, earth! // Drawn to you alone, // I breathe in the mighty spirit of Antaeus. // And I've already grown so attached to you // that I am frightened at being uprooted!

Appendix 3

Semyon Lipkin (*Moskva*, No. 12 [1968], p. 196)

Союз

Как дыханье тепла в январе
Иль отчаянье воли у вьючных,
Так загадочней нет в словаре
Однобуквенных слов, однозвучных.

Есть одно, – и ему лишь дано
Обуздать полновластно различья.
С ночью день сочетает оно,
Мир с войной и с паденьем величье.

В нем тревоги твои и мои,
В этом И – наш союз и подспорье...
Я узнал, в азиатском заморье
Есть народ по названию И.

Ты подумай: и смерть, и зачатье,
Будни детства, надела, двора,
Неприятие лжи и понятье
Состраданья, бесстрашья, добра,

И простор, и восторг, и унылость
Человеческой нашей семьи, –
Все сплотилось и мощно сроднилось
В этом маленьком племени И.

И когда в отчужденной кумирне
Приближается мать к алтарю, –
Это я, тем сильней и всемирней,
Вместе с ней о себе говорю.

Без союзов словарь онемеет.
И я знаю: сойдет с колеи,
Человечество быть не сумеет
Без народа по имени И.

N. B.: It must be understood that in the literal translation below "I" is to be read both as the letter *I* and as the Russian conjunction *i* ("and"); this dual meaning cannot, of course, be rendered in English.

Conjunction

Just as there is nothing more baffling than a breath of warm air in January, // Or than a pack animal's surrender of will, // So in the dictionary there is nothing more mysterious // Than one-letter, one-sound words.

There is one such word–and it alone has the sovereign power // To hold distinctions in check. // It merges day and night, // War and peace, majesty and humble rank.

It holds my unease and yours, // This "I" unites and supports us . . . // I've heard that overseas in Asia // There's a people by the name of "I."

Think of it: the death and conception; // The mundane routine of childhood, a plot of land, and household; // The rejection of falsehood and the understanding // Of compassion, courage, and good;

The breadth, the rapture, and the melancholy // Of our human family– // All are fused and powerfully linked // In this small tribe of "I."

And when a mother approaches the altar // Of some unfamiliar place of worship– // It's me, so much the stronger and more ecumenical, // who joins her and speaks of himself.

Without conjunctions the dictionary would be speechless. // And I've no doubt: it'd all come undone, // The human race could not exist // Without the people by the name of "I."

Appendix 4

Daniil Kharms (*Igra* [Moskva: Malysh, 1967], n.pag.)

МИЛЛИОН

Шел по улице отряд –
сорок мальчиков подряд:
раз,
два,
три,
четыре,
и четыре
на четыре,
и четырежды
четыре,
и еще потом четыре.

В переулке шел отряд –
сорок девочек подряд:
раз, два, три, четыре,
и четыре на четыре,
и четырежды четыре,
и еще потом четыре.

Да как встретилися вдруг,
стало восемьдесят вдруг!
Раз,
два,
три,
четыре,
и четыре
на четыре,
на четырнадцать
четыре,
и еще потом четыре.

А на площадь
повернули,
а на площади стоит
не компания,
не рота,
не толпа,
не батальон,
и не сорок,
и не сотня,
а почти что
МИЛЛИОН!

Раз, два, три, четыре,
и четыре
на четыре,
сто четыре
на четыре,
полтораста
на четыре,
двести тысяч
на четыре,
и еще потом четыре!
ВСЕ!

A Million

A troop marched down the street– // forty boys in a row: // one, // two, // three, // four, // plus four // by four, // plus four times four, // then plus four more.

A troop marched in the lane– // forty girls in a row: // one, two, three, four, // plus four by four, // plus four times four, // then plus four more.

When suddenly they met, // they made eighty altogether! // One, // two, // three, // four, // plus four // times four, // four times fourteen, // then plus four more.

They turned // into the square, // and in the square there stood // not a band, // not a squadron, // not a throng, // not a battalion, // and not forty, // not a hundred, // but nearly // a MILLION!

One, two, three, four, // plus four // times four, // one hundred four // times four, // one hundred fifty // times four, // two hundred thousand // times four, // then plus four more! // THAT'S ALL!

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Quoted from *Stixotvornaja satira pervoj russkoj revoljucii (1905-07)*, ed. N. B. Bank, N. G. Zaxarčenko, E. M. Šnejderman (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1969), p. 74.

2. Ilya Kopievich, according to other sources. See *Enciklopedičeskij slovar'*, t. XVI (SPb.: Brokgauz i Efron, 1895), p. 168.

3. The appearances of a text in the structure of an age's political conceptions and creeds and its manifestations in an aesthetic structure—in the structure of the literary work, that is—are of course interconnected. Nonetheless, lest to Griboedov be attributed the philosophy of Skalozub, any interpretation must keep expressly within the structure in which the text was created by its author. Beginning with the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel in 1965, this phenomenological problem of the text has been the stumbling block in cases against writer-dissidents in the USSR: the defense usually takes a structuralist position, arguing that the opinions of the characters, those of the narrator or authorial "I" included, are not relevant to the political activities of the author; the prosecution, however, leans clearly to an idealistic position, refusing to acknowledge the structural manysidedness of the text and deeming it a kind of "thing in itself" ("This man is on trial not for his literary activity, but for the slander to the Soviet regime written by his hand . . . "). Sadly, structuralism has still to win even a single political trial in the USSR.

4. Thus it was said, for example, that on the strength of the infamous "ironclad" censorship code of 1826 even the "Our Father" might be interpreted as a revolutionary work. The new code which replaced it in 1828, however, not only confined the censors' say to the areas of government security and social morality, but even forbade pointblank their meddling in the realm of Aesopian language. The code stated that the censor was not obliged to reject written passages "having a double meaning, if one of them runs counter to the censorship's regulations" and that in such cases he should always "accept words at their face value and not indulge in an arbitrary reading for the worse" (quoted from *Enciklopedičeskij slovar'*, t. XXXVII[a] [SPb.: Brokgauz i Efron, 1903], p. 951). In the Soviet period the directives of the censorship have evolved continuously in the direction of none other

than a search for "double meaning" (see *The Soviet Censorship*, ed. Martin Dewhirst and Robert Farrell [Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1973] and this author's "What It Means To Be Censored," *New York Review of Books*, 29 June 1978, pp. 43-50).

5. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 9-18, 20.

6. M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin, *Sobranie sočinenij*, t. 9 (SPb, 1905), p. 68.

7. V. I. Lenin, "Partijnaja organizacija i partijnaja literatura," in *V. I. Lenin o literature i iskusstve* (M.: GIXL, 1957), p. 42.

8. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v 50 tt.*, t. 17 (M.: Gospolitizdat, 1957), p. 97.

9. See V. V. Rozanov, *Kogda načal'stvo ušlo* (M.: izd. A. S. Suvorina, 1907), conclusion.

10. For this view see A. I. Solženicyn, "Obrazovanščina," in *Iz-pod glyb* (M.: samizdat, 1974; Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974), esp. pp. 233-34.

11. Quoted from *M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin v russkoj kritike*, ed. M. S. Gorjačkina (M.: GIXL, 1959), p. 191.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

13. *Stixotvornaja satira* . . . , p. 75.

14. I. S. Aksakov, *Sočinenija*, t. IV (M., 1886), pp. 432-33.

15. Quoted from L. Evstigneeva, *Žurnal "Satirikon" i poety-satirikoncy* (M.: Nauka, 1968), p. 140.

16. M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin, *Sobranie sočinenij v 20 tt.*, t. 13 (M.: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1972), p. 506.

17. A. I. Gercen, *Izbrannye sočinenija* (M.: GIXL, 1937), pp. 400-1.

18. A. V. Lunačarskij makes a passing reference to the same in the article "M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin," in *M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin v* . . . , p. 563.

19. I. Brodskij, "Jazyk – edinstvennyj avangardist" (an interview given to V. Rybakov), *Russkaya mysl'* (Paris), No. 3188 (26 January 1978), p. 8.

20. M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij*, t. XIII (M.: GIXL, 1936), p. 213.

21. The fear of endangering this or that writer is also a damper on the discussion of Aesopian language in present-day Russian literature. One talented and popular Soviet writer, who has written much in an allegorical vein, once complained bitterly to this author about critics abroad: "I go to great lengths to get

a story or historical novel published, and straightaway Western radio is spelling out in detail what my work really says . . . To whom are they explaining? The KGB?" The policy which guides this work in the use of contemporary material is stated in the Preface.

22. *Kratkaja Literaturnaja Enciklopedija,* t. 8 (M.: Sovetskaja enciklopedija, 1975), pp. 839-40; Ray J. Parrot, Jr., "Aesopian Language," *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet Literature* (1978).

23. See, for example, P. N. Berkov, "Odno iz pervyx primenenij ezopovskogo jazyka v Rossii," in *Problemy teorii i istorii literatury. Sbornik statej, posvjaščennyx pamjati prof. A. N. Sokolova* (M.: izd. MGU, 1971), pp. 74-82.

24. *M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin v . . .* , p. 560. The theoretical sophistication of Olminsky's "findings" may be judged by his assumption here that Shchedrin inserts phrases "and even whole conversations" in French in order to conceal something from the censorship—the tsarist censors, *voilà!*, did not know French.

25. M. S. Ol'minskij, *Ščedrinskij slovar'* (M.: GIXL, 1937).

26. A. I. Efimov, *Jazyk satiry Saltykova-Ščedrina* (M.: izd. MGU, 1953).

27. Kornej Čukovskij, *Sobranie sočinenij v 6 tt.*, t. 4 (M.: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1966), pp. 680-722; t. 5 (M.: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1967), pp. 254-99.

28. *Russkaja revoljucija v satire i jumore,* ed. K. Čukovskij and S. Drejden (M.: izd. "Izvestija CIK SSSR i VCIK," 1925).

29. Čukovskij, t. 4, pp. 716-17.

30. *Ibid.,* pp. 693-94.

31. *Ibid.,* p. 693.

32. *Ibid.,* p. 692.

33. *Ibid.,* p. 680.

34. L. Ja. Paklina, *Iskusstvo inoskazatel'noj reči. Ezopovskoe slovo v xudožestvennoj literature i publicistike* (Saratov: izd. Saratovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 1971).

35. *Ibid.,* p. 5.

36. B. I. Lazerson, "Ironija v publicistike Černyševskogo," in Černyševskij, *Stat'i, issledovanija i materialy,* 1, ed. E. I. Pokusaev, Ju. G. Oksman, A. P. Skaftymov (Saratov: Saratovskoe knižnoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), pp. 272-335.

37. See Note 15.

38. The bibliography at the back lists still a few other sources besides those mentioned in which isolated observations on the nature of Aesopian language in Russian literature can be found.

39. V. V. Vinogradov, *O xudožestvennoj proze* (M.: GIZ, 1930), p. 187.

40. Roman Jakobson, *Puškin and His Sculptural Myth*, trans. John Burbank (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 50.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. The present work lies to a considerable extent within the domain of stylistics. The second chapter, which is the theoretical core of the study, examines Aesopian language as a distinctive "style of styles" or "metastyle." As is commonly known, varying conceptions of literary style have provoked and continue to provoke academic debate (as far back as 1954 the author, then a beginning student, devoted his first university essay to an overview of the stylistic discussions which had figured in the pages of the journal *Issues in Linguistics* at the beginning of the 1950s). Clarity concerning the understanding of literary style upon which subsequent formulations are premised is essential; here that understanding derives from the work of the American scholar Michael Riffaterre, whose theory of style owes much to the work of the Russian Formalists (particularly Shklovsky) and which was first set out in two articles: Michael Riffaterre, "Criteria for Style Analysis," *Word*, 15 (1959), pp. 154-74; Michael Riffaterre, "Stylistic Context," *Word*, 16 (1960), pp. 207-18. A notion of artistic style as the intentional frustration of the text's linguistic predictability is the basis of Riffaterre's theory. The confusion of artistic style with either speech style or poetic means is in this way eliminated. This, in the author's opinion, is the first theory of style which arms the stylistician with a *method* (many continue to rely upon taste and feel when it comes to the description and analysis of style). Proceeding from the predictability-unpredictability opposition of Riffaterre, it is possible to give a typological description of the text's stylistic features and to distinguish the artistic text, however lacking

in poetic devices, from the non-artistic, however saturated with tropes and rhetorical flourishes.

2. The observation is Nabokov's. See Vladimir Nabokov, trans. with commentary, *Eugene Onegin,* by Aleksandr Pushkin, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), II, pp. 30-31. In his recent commentary to *Eugene Onegin* Yu. M. Lotman rejects Nabokov's interpretation out of hand. All quotations from *Onegin* are from the Nabokov translation.

3. For the two poems, see A. S. Puškin, *Sobranie sočinenij v 10 tt.,* t. 3 (M.: AN SSSR, 1957), p. 191 and 369.

4. Vladimir Majakovskij, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v 13 tt.,* t. 7 (M.: GIXL, 1958), p. 46.

5. Evgenij Evtušenko, *Idut belye snegi . . .* (M.: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1969), p. 376.

6. Ju. I. Levin, "Semantičeskaja struktura russkoj zagadki," *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* (Tartu University), vyp. 5 (1969), p. 166.

7. *Ibid.,* p. 167.

8. Spoken Russian is pervaded by riddle-allusions, at the basis of which is a semantic mechanism no different from that of the folk riddle. The "solution" is in every case one or another cultural or social taboo: "where the tsar travels on foot" instead of "bathroom," for instance, or "where ninety-nine weep, one laughs" in the place of "corrective labor camp" (the second example is from Solzhenitsyn). Not only verbal, but also visual suggestion—the order in which Soviet leaders make their appearance on the rostrum above Lenin's mausoleum on special occasions, for example—as well as hints which arise from situation (the type examined in this section) rely upon this mechanism.

9. Broadcast of the concert over the first channel of Central Television came at a time when emigration of the Jewish (and pseudo-Jewish) intelligentsia was assuming a mass character, as the government had in fact calculated it would. The Aesopian message was in this case evidently designed to conceal the overly pragmatic, "non-ideological" character of the policy and, possibly, to deflect accusations of government anti-Semitism.

10. Levin, p. 187.

11. *Ibid.,* p. 174.

12. *Ibid.,* p. 166.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

14. The cleaning and minor repair of shoes on the street is everywhere in the USSR the national occupation of Aysors (a people, so it is supposed, which traces its origin to the ancient Assyrians). Their dark complexion, black hair, and other anthropological features blur them in the eyes of chauvinist-minded Slavs with members of the Caucasian peoples, among them the Georgian Stalin. As a group, persons of Caucasian appearance are also referred to as *armjaški* (dirty Armenians), obviously abusive. Still another collective term for people of generally exotic aspect–Caucasians, Arabs, Mongoloids–is "Chichmek" (with variants "Chichmek" or "Chuchmek," slang which A. Kondratov conjectures has its origin in popular-science literature, in an Incan word which denoted "a foreigner").

15. *Poèty XVIII veka*, t. 1(L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1972), p. 196.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 583. See also G. Gukovskij, *Russkaja poèzija 18 veka* (L.: Gosizdat, 1927), pp. 151-82.

17. Bella Axmadulina, "Varfolomeevskaja noč'," in *Poetry from the Russian Underground*, ed. Joseph Langland, Tamas Aczel and Laslo Tikos (New York–San Francisco–London: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 39-43.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

19. G. Gukovskij, *Očerki po istorii russkoj literatury XVIII veka* (M.: GIXL, 1936), p. 225.

20. See Vjač. Vs. Ivanov and V. N. Toporov, "Postanovka zadači rekonstrukcii teksta i rekonstrukcii znakovoj sistemy," in *Readings in Soviet Semiotics*, ed. L. Matejka, S. Shishkoff, M. E. Suino and I. R. Titunik (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1977), pp. 53-54.

21. Ju. M. Lotman, *Struktura xudožestvennogo teksta* (1970; rpt. Providence: Brown University Press, 1971), pp. 98-99.

22. Aleksandr Solženicyn, *Sobranie sočinenij*, t. 2 (Vermont-Paris: YMCA Press, 1978), pp. 99-100. An interesting self-analysis may also be found in Ju. Krotkov's article, "Pis'mo misteru Smitu," *Novyj žurnal*, No. 86 (1967).

23. As Herbert Eagle justly observed in a letter to the author, the use of what from the standpoint of everyday communication is "noise" for the transfer of complex information likens Aesopian language to all aesthetic languages (to the language of poetry, for instance: the sound

and metrical organization of verse are entirely irrelevant to the relay of plot content of the type "I love you" or "I'm old," yet precisely therein lies the fundamental aesthetic content; while there is no ready distortion in everyday speech when a sentence's rhythmical structure is altered–as it may be by the insertion of such filler words as "you understand" or "you see"–the same procedure when applied to a poem by Yesenin will, as one of Zoshchenko's heroes discovered, easily destroy the poem: "As if, you understand, I rode by in the early quivering spring air, you see, on a rose-colored horse").

24. It should be recalled that the variable here is the "ideal censor," a type which the majority of Soviet censors do in practice closely approach: many among them have enjoyed a formal education yet, as has been mentioned elsewhere (see Note 4 to Chapter I), they are notable for their aesthetic tin ear.

25. A. Belinkov, *Jurij Tynyanov* (M.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1965), p. 601. (Here the *second* edition of this seditious Aesopian book is followed. Preparations which were made for yet a third edition testify to the success of Belinkov's Aesopian design; with Belinkov's flight abroad, however, the new edition did not materialize. See *The Soviet Censorship*, p. 133 and fn.).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

28. A similar metaphorical use of the word "Vendée" may be found, for example, in Tsvetaeva: "One last glimpse of a world that's gone: / Manliness–Daring–Vendée–Don." (Marina Cvetaeva, *Lebedinyj stan. The Demesne of the Swans* [bi-lingual edition], ed. and trans. Robin Kemball [Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1980], p. 63). For *"drabant,"* see *Slovar' russkogo jazyka Akademii Nauk.*

29. Belinkov, p. 362.

30. On this matter, see *Semiology and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*, ed. Daniel Patte (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1976). The discussion is interesting, if also rough going with its daunting structuralist jargon.

31. See *Poetry from . . .*, p. 232.

32. Thus the category of marker as here conceived does not embrace such baldly articulated suggestions of hidden meaning as Pushkin's "the

story's all lies, still it holds a clue! / There's a lesson for those with smarts" ("The Tale of the Golden Cockerel").

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. See *Poetry from . . .*, p. 197.

2. See David K. Shipler, "Soviet Editors Ousted over Poem Lamenting Czarina," *New York Times*, 28 April 1977, Sec. 1, p. 12.

3. Under the title "To Louis XVII," the poem first appeared in 1922 in the collection *Blood-Ore* (with a second edition in 1925). The poem compares the fate of the murdered dauphin with that of crown prince Alexis, who in 1918 at age 14 was shot with the rest of the imperial family by the Bolsheviks in Ekaterinburg. The concluding stanza reads:

> Но помню горестно и ясно –
> Я – мать, и наш закон простой:
> Мы к этой крови непричастны,
> Как непричастны были к той.

> But I remember clearly and with sorrow– / I'm a mother, and our rule is simple: / We're no more party to this blood / Than we were to that.

> (Quoted from Marija Škapskaja, *Stixi* [London: Overseas Publications, 1979], p. 85.)

4. G. Ladonščikov, "Pro skvorca," *Veselye kartinki*, No. 10 (1974), n. pag.

5. *Ibid.*

6. See M. Šatrov, *18-j god* (M.: Iskusstvo, 1974).

7. Here it is impossible not to note once again that Aesopian language is but a particular instance of a general aesthetic problem concerning the existence of a work of art, a problem which Potebnya pinpointed brilliantly

120 years ago in the treatise *Thought and Language*. There, incidentally, in the section "Poetry. Prose. The Condensation of Thought," Potebnya writes:

> Art is the language of the artist, and just as words cannot possibly convey one's own thought but may only awaken in another his own idea, so it is also impossible to communicate that thought in a work of art; for this reason, the content of the latter (once it is complete) now evolves not in the artist but in his audience.

(A. A. Potebnja, *Èstetika i poètika* [M.: Iskusstvo, 1976], p. 181.)

Aesopian language likely offers the most striking illustration in favor of Potebnya's argument.

8. Belinkov, p. 95.

9. On autological and metalogical devices, see V. I. Korol'kov, "Trop," *Kratkaja Literaturnaja Èntciklopedija*, t. 7.

10. See N. P. Kanonykin, "Osnovnye čerty èzopovskogo stilja Ščedrina," *Učenye zapiski Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogičeskogo Instituta im. Gercena*, t. 59, 1948, pp. 97-112.

11. Naum Koržavin, *Vremena. Izbrannoe* (Frankfurt/Main: Possev-Verlag, 1976), p. 105.

12. Quoted from A. Janov, "Kompleks Groznogo /Ivaniana/," *Kontinent* (Paris), No. 10 (1976), p. 298.

13. Vera Aleksandrova, *Literatura i žizn'. Očerki sovetskogo obščestvennogo razvitija* (New York: Sponsored by the Russian Institute of Columbia University, 1969), pp. 430-31. V. Aleksandrova was in her time probably the most insightful critic of Russian literature outside the Soviet Union. She was able to comprehend in even a swift overview the crux of new literary phenomena, and so, for instance, drew attention to the role of the dedication in the first of Kostylev's novels: " 'To my dear Vasily Gavrilovich Grobin and to all Soviet cannon and weapons makers.' Why, this has the sense of a new 'social mandate'. . ." *(Ibid.)* In the terminology adopted here, that is, the dedication is a marker.

The novel upon which Aleksandrova voiced her opinion was the first in a trilogy which required twelve additional years to complete: V. Kostylev, *Ivan Groznyj*, 3 vols. (M.: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1955).

"Zodčie" is included in Dmitrij Kedrin, *Izbrannye proizvedenija* (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1974), pp. 92-96.

14. Aleksandrova, p. 329.

15. A tradition deriving from Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and the philosophical tales of Voltaire is readily traced through Russian literature, beginning with Emin's *Hell's Post* and Krylov's "Kaib." Nekrasov's *"v Pizu"* invokes also the popular Russian obscenity of a very similar sound (see A. Flegon, *Za predelami russkix slovarej* [London: Flegon Press, 1973], pp. 249-50).

16. Evstigneeva, p. 57.

17. M. Levidov, *Putešestvija v nekotorye otdalennye strany, mysli i čuvstva Džonatana Svifta . . .* , 2nd ed. (M.: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1964); L. Zorin, *Rimskaja istorija (Dion)*, in his *Pokrovskie vorota* (M.: Iskusstvo, 1979); M. Bulgakov, *Žizn' gospodina de Mol'era* (M.: Molodaja Gvardija, 1962).

18. The thoughtful observer, nonetheless, will draw a distinction between the Soviet attitude toward Orwell's masterpiece and its treatment of *Invitation to a Beheading*. No matter how unacceptable Nabokov is for political reasons, there is room to interpret his anti-utopia as an antifascist, anti-capitalist satire. This leeway explains the neutral tone, the all but positive impartiality, of references to this work. See, for instance, O. Mixajlov and L. Čertkov, "Nabokov," *KLE*, t. 5.

19. A. and B. Strugackie, *Gadkie lebedi* (Frankfurt/Main: Possev-Verlag, 1972), p. 183.

20. The slang *banja*, in turn, owes nothing to the word's primary meaning, but is the result of a free distortion of *banka* ("a jar") to mean "a bottle": "To put away half a *banka*" = "To put away a half-liter (of vodka)."

21. Strugackie, p. 105, 74.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

23. The first major publication of the texts of Vysotsky's popular songs was in *Metropol'*, ed. V. Aksenov et al. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), pp. 32-36.

24. A. and B. Strugackie, *Ulitka na sklone. Skazka o trojke* (Frankfurt/Main: Possev-Verlag, 1972). The Possev edition reproduces the text of *Ulitka na sklone* from the journal *Baikal*, Nos. 1 and 2 (1966), but

does not even mention that roughly an equal-size portion of the novel was published in the anthology *Èllinskij sekret* (L.: Lenizdat, 1968). (G. Svirsky's *A History of Post-War Soviet Writing [Na lobnom meste]* is similarly misinformed about the novel, as a reviewer sets straight:

> . . . there [in *Èllinskij sekret*–L. L.] the Strugatskys published *the even chapters* of *Ulitka na sklone*–their most frightening novel, whose *odd chapters* appeared at almost the same time in the journal *Baikal.*)

(V. Betaki, "V protivorečie s predisloviem," *Kontinent* [Paris], No. 24 [1980], p. 373).

25. It is on the basis of its practical application, above all, that the fable of recent Russian literature is excluded as an Aesopian genre: while official propaganda and unadulterated humor writing make generous use of the fable, fables in connection with ideological taboos are entirely unknown. It is a paradox that the genre which has been traditionally associated with the name of Aesop should bear no relation to Aesopian language.

26. Ju. Koval', *Nedopesok* (M.: Detskaja literatura, 1975).

27. Potebnja, pp. 342 ff.

28. Deming Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin* (Cambridge-London-New York-Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 208.

29. B. Lapin, *Podvig* (M.: GIXL, 1936), p. 51.

30. Bulat Okudžava, *65 pesen* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1980), p. 106 and 120. See also the introduction to this volume by V. Frumkin.

31. Vladimir Lifšic, *Naznačennyj den'* (M.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1968), p. 54.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-69.

33. Anna Kay France, *Boris Pasternak's Translations of Shakespeare* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 113-15.

34. Such details as the salutation "Postumus" and "thrushes . . . within the hairdo of the cypress" are borrowed, for example, from Martial. Simonides of Ceos' "A Cretan Merchant" likewise permits comparison with Brodsky's lines:

Здесь лежит купец из Азии. Толковым
был купцом он – деловит, но незаметен.
Умер быстро: лихорадка. По торговым
он делам сюда приплыл, а не за этим.

Here lies a merchant from Asia. He was / A judicious one–competent, but small-time. / The end came fast, from fever. He sailed here / On business, not after that.

(Iosif Brodskij, *Čast' reči* [Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977], pp. 11-12). The earlier Greek epitaph read:

Here Brótachus from Cretan Gortyn lies:
He did not come for this, but merchandise.

(English translation by C. M. Bowra in *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation*, ed. T. F. Higham and C. M. Bowra [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938], p. 240).

35. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

36. *Mastera russkogo stixotvornogo perevoda* (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1968), I, p. 59.

37. Belinkov, p. 2.

38. Quoted in P. Strokov, "Revoljuciej mobilizovannye," *Oktjabr'*, No. 6 (1966), p. 218.

39. It was put to use on a particularly large scale by Chernyshevsky. Among *Novy mir*'s most remarkable ventures along this line, I. Kon's study "The Psychology of Prejudice" ("Psixologija predrassudka") deserves special mention (*Novyj mir*, No. 9 [1966], pp. 187-205).

40. Some theorists would draw a distinction between continuous and intermittent allegory (see "Allegory," *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, enlarged ed.).

41. Sofija Parnok, *Sobranie stixotvorenij* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), p. 163.

42. Sofija Poljakova, "Poèzija Sofii Parnok," *ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

43. *Novyi mir*, No. 10 (1971), pp. 96-8.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

45. *Ibid.*

46. "Markin caught me back in the corridor and loudly begged forgiveness (it was meant well, right out of Dostoevsky . . .)." A. Solženicyn, *Bodalsja telenok s dubom. Očerki literaturnoj žizni* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1975), p. 285.

47. Fazil' Iskander, *Sandro iz Čegema* (M.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1977), p. 88.

48. It was the Germans who used this slur *(russische Schweine);* the image of the "Russian bear" was taken up in Europe following the appearance of an album of cartoon illustrations of the Crimean War by Gustave Doré. Ironically, it was the Frenchman Napoleon who, in cheap Russian popular prints dating from the 1812 war, was not infrequently depicted as a bear speared by a Russian.

49. These percentage figures were kindly supplied by Carl Proffer.

50. A. A. Morozov, "Russkaja stixotvornaja parodija," in *Russkaja stixotvornaja parodija (XVIII – načalo XX veka)* (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1960), pp. 6-7.

51. F. M. Dostoevskij, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v 30 tt.*, X (L.: Nauka, 1975), p. 273; XII (L.: Nauka, 1975), p. 203 and 303.

52. *Russkaja revolucija v . . .*, p. 45.

53. The figure is somewhat lower, near 20%, for the works collected in *Russkaja stixotvornaja satira 1908-1917-x godov* (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1974).

54. N. Glazkov, *Moja èstrada* (Kalinin: Oblastnoe knižnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957), p. 91.

55. N. A. Nekrasov, *Izbrannye stixotvorenija v 2 tt.* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1948), I, pp. 288-89.

56. Glazkov, p. 31.

57. Okudžava, p. 127. The Aesopian language was pointed out to the author in this case by V. Frumkin.

58. Quoted from a *samizdat* manuscript copy.

59. *Moskva*, No. 12 (1969), p. 196.

60. V. Nekrasov, *V okopax Stalingrada* (L.: Lenizdat, 1948), p. 183.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 320. G. Svirsky cites the same example in his *A History of Post-War Soviet Writing: The Literature of Moral Opposition*, translated and edited by Robert Dessaix and Michael Ulman (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), p. 32.

62. *Novyj mir*, No. 7 (1968), p. 40.

63. Koržavin, p. 145.

64. N. Nekrasov, *Stixotvorenija v 3 tt.* (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1950), p. 71.

65. B. Lazerson has much of interest on this point in particular in her article "Publicistika Černyševskogo v gody revoljucionnoj situacii," in N. G. Černyševskij, *Stat'i, issledovanija i materialy* (Saratov: izd. Saratovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 1962), pp. 62-91. This area of Aesopian language as a whole is aptly described by Paklina:

> Polemic debate gave those adept at Aesopian language great freedom—with respect to both the selection and the presentation of material. To counter an opponent they might make historical reminiscences, complete scientific excursuses, or resurrect forgotten names. They might introduce quotations and bibliographical references which, naturally and organically fitted to the weave of a polemic article, carried with them the living voice of a thinker *non grata.* They might imperceptibly adjust the orientation of the article, turning the reader's attention unnoticed from the point of contention to the ideas which were expressed in the ensuing debate.

(Paklina, p. 40).

66. *Moskva,* No. 12 (1968), pp. 202-3.

67. A. S. Puškin, *Sobranie sočinenij v 10 tt.*, t. X (M.: AN SSSR, 1958), p. 683.

68. I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij i pisem v 25 tt.*, t. XIV (M.-L.: Nauka, 1968), p. 251.

69. Viktor Goljavkin, *Privet vam, pticy!* (L.: Lenizdat, 1969), pp. 47-48.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

71. A. I. Gercen, *Sočinenija v 9 tt.*, II (M.: GIXL, 1955), p. 400.

72. This observation comes from E. Muza, "Puškin i ego gazeta," *Literaturnaja gazeta,* No. 1, 1 January 1980, p. 5.

73. *Russkaja revoljucija v . . .*, p. 8.

74. Quoted from L. Uspenskij, *Zapiski starogo peterburžca* (L.: Lenizdat, 1970); Uspenskij devotes an entire chapter, "Toropyga obščestvennyj" (pp. 199-215), to this episode.

75. It unfortunately proved impossible to obtain the text of this poem. What information is given follows the account of the author and a series of readers.

76. See Note 4 to Chapter I.

77. A. N. Apuxtin, *Stixotvorenija* (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1961), p. 59 and annotation on p. 326.

78. *Newsweek*, 8 March 1982, p. 42.

79. See this author's "What It Means To Be Censored," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. XXV, No. 11, June 29, 1978, pp. 43-50.

80. *Novyj mir*, No. 11 (1968), p. 265.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Evstigneeva, pp. 126-27.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Examples of extreme discrepancies are afforded by the comic reading to which archaic texts, such as syllabic verse, are subjected by modern readers.

2. The play is here taken from E. Švarc, *P'esy* (M.-L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1962), pp. 311-84. Further quotations from the play are accompanied in the text by page references to this edition.

3. See M. Slonimskij et al., *My znali Evgenija Švarca* (L.-M.: Iskusstvo, 1962), p. 182.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-83.

6. Švarc, *P'esy*, p. 31.

7. The author was more than once compelled to participate in similar outpourings: he was among the active performers as a child, and at a later time numbered among the composers of the text.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. L. N. Tolstoj, *Sobranie sočinenij v 20 tomax*, vol. 15 (Moscow: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1964) p. 244. The other examples which Tolstoy gives–"ecclesiastical" → "Catholic," "the virgin" → "madonna," "patriotism" → "mock-patriotism"–are Aesopian in nature (see III.3 and III.1). They had no Aesopian function in Tolstoy's text, however, likely because the rule of synonymy and redundancy in the application of Aesopian means was not observed (see Chapter III).

2. Gary Kern, "Solzhenitsyn's Self-Censorship: The Canonical Text of *Odin den' Ivana Denisoviča*," *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 20, No. 4, 1976, p. 426.

3. Aleksandr Solženicyn, *Sobranie sočinenij*, t. 2: *V kruge pervom* (Vermont-Paris: YMCA Press, 1978), p. [403]. Elsewhere in this chapter the first edition (Aleksandr Solženicyn, *Sobranie sočinenij*, tt. 3-4: *V kruge pervom* [Frankfurt/Main: Possev-Verlag], 1971) will be designated as *The First Circle /87/* and the second as *The First Circle /96/* according to the number of chapters in each.

All quotations from the works of Solzhenitsyn and Simonov are given in Jane Bobko's translation.

4. *The First Circle /96/*, vol. 1, p. [7].

5. The misreading of this word, which in criminal slang means "head of a gang of thieves," is one of the gross errors in Thomas Whitney's English translation of the novel. Whitney translates this word as "the Plowman," thereby substantially distorting the style of utterances about Stalin. It ought to have been rendered as "boss" or "godfather," its probable etymology being "papa" → "Papachen" → *"paxan."*

6. See Dimitry Panin, *The Notebook of Sologdin*, trans. John Moore (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) and, for a somewhat different account, Lev Kopelev, *Utoli moja pečali* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1981).

7. Aleksandr Solženicyn, *Bodalsja telenok s dubom* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1975), p. 88.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 511. See also Edith Rogovin Frankel, *Novy Mir: A Case*

Study in the Politics of Literature 1952-1958 (Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 103-4.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 504.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

12. I. Višnevskaja, *Konstantin Simonov. Očerk tvorčestva* (Moscow: Sovetskij pisatel', 1966), p. 111.

13. Konstantin Simonov, *P'esy* (Moscow: Sovetskij pisatel', 1950), pp. 407-507. Page numbers given in the text are from this edition.

14. Konstantin Simonov, *Sobranie sočinenij v 6 tomax*, t. 1 (Moscow: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1966), p. 24.

15. Natalija Roskina, *Četyre glavy. Iz literaturnyx vospominanij* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1980), p. 27. Several other MGB-inspired "affairs" followed the same scenario, notably the case of the biologist V. V. Parin.

16. Oleg Penkovsky, *The Penkovsky Papers*, trans. Peter Deriabin (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965).

17. It is interesting to note that there are certain details in his description of Innokenty's phone conversation which Solzhenitsyn did not deem it necessary to change:

The First Circle /96/. "I didn't get all you said," the attaché said calmly. He, of course, was sitting on a soft couch, and there was no one hurrying him to get off.

The First Circle /87/. "Who's calling?" The woman's voice was heavy and sluggish. She was probably sitting on the couch and she was not in any hurry.

18. Compare Lavrenyov's short stories "The Story of a Simple Thing" and "The Seventh Satellite," which find justification for the sacrifice of entirely innocent lives; cf. also certain features of the plot of Vishnevsky's *An Optimistic Tragedy* and Babel's *Red Cavalry.*

19. It should be recalled again that in analyzing such a complex work as *The First Circle* it is possible to speak only of *elements* of Aesopian language, just as one may speak only of structural elements of the parable or the *roman à clef.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. Inasmuch as stylistic resonance echoes clearly only within the confines of a singular artistic entity, it was necessary to limit the reach of this study by the selection from Yevtushenko's work of one such natural coherent whole. The ideal object in this instance would have been one of Yevtushenko's poetry readings before young audiences, for the element of spontaneous effect played a highly formative role in Yevtushenko's art and above all in the devices by which he established Aesopian contacts with his audience. Records of such readings, however, are unfortunately unavailable. The book *Idut belye snegi* . . . (see Note 5 to Chapter II) will therefore be examined– in it Yevtushenko sums up an express period of his work, on the whole the period 1955-1965.

Page references given later in the text are to this edition.

2. E. A. Evtušenko, *Avtobiografija* (London: Flegon Press, 1964), p. 64.

3. Vladimir Majakovskij, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v 13 tomax*, t. 12 (M.: GIXL, 1959), p. 101.

4. Brown, p. 114.

5. N. A. Zabolockij, *Stixotvorenija i poèmy* (M.-L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1965), p. 154.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. See Efim Etkind, *Notes of a Non-Conspirator* (Oxford-London-New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 111-15.

2. The interest in techniques of the absurd which was shown by that part of the Russian literary profession engaged in writing for children had its source also in Anglo-American children's literature (beginning with Lewis Carroll); a great quantity of this literature was translated into Russian, much of it by S. Ya. Marshak.

3. Čukovskij, t. 1, pp. 352-83, 636-54.

4. Ju. N. Tynjanov, *Arxaisty i novatory* (Munchen: Fink Verlag, 1967), p. 565.

5. Čukovskij, t. 1, p. 280.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 285-86.

7. M. Ju. Lermontov, *Sobranie sočinenij v 4 tomax*, t. 2 (M.-L.: AN SSSR, 1959), p. 470.

8. Čukovskij, t. 1, p. 291.

9. Valerij Brjusov, *Sobranie sočinenij v 7 tomax*, t. 1 (M.: Xudožestvennaya literatura, 1973), p. 329.

10. Fedor Sologub, *Stixotvorenija* (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1975), p. 313.

11. Čukovskij, t. 1, p. 174.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-76. Early editions continued with the lines: *А кузнечик, / А кузнечик, / Ну, совсем как человечек, / Прыг-скок под мосток / И молчок* (The grasshopper, / The grasshopper, / Why, exactly like a man, / Fled skip and a jump beneath the bridge / And shut up). Evidently, in the author's eyes the much too obvious marker, *Ну, совсем как человечек* undid the stylistic integrity of the piece.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

14. See V. I. Dal', *Tolkovyj slovar' živogo velikorusskogo jazyka* t. 4 (M.: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo inostrannyx i nacional'nyx slovarej, 1955), p. 390.

15. See the *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 1/2 (1955), p. 272.

16. See *Narodno-poètičeskaja satira*, ed. V. P. Adrianova-Peretc (L.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1960), pp. 54-59.

17. Osip Mandel'štam, *Sobranie sočinenij v 3 tomax*, t. 1 (n.p.: Meždunarodnoe Literaturnoe Sodružestvo, 1967), p. 202, 511.

18. *Čiž*, 10 (1940), pp. 1-4. (Since the pagination of the children's periodicals *Ež* and *Čiž* is irregular, subsequent citations will in some instances be limited to the year and number of issue.)

19. On the poetics of the absurd in children's literature see Elena Sokol *Russian Poetry for Children* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984).

20. Daniil Xarms, *Čto èto bylo?* (M.: Malyš, 1967), n. pag.

21. Viktor Golyavkin, *Tetradki pod doždem* (L.: Detgiz, 1959), pp. 20-21.

22. For reasons which are explained in the Preface, names will be given only of those writers who have at this time emigrated. V. V. Golyavkin, as a consequence of serious illness, has withdrawn from literary activity.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1. Such a telephone conversation actually took place several years ago between the author and a friend, with the author in the role of receiver-decoder. For some reason, however, the transaction was never carried out, and it was only later, in the West, that the author read "Arkhip."

2. See, for example, the entire second chapter in Ju. Tynjanov, *Problema stixotvornogo jazyka* (M.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1965), pp. 77-171.

3. *Russkaja revolucija v . . .*, p. 34.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

5. A. S. Vygotskij, *Psixologija iskusstva* (M.: Iskusstvo, 1968), p. 186.

6. See "Cenzura," *Enciklopedičeskij slovar'*, t. XXXVII[a] (SPb.: Brokgauz i Efron, 1903).

7. Baxtin sets out his theory in *Tvorčestvo F. Rable i narodnaja kul'tura srednevekov'ja i Renessansa* (M.: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1965).

8. See *Poetry from . . .*, p. 197.

9. Once again, the author is indebted to Herbert Eagle for his insight into the levels of the Aesopian text.

10. A. P. Čexov, *Sobranie sočinenij v 12 tomax*, t. 11 (M.: GIXL, 1956), p. 74.

11. *Neizdannyj Bulgakov. Teksty i materialy*, ed. Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977). Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-60.

13. M. Kuzmin, *Zanavešannye kartinki* ("Amsterdam" [Petrograd]: n. p., 1920), n. pag.

14. Dostoevskij, t. 10, pp. 389-90.

15. See *Soviet Literature*, No. 5 (1979), p. 164.

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