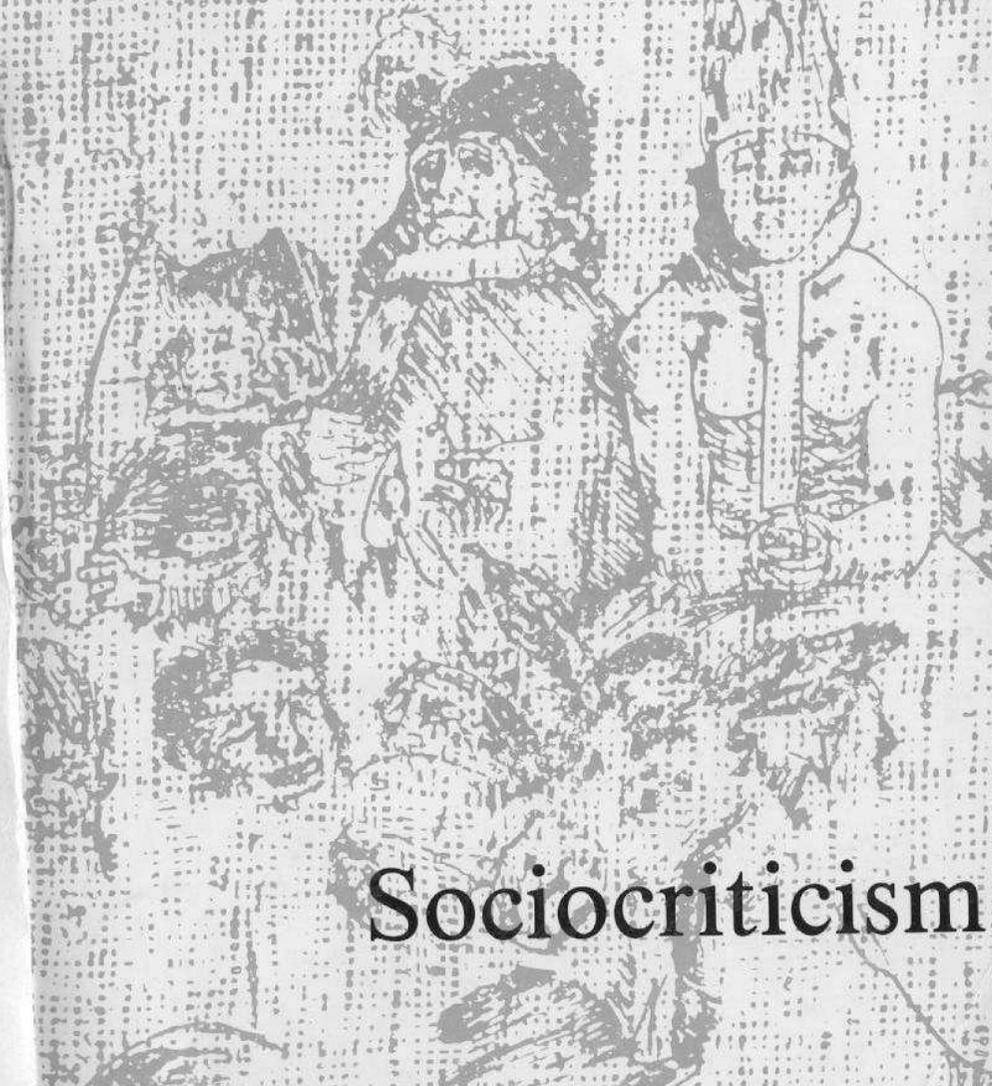




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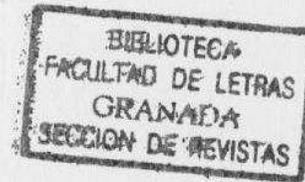
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SOVIET LITERATURE
OF THE THIRTIES :
A REAPPRAISAL
Textes réunis et présentés par
Regine Robin

Sociocriticism

Vol II n°1 Octobre 1986

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural Stalinism, Didacticism and Literariness

There is something provoking about the mention of the thirties in the U.S.S.R., especially from the point of view of its literature. Has everything not been said in the vagueness of essays, humourous articles and, on the other hand, in scholarly works about the end of a period of great intellectual effervescence (the marvellous twenties), confrontations in the schools, avant-gardist cliques and unprecedented innovations at all levels, that yielded its place to State censorship and self-censorship, shortly followed by purges and the physical liquidation of individuals, propaganda, and the enrollment in a unique organization : the Writer's Union, closely surveyed by the government. Do we not already know all there is to know about how writers had to fall back into line within the framework of an aesthetics « controlled » from the top, Socialist Realism. And finally, everyone has heard of cultural writings born of this new enrollment, of those « romans à thèse » whose scope was, above all, ideological. Literature without literariness, society without civilian society, and so on.

Until very recently historiography of the Soviet society approached the latter with only ad hoc concepts (totalitarianism and its derivatives) and with a history reduced to confrontations at the top, the Party and State hierarchy (Stalin against Trotskii, Stalin against Bukharin, Stalin against everyone etc.), and to the imposition from top to bottom of an implacable authority. No one confronted the issue of exactly how this authority was experienced, internalized and frustrated, for what it could have been the substitute, what preliminary social imaginary it had seized, and

for exactly what cause. It was a remarkable history without differentiated social groups that had already had a history during the years immediately preceding the revolution, a history without memorandum, internal tension, cultural depth, daily life or sensitivity. The undifferentiated masses, alienated in personality worship, dazed, having evaded or not having evaded terror, saw collectivization and industrialization imposed by force, without anyone knowing or wondering just what was going through their minds.

How full this period was of tension, not only between the Party and civilians, but even at the heart of civilian society; what a lot of very great cultural and social changes occurred, entire groups tragically disappearing while semi-literates obtained positions of command through lightning promotions; what phenomenons of acculturation were witnessed, what popular creations, complex syncretisms, and reinstatement of traditional elements, popular in official speeches of propaganda; what unprecedented tension there was during the twenties and thirties, but also what precarious construction, always threatened, always being renewed through a cultural consensus, a new social imaginary: all of this is not on the horizon of traditional historiography, does not enter into its queries.

Over the past few years a new historiography¹ has started to demolish this ignorance and open up new doors to social history.

¹ The following would be of particular interest to the reader: K. Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

F. Champarnaud, *Révolution et contre-révolution culturelles en URSS: de Lenin à Zhdanov* (Paris: Anthropos, 1975).

V.S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middle Class Values in Soviet Fiction* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Sh. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Sh. Fitzpatrick, « Culture and Politics under Stalin: A Reappraisal, » *Slavic Review*, 35 (1976), p. 211-231

Sh. Fitzpatrick, « Stalin and the Making of a New Elite 1928-1939, » *Slavic Review*, 38 (1979), p. 377-402

Sh. Fitzpatrick (ed), *Cultural Revolution in Russia 1928-1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

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J. A. Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges. The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered 1933-1938* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

H. Günther, *Die Verstaatlichung der Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1984).

J. L. Heizer, *The Cult of Stalin 1929-1939* (PhD, University of Kentucky 1977, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1981).

Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Peter Kenez and R. Stites (ed), *Bolshevik Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

Moshe Lewin, « Aux prises avec le Stalinsisme: quelques réflexions historiques, » *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 43 (June 1982), p. 71-82.

Moshe Lewin, *La paysannerie et le pouvoir soviétique 1928-1930* (Paris, La Haye: Mouton, 1966).

Ch. Lane, *The Rites of Rulers* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

F.J. Oinas, « Folklore and Politics in the Soviet Union, » *Slavic Review* (1973), p. 45-58.

F.J. Oinas, « The Political Uses and Themes of Folklore in the Soviet Union, » F.J. Oinas (ed), *Folklore, Nationalism and Politics* (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1972), p. 77-95.

N. Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).

R.C. Tucker (ed), *Stalinism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).

N. Werth, *La Vie quotidienne des paysans russes de la Révolution à la collectivisation 1917-1939* (Paris: Hachette, 1984).

R. Zapata, *Luttes philosophiques en URSS, 1922-1931* (Paris: PUF, 1983).

It is in the wake of this new examination that we wish to be situated. First, a few reminders of periodization.

We know that after the period of War Communism Lenin launched his *New Economic Policy* (1921-1927), which entailed a relaxation of economic life. Within the framework of price controls a free market was allowed to develop. The NEP immediately drew spectacular results in agriculture and industry; it also represented detente in the cultural sphere (the 1925 decrees on literary and cultural organizations). But the NEP created some new problems: new social differentiations arose in the city and in the country; a new kind of bourgeoisie started to proliferate (the nepmen); and if some young people had a renewed interest in life, others who had participated in the romantic epic of the Civil War found themselves disabled and demoralized. More seriously, the NEP led to discrepancies between industrial and agricultural prices (the scissors phenomenon), which affected rural revenues and undermined industrial production as well. The workforce necessary for the country's industrialization remained held up in a campaign of archaic acts and was, to a great extent, incapable of providing the cities with fresh supplies.

After the death of Lenin and the political episodes that became known as the black legend (the failure of the leftist opposition with Trotskii in 1927, the economic debate about the rate of industrialization around Preobrazhenskii, Bukharin and Stalin, the opposition of Zinonev and Kamenev, the failure of Bukharin, etc.), Stalin consolidated his power and was finally joined by his former opponents (except for Trotskii, condemned to exile). In 1928, the starting date of the First Five-year Plan, the country found itself launched into the crazy adventure that resulted in a forced march towards collectivization of the countryside and industrialization of the whole country, with priority given to heavy industry. There is no question of relating here this epic with its tragedies and its glories; I refer you to the many historians who have already done so.² To

² Particularly recommended: K.E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978); A. Erlich, « Preobrazhenski and the Economics of Soviet Industrialization, » *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, LXIV, 1 (February 1950) p.57-58; A. Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960); J.R. Millar and A. Nove, « A Debate on Collectivisation: Was Stalin Really Necessary?, » *Problems of Communism*, XXV (July-August 1976) p. 50-52. See also Moshe Lewin, *La paysannerie et le pouvoir soviétique 1928-1930* (Paris, La Haye, Mouton, 1966).

put these events into context, suffice it to recall that the excesses of collectivization were so extensive that on March 2, 1930 Stalin's text, known informally as « Stalin's letter, » *On the Dizziness of Success (Golovokruzhenie ot uspekhev)* appeared in *Pravda*, emphasizing the damaging effects of these excesses and demanding they be put to end.

After 1931, and especially after 1933, the rate of industrialization slackened. But N. Bukharin who had criticized the First Five-year Plan, its pace, the withdrawal of the peasantry it entailed and the resulting end of the alliance (*smychka*) between workers and peasants, was never pronounced right.

From 1928 to 1931, a kind of *cultural revolution* was witnessed everywhere, almost in the Chinese sense of the term (and not the sense that Lenin gave to this notion), where everything representing the old order was disgraced, dismissed and swept away : religion, professors, professional writers, technicians and engineers. Everything and anything that had to do with skills was denigrated in favour of politics. The worker and his culture were praised to the skies, a new proletarian culture was promoted, the ordinary man, the « little » man, the *udarnik* (before Stakhanov), and the zealous worker who increased production standards by himself were expected to produce miracles.

From 1928 to 1931, within the context of this « Revolution from Above, » that is to say, after the Shakhty case against Intelligentsia technicians accused of plotting and sabotage, all of the country's iconoclasts, the youth, the militants, the Komsomol, were continuously appealed to. These masses were devoted to the regime, enthusiastic, extraordinarily utopian and sectarian, and at the same time relatively uncontrollable, as were the vast migrations of abandoned children and the young (and not so young) peasants who gathered in urban centres or moved from site to site trying to find a job, a place, a campaign, or everything at once, fleeing collectivization or simply trying their luck.

At the same time there was an acceleration in the crusade against illiteracy and a spreading of the general culture (at a minimal level only, admittedly). The government relied on the support of the new elite, the new « promised ones » that had risen from the midst of this generation of enthusiastic young people. Of the 861,000 managerial positions listed in 1933, 140,000 were occupied by persons who had been but mere workers in 1928. Thus, more than half a million Communist workers found themselves catapulted into

managerial posts from 1930 to 1933. Over 150,000 workers and young Communists such as N. Krushchev, L. Brezhnev and A. Kosygin had access to higher technical education during this period.

It was therefore a period of great upheaval and collective tragedy (there is a never-ending list of direct and indirect victims of forced collectivization, deportation and the great famine of 1932-1933), but also an epic saga that saw the stunning social rise of an entire generation.

In the cultural sphere it was the period when the sectarian RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) reigned, steeped in its dialectical-materialist method, extremely hostile towards non-Communist professional writers known as « fellow travellers » since being so-named by Trotskii. It was the era when proletarian writers, extolling agitation, occasional poetry and the primacy of politics, attempted as well to put forward the writing of workers, the grass roots, the personal experience of the construction of Socialism.

In 1933, the consequences of this epic upheaval, of which literature would give its account, were uncertain. If there were some spectacular successes in industry, the countryside was, nevertheless, impoverished and the standard of living remained very low. From 1931 onward signs of a great change in orientation could be detected here and there : changes towards the old intelligentsia and professionalism. Stalin went to war against egalitarianism, increased discipline, promoted education where once again fundamental matters and academic standards prevailed over class origin, returned the family, the notion of elite and of culture to a place of honour, revived traditional history, particularly Russian history, against Prokovskii, reintroduced ranks to the army, reorganized the Party and the political police, and took his place as true leader.

After this radical upheaval came stabilization and a return to order, referred to by Nicholas Timasheff as *The Great Retreat* in his well-known book.³ The new society was born, albeit amid noise and fury. The countryside was hardly recognizable : 50 percent of the rural population lived in kolkhozes. Urbanization and industrialization spread rapidly—the price paid is another story. The crusade against illiteracy raced ahead and a new elite that had come up from the ranks craved respectability. It was this elite that demanded a new imaginary in conformity with its higher social

³ N. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat* (New York : E.P. Dutton and Co., 1966 re-edition).

status. It was no longer the era of the takeover of the Winter Palace, of the Civil War, nor of the NEP. This generation needed heroes worthy of it, heroes of mastery : mastery of nature, economic and social life. Tret'iakov could, then, look upon writers as « Engineers of Men's Souls, » an expression immediately attributed to Stalin. It was from this general stabilization that the new Writer's Union emerged after the suppression of the RAPP in 1932; it was this stabilization that accounted for the new aesthetics of Socialist Realism, the aesthetics of a return to order.

This recall to order was general during the thirties. It had, moreover, started immediately after World War I and was characterised by a multi-sided and ambiguous will for a return : a return to purpose, the direct study of reality, tradition, savoir-faire, and traditional and national roots. It was known by various names : Naïe Sachlichkeit in Germany, Valori Plastici in Italy, Regionalism in America. The U.S.S.R. participated, without knowing it, in the thirties in the strongest sense of the term, at the mercy of the march to war, haunted by the problem of representing a reality that was becoming more and more opaque ; the thirties were torn between the machinery of fascist Kitch and the utopia of the mastery of Stalinism. It was a return to a realism (so badly defined) that still holds many surprises, because, as J. Clair excellently puts it : « It may well be...that the realism that standard historiography was in the habit of neglecting or considering only as a relic of the 19th century is in reality a still unknown movement, to be discovered and studied; a movement that, from one end of the century to the other, without solution of continuity and for which only naive belief in some « avant-garde » was able to make us forget the cohesion and the power, will mark our era as much as, and perhaps more than, abstraction. »⁴

This return to order involved a clear tendency towards cultural homogenization and language standardization, yet it was necessary to reckon with the great cultural mobilization after the campaigns against illiteracy (the shock-workers) and with the great pressure exerted by the reader. It was necessary to reckon with, not what the intellectuals of the time called « social command, » which could take many forms and meanings,⁵ but with the genuine reader,

⁴ J. Clair, « Retour au réalisme, » *Encyclopedia Universalis* (1985), Vol. 15, p. 704.

⁵ On this debate see : « V diskussionom poriadke : spor o sotsial'nom zakaze; pisateli o sotsial'nom zakaze, » *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 1 (January-February 1929) p.19-75, and in French, translated by O. Brik, « La Commande sociale, mot d'ordre et non théorie, » *Change*, 4 (1969) La mode, l'intervention, p. 188-195.

the reader from amongst the masses (*massovyi chitatel'*), the one who went to the First Congress, in 1934, to bear pressure and explain what he wanted to see in novels and plays. It was first necessary to reckon with what remained more or less revived of the former popular culture ; before the revolution, the general public liked sentimental novels à la A.A. Verbitskaïa, and the adventures of Nick Carter, Nat Pinkerton and Tarzan.

In the early twenties, Tyn'ianov looked down on and worried about these popular tastes so far from formalist designs : « Everyone sees the writer who writes; some see the publisher who publishes, but it seems that no one sees the reader who reads. He maliciously approaches every new book and asks : « What next ? » And when he is told what is « next, » he contends that it has already been done. As a result of these leap-frogs by the reader, the publisher has conceded the game. He publishes Tarzan, Tarzan's son, Tarzan's wife, his ox and donkey and... has already almost convinced the reader that Tarzan is, in fact, Russian literature. »⁶

The works of J. London were also very widespread, not to mention science-fiction such as A. Tolstói's « *Aelita*, » and Soviet versions of adventure and detective novels. Marietta Shaginian made her name with the latter, which were very successful. *Dzhim Dollar* (1923), *Mess Mend ili Ianki v Petrograde* (1924) and *Lori Len metalist* (1925) pleased the public with their linear *diegese*, their adventures and their development, integrating in certain places cinematic techniques. In those works there was clearly a parodic, ironic play on clichés and stereotypes of the former popular literature, which escaped the public who, on the contrary, liked this literature because it reinforced mental habits and internalized clichés. This flood of literature was so sizeable that V. Shklovskii proposed to not only take an interest in cinema, journalism and avant-garde literature, so far removed from the masses, but to study mass literature closely and not scorn it.

⁶ Quoted by Halina Stephan, « *Lef* » and the Left Front of the Arts (München : Verlag otto Sauer, 1981) p.160. See the outstanding works by Jeffrey Brooks on mass culture at the end of the Czarist period and at the beginning of the Revolution : Jeffrey Brooks, « Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era, » in William Mills Todd III (ed.), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia* (Stanford, California : Stanford University Press, 1978) p. 97-150 ; Jeffrey Brooks, « The Kopecks Novels of Early Twentieth Century Russia, » *Journal of Popular Culture*, XIII, 1 (Summer 1979) p.85-97 ; Jeffrey Brooks, *Discontinuity in the Spread of Popular Print Culture 1917-1927* (Conference at the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, The Wilson Center, May 18-19, 1981).

We have a fair idea of what the masses wanted : writers who toured factories, Red gathering places and the reading *izbas* of kolkhozes, and were in contact with reading clubs always returned with the same demands.

In 1927, Serafimovich held a discussion with workers from the reading club of a Leningrad metallurgical factory. He was taken aside by workers complaining of finding only « bad language », swearwords, colloquial language and gibberish in literature. However much Serafimovich tried to explain that the tongue uses everyday language and that life is often dirty and crude and that one should not, therefore, always expect to see « good language, » nothing would make them listen.⁷ This reaction (allied to positions taken by Gor'kii at a later time) was very widespread. The search for good speech can even be turned against M. Gor'kii himself, against *The Mother*, considered however to be the precursor of precursors of Socialist Realism : « Those who read the classics (usually the most « cultivated » peasants) are also looking for « good style, » « beautiful descriptions » and « good speech » in literature. In this respect, the comment of a reader, concerning *The Mother* by Gor'kii, is revealing : Does M. Gor'kii not have any education ? People should not be allowed to read that kind of book ! Is that why books are written ? To learn to swear, one does not need Gor'kii's help. »⁸

Again in 1927, T. Kholodnyi gave an account of a « Communist Saturday » where readers stated their impressions and demands. They wanted books for relaxation, were not in favour of political lessons, but begged for action, contemporary day-to-day life. Kholodnyi explained : « ...writers have gotten a proper dressing down. Even those who praised *Cement* reproached its author at the same time for his « bad language, » his coarse language tinged with literature... »⁹ The mannered style and imitation of popular speech were criticized; *skaz* and ornamental prose were denounced. At the same time that they criticized the style, workers protested that they recognized themselves only in realistic

⁷ Quoted in Laure Iddir-Spindler, « La Résolution de 1925 à l'épreuve de la pratique. Littérature soviétique et lutte contre l'opposition d'après *La Pravda* de 1927, » *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XXI, 3-4 (July-December 1980) p.361-399.

⁸ Quoted by N. Werth, *La Vie quotidienne des paysans russes de la Révolution à la collectivisation 1917-1939* (Paris : Hachette, 1984) p.232.

⁹ Laure Iddir-Spindler, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

and psychologizing forms. One of them declared : « What is good about old novels is that you see the whole of life. *You read them and see everything as if you were there* : a man is born...he is very small...he grows, the rascal...And little by little, you see him become a man...you see him live, and then die. That's what's important, » and T. Kholodnyi concluded : « The mind of the masses is expressed in that tirade. »¹⁰

What then were the masses reading, as time passed and the crusade against illiteracy was in full swing ? Some vast surveys and the Smolensk archives give us a rough estimate of the tastes of actual readers, the true reception (and not that of the critics) of literature : library inventories, responses to surveys on reading, etc. The Sobol'ev survey, reported in the magazine *Monde* (Paris, September 23, 1933, Volume 277), stated that a return to the classics was in fashion; there was a certain lassitude towards the same stories dealing with iron, steel, coal, tractors and machines. Furthermore, workers were calling for books permitting them to know foreign peoples. They were also looking for detective stories; J. Verne and F. Cooper were selling at exorbitant prices.

Trud's January 1935 survey, reproduced in *Monde* on February 8, 1935, is not without interest. Twenty-four workers and technicians from Dneprostroi replied to the union paper in January 1935. The questions were as follows :

1. What was your profession before entering the Dneprokombinat ?
2. What is your present job ?
3. What studies have you undertaken during your period of employment at Dneprokombinat ?
4. What is your favorite literary work ?
5. What episode of the factory's construction is most impregnated in your mind ?
6. What 1934 political event made the greatest impression on you ?
7. What are your personal plans for 1935 ?

Of the twenty-four responses to the fourth question one worker had forgotten what he had read and three others gave no reply. Of the twenty remaining answers eight workers affirmed that they read,

¹⁰ F. Champarnaud, *Révolution et contre-révolution culturelles en URSS : de Lenin à Zhdanov* (Paris : Anthropos, 1975).

not literary works, but newspapers, political books, physical and technical manuals. Only twelve responses dealt with literary works. A Chuvash worker stated that he read Chuvash literature, and the Ukrainians in the sample replied that they liked Shevchenko and Ukrainian literature. The nine remaining answers, concerning literature written in Russian, brought out the following names :

Sholokhov	<i>Tikhii Don</i>
Sholokhov	<i>Podniataia Tselina</i>
Sobolev	<i>Kapitalnyi Remont</i>
Shishkov	<i>Ugrium-reka</i>
A. Blok and A. Tolstoi	no details
Furmanov	<i>Chapaev</i>
Panferov	<i>Bruski</i>
A. Tolstoi	<i>Petr I</i>
M. Gor'kii	<i>Moi Universitety</i>
Books on the Civil War	no further details.

Of course, these workers may very well have been chosen for their political education, chosen a priori. Their responses are, nevertheless, interesting. The canonical names in Soviet literature are found among the authors on this short list : Gor'kii, of course, but also Sholokhov, Furmanov, Panferov and A. Tolstoi. The inclusion of *Petr I* illustrates the vogue for historical novels that started to sweep the country at the beginning of the thirties.

Shishkov is a very well-known writer; his adventure novels are well read. Sobolev's novel deals with life at the Naval College. The allusion to works on the Civil War shows that the tastes of these young people were slightly behind the times because in 1934 and 1935 the general opinion was that too much had been written on the civil war period and not enough about worker's day-to-day lives. The mention of Blok illustrates the wide range in tastes, from the simplest to the most elaborate.

The responses to the sixth question often included the rescue of the Cheliukin and the ascents into the stratosphere. Certain workers mentioned, moreover, that they wanted to become pilots, proving that the spirit of adventure was still very much alive and that it could be reinvested in the literature of Socialist Realism. It is not entirely known whether the explicit or underlying didactic message was detected. Once again, the actual reception is uncontrollable. It is probable, on the other hand, that the epic accounts of the Civil War (*Chapaev*, *Tikhii Don*), the saga of

collectivization (*Bruski*, *Podniataia Tselina*), the exotic escapism in the historical genre (*Petr I*) were the new vectors of at once the heroic dream, the escapism from a difficult present and the new self-identifying adventures where the Tarzans were named Levinson Wargulies, Chapaev or Kirill Zhdarkim.

If the 4,000 factory clubs were bringing together workers, *udarniki*, all the writers of hundreds of autobiographies, the writers of collective works such as *History of Factories and Plants* launched by Gor'kii, and if the agit-prop theatre was still alive, although more and more hemmed in, what was being read in the country ? N. Werth gives an account of a survey taken amongst 360 young peasant readers, aged 16 to 24, in the Leningrad region. The ten works in greatest demand were :

Neverov	<i>Tashkent, Good khlebnyi</i>
Furmanov	<i>Chapaev</i>
Furmanov	<i>Krasnyi Desant</i>
Seifullina	<i>Virineia</i>
Dorokhov	<i>Ob Irtyche</i>
Sinclair	<i>King Coal</i>
Serafimovich	<i>Zhelëznyi Potok</i>
Jack London	<i>The Sea Wolf</i>
Sikachev	<i>Kulak</i>

Other works in great demand were simple short stories used in basic reading classes, such as « *The Life of Avdotina* », against alcoholism, and « *Andrew Good-for-nothing*, » combatting the ill-effects of ignorance. The Russian classics were represented by Chekhov, Tolstoi (*Anna Karenina*) and Pushkin (*The Captain's Daughter*). Foreign classics, from J. London to Erckman-Chatrion, and V. Hugo to Zola, made up 18 percent of the books represented.

Neither proletarian best-sellers (*Cement* by Gladkov), nor avant-gardists (Maiakovskii) were represented. N. Werth made the following comment on this survey : « Thus, amongst the most-read books, there are six adventure stories, which take place during the initial « heroic » years of the Soviet regime, two « foreign classics, » dedicated to the worker's fight against money, one book about the « social reality » of the village and only one Russian classic. Generally speaking, adventure novels and spy stories that take place during the Revolution and the Civil War constitute the nucleus of

all rural libraries. All of these books (several hundred books are listed) present some legendary Chekist or a brave soldier from the Red Army fighting victoriously against the White Guards and spys of a foreign power, and exalt a revolutionary romanticism to which the youngest readers (16 to 20 years), for whom the 1917-1920 era has already become a part of mythology, are particularly sensitive. »¹¹

Linear plots, reinvestment in the spirit of adventure, revolutionary heroism and romanticism, glib talk, realistic scope, verisimilar background : the pressure of the reader was not pushing in an avant-gardist direction ; it was demanding the readable, the decipherable, self-recognition, the identifiable, both escape from day-to-day life and a new kind of writing, idealizing this day-to-day life.

In 1927, Maiakovskii, perfectly aware of these difficulties, responded to his detractors by emphasizing that Pushkin, in his time, had not been completely understood by the masses. With work, he added, one makes oneself understood : « I recited verse for the peasants in Livadia's palace. I recited verse this past month at the docks of Baku, at the Baku Schmidt factory, at the thatcher's club, at the Tiflis worker's club; I recited verse standing on a metallurgist's lathe at breakfast time, accompanied by the noise of the machines. I quoted one of the numerous resolutions of the factory committee : ...at the end of his reading Maiakovskii addressed himself to the workers, inviting them to give their impressions and their degree of comprehension, after which a vote was proposed. It demonstrated complete comprehension because the vote was delivered all but unanimously. The one dissenting voter stated that upon hearing the author, he had understood his works better than when reading them alone... »¹² This incredible account draws smiles; it reveals, however, that the incline towards complaisance, the already heard and seen, and towards automatic expressions, was not fatal; even avant-gardist poets could find ways to make themselves heard.

This pressure on the part of the reader can, conversely, bring the writer to alter his style, make his work more readable and fall into agitation poetry even into pure propaganda. That is what

¹¹ N. Werth, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

¹² Elsa Triolet, *Maiakovskii, vers et prose* (Paris : Editeurs francais réunis, 1957), p. 24.

happened to Sel'vinskii, a poet of innovative pursuit, a constructivist who, after a period of crisis, went and tried to renew his art at the factory. When he wrote « The Electric Factory Gazette, » his audience, workers from a reading club, drew up a resolution in which can be read : « 1. The poem gives a politically just depiction of life and customs at the factory, it contributes effectively to the agitation for socialist enlightenment, for the Five-year Plan and the general line. 2. From technical point of view, this poem constitutes a new endeavor, extremely audacious, of rhyming news; it opens new genres to poetry (editorial articles, articles on production, telegrams, stenographic reports, resolutions, and even advertisements in verse...) 4. This poem, by means of its political newsworthiness, its high artistic quality, and its boldly innovative spirit, is a precious contribution to proletarian literature, a success for the poetry of the U.S.S.R., and progressive in the transformation of the poetic work of Sel'vinskii... »¹³ It is not known whether Sel'vinskii's new style was a real alternative to Bednyi, even if, in the *agitka*, he rediscovered modernist editing and sketching processes in real-life situations dear to the followers of « the biography of the object. » The fact remains that the actual reader, in the city as in the country, wanted to be able to find himself, or escape in a literature that he recognized in its structure, its *diegese*, in the status of the characters and in the level of its language. If he wanted something new, it was not at the level of the writing of the narrative or lexical structure but at the level of thematics : a Red Tolstoï, or even a Red Tarzan. He understood, even less, purely formal plays on the language : Khlebnikov's *Zaum* never hit it off with the masses. They are amongst those who push for respectability and conformity in literature.

« Plebeianization » has been referred to. Marc Ferro conjured up « popular absolutism » to designate (in another context it is true) this pressure from the masses that at times goes beyond what the leaders are calling for.¹⁴

By analogy, it can be said that : there was no need for the socialist realism vulgate, the April 22, 1932 decree, obligatory positive heroes, or realism defined in one way or another in order for the masses to end up by imposing their needs for adventure,

¹³ Quoted by F. Champarnaud, *op. cit.*, p. 310-311.

¹⁴ Marc Ferro, *Des Soviets au communisme bureaucratique* (Paris : Gallimard-Juillard « archives, » 1980) p. 230.

for heroes after their own image, their need to idealize an uncertain and rude present or to escape into the heroic past of Pugachev's and Stenka Razin's rebellions or into popular tales revived through modern folklore.

Cultural plebeianization that met orders from above, but plebeianization with respect to what? to whom? If the readers of the thirties are to be compared with the reading minority during the years immediately preceding the Revolution, a plebeianization can, admittedly, be talked about--again would it not be necessary to forget the existence of a popular culture during the 1900s. But if it is necessary to take into account the great effort against illiteracy and the participation--although directed and supervised--of workers and peasants in cultural development: autobiographies, factory histories, histories of such-and-such locality during the Civil War, the editing of little scenes and *agitka* concerning day-to-day life, *dekulakization*, industrialization, the fight against alcoholism; individual or collective endeavours to write fiction, real-life sketches, portraits from *rabkors* or factory correspondents, new bards born of the countryside or the cities, of national minorities in particular, revival of oral traditions, etc.; it is that despite the growing authoritarian character of the regime--and this is not the least of the contradictions with which the researcher is confronted--a *whole new discourse* is being dealt with (once again, the fact that this new discourse is considered hoaxed, delinquent, directed and channeled in no way changes the phenomenon); if, let us write, this genuine cultural revolution must be taken into account, the notion of « plebeianization » becomes a comparative one. The fact remains that this vast new discourse is another expression--from below this time--of the authoritarian word.

It conflicts with all those who gave priority, not to normalization of language, but rather to changes in the way of life. Kalafat, Leonov's legendary hero, can take many faces, and it is not quite certain that popular wisdom is the lofty path to innovation.

This long exposition simply points out that normalization of language and the novel involves an encounter (of misunderstandings and division, admittedly, but an encounter nonetheless) between the rank and file and the higher-ups. The same can be said for the notion of Socialist Realism (with the same misunderstandings and division) which was both the result of twenty years of aesthetic and theoretical infighting between groups of intellectuals, and orders from the top.

We recall here the First Soviet Writers' Congress, which took place in Moscow in August 1934 and was presided over by Gor'kii. The following definition of Socialist Realism was given in the statutes of the newly-formed Writers' Union: « Socialist Realism, the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism, requires from the honest writer an historically concrete account of reality in its revolutionary development. Thus the veracity and the historically concrete aspect of artistic representation must combine with the task of ideological change and of worker education in the spirit of Socialism. Socialist Realism provides creative art with the extraordinary opportunity to manifest any and all artistic endeavour and a varied choice of forms, styles and genres. The triumph of Socialism, the impetuous growth of the productive forces, as yet unseen in the history of mankind, the growing process of class elimination, the abolition of all means of exploitation of man by man, the disappearance of contrasts between city and country, and finally the progress made by science and culture have opened countless paths towards a qualitative and quantitative increase of the creative forces and towards the blossoming of all forms of art and literature. »

At this point, let us say that for many Western scholars, it is fashionable to maintain that socialist realist aesthetics were imposed on the intellectual community by the political establishment, by Stalin, by Gor'kii, by Kirpotin, etc., and that the method that would dominate Soviet literature to this day was established between 1932 and 1934 by force of a decree. Of course, it is imperative that we react against such a caricature that is not without ulterior motive. We must distinguish scientifically between the emergence of the notion in the 1930s and the actual aesthetic and literary phenomenon. In order to shed some light on the subject, I shall first discuss the development of the notion in the 1930s.

The decree calling for the disbandment and restructure of all artistic and literary organizations, on April 23, 1932, did not come as a bolt of lightning; it was a brutal awakening nonetheless. An organizing committee was set up with the objective of founding the future Writers' Union. Its members included Ivanov, Panferov, Serafimovich, Tikhonov, Fadeev, Kirshon, Chumandrin, Afinogenov, Fedin and Gor'kii, as well as Gronskii, representing the editors of *Izvestiia*. The secretaryship was first held by Kirpotin, who was replaced in August 1933 by Iudin, Director of the Philosophy Institute, and from May 1933 onward editor-in-chief

of the renowned theoretical journal *Literaturnyi Kritik*. Lastly, Stetskii, head of the Central Committee's propaganda section, joined the organizing committee. It was a well-balanced committee with politicians (Stetskii, Gronskii and Kirpotin), Gor'kii and members of the defunct RAPP (Fadeev, Kirshon, Afinogenov and Chumandrin). Later on, Averbakh, Ermilov and Makarev also joined the organizing committee, which almost all members of RAPP's administration had thus joined. It included proletarians such as the older Serafimovich and the more vulnerable Panferov, as well as a number of « fellow travellers », a sign of the committee's search for a common aesthetic and ideological ground.

Sheshukov, historian of the RAPP movement, states that the RAPP members could not accept the death of their organization. They put pressure on various authorities but especially on Gor'kii and finally sent a letter asserting their point of view to the Party's Central Committee. They had two major demands. The new Writers' Union had to comprise an autonomous proletarian literary section that would adopt RAPP's watchword and aesthetic stand on the dialectical materialist method in literature as its platform. This was denying the very reasons RAPP had been abolished, for the idea of a distinct proletarian literature was no longer suitable and the « dialectical materialist method » slogan seemed too abstract, too philosophical, too sectarian. A five-member special commission was set up by the Central Committee to examine these demands. Its members included Stalin, Postychev and Gronskii. The signatories of the petition, among them Kirshon and Afinogenov, were summoned in May. Sheshukov reports in his work on RAPP that the meeting lasted over seven hours and that the atmosphere was tense. From the outset the members of RAPP gave in on the matter of creating an autonomous section within the new Union--which brought to mind, in another context, the organizational demands of the Proletkult. The second point of contention was more problematic since the members of RAPP held on to their « dialectical materialist method ».

The Central Committee commission finally got the better of its opponents. The « dialectical materialist method in literature » was replaced by the « socialist realist method », with the half-hearted approval of the members of RAPP. The phrase was thus coined in May but not made public at that time. A number of meetings were held in May, at many of which Stalin would have proposed « communist realism ». He was made aware that the

notion might be premature since it did not correspond to the actual state of society nor to that of Soviet literature. Stalin would then have approved « socialist realism » ; a year later, the legend of Stalin himself inventing the notion began to circulate.

On May 19, at a gathering of Moscow literary circles, Gronskii drew a conclusion to these debates and meetings. He said that the socialist realist method represented reality in a truthful manner, being dialectical in itself. His speech appeared in the May 23 edition of *Literaturnaia Gazeta*--it stands as the *first public mention* of the phrase « socialist realism ». On May 29, an editorial in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (« Let's Get to Work ») again took up the notion. Kirpotin wrote : « (...)In accordance with the aspiration of the masses who require from the artist a sincere and truthful description of the proletarian Revolution-- *revolutionary socialist realism*. » As we can see, the phrase was still unofficial as the adjective « revolutionary » was attached to it.

In the minutes of a meeting of the writers on June 2 in Rostov-on-the-Don, Vypriazhkin mentions the « basic method of Soviet literature as being the *revolutionary socialist realist* method »¹⁵ ; Kulik, President of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, then explained the notion at a meeting in Kharkov, in the following manner : « If a writer truthfully portrays reality in his works, then he is essentially a realist and his method is realism. If this is a writer who supports the program of the Soviet regime, then this means he is a revolutionary writer and that his is a revolutionary method. If this writer also endeavours to participate in the edification of Socialism, to create a socialist literature, then his will be a socialist method. This is why, comrades, the method that should inspire us all should be called *socialist revolutionary realism*. »¹⁶ Overall this reasoning confounded the artist's point of view, his political and social stands, with the literary text. Confusion reigned from the start. This is the main idea we must bear in mind. The notion was vague at the outset, and Gor'kii strived to clarify it by broadening the basis of the organizing committee and preparing the first plenum of the committee. It took place in Moscow from October 29 to November 3, 1932; the 129 delegates tried to sort out the confusion of the

¹⁵ H. Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934 : The Genesis of Socialist Realism* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1963), p. 145.

¹⁶ Roy Medvedev, *Le Stalinisme* (Paris : Le Seuil, 1972), p. 562.

debates.¹⁷ Prishvin, Averbakh, Belyi, Libedinskii, Vishnevskii, Kirshon and Gor'kii (as Honorary President) all gathered for this plenum, which cannot but seem somewhat surreal witnessed fifty-four years later. We will not discuss the settling of scores between Averbakh and the « fellow travellers » but will focus our attention instead on the notion of socialist realism. The major speeches were those of the « politicians », Gronskii and Kirpotin. Gronskii stressed the relation between realism and romanticism.

Kirpotin clearly tried to define « socialist realism, » and placed the search for a definition in the context of necessary improvement of the artistic quality of Soviet literature. He opposed the new slogan to that of the RAPP's « dialectical materialist method ». Even though he claimed his inspiration from the same philosophical basis, he branded the RAPP slogan as mechanistic and abstract. It removed the aesthetic from the ideological; it harboured the threat of having a work judged solely on the social status of its author or on his explicit view of the world. He took examples, as varied as Fadeev's *Razgrom*, Panferov's *Bruski*, Leonov's *Skutarevskii*, Ivanov's *Puteshestvie v stranu, kotoroi eshchë net* and Tikhonov's *Voïna*, and showed them to be, in their very diversity, good examples of what he called the socialist realist *form*. He insisted that socialist realism could not be imposed arbitrarily or administratively; it was within literature itself, through debates on the nature of the hero and on romanticism, that socialist realism imposed itself. Speaking against subjectivism and naturalism, Kirpotin broached the subject of romanticism, a heroic age that demands its literary specificity. Referring to Engels, he pointed out the importance of portraying the typical, and of Shakespearizing as opposed to Shillerizing the description of characters. We can assume that Kirpotin's speech contained all the formulas, the questions and the problems that were scattered and disseminated throughout the First Writers' Congress of 1934 : is socialist realism a form, a trend, a style, a movement or a method ? Is it exclusive of romanticism ? What is its relation to classical realism ? to modernism ? What kind of characters does it require ? What kind of heroes ? How can ideology be related to aesthetics ? Lest it be forgotten : no administrative measures !

The writers were not impressed. Nikulin stated his fears in no uncertain terms : « The socialist realist slogan, even if basically true, can very well lead, just like the dialectical materialist method slogan,

¹⁷ *Sovetskaia literatura na novom etape. Stenogramma pervogo plenuma orkomiteta soiuza sovetskikh pisatelei* (Moscow, 1933).

to strange applications. The critics of RAPP were wrong when instead of looking for dialectical materialist elements in literary works, they tried to mold these literary works to their own conception of dialectical materialism. This was their downfall. I cannot help but wonder. Won't the same thing happen with socialist realism ? People will begin to accommodate works to their own conception of socialist realism instead of searching for socialist realist elements in these works. »¹⁸ In order to calm the writers, the November 11, 1932 editorial in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* stated : « The slogan does not mean, of course, that all writers are to write in the same fashion. The slogan emerged from trends and processes in the literary reality, from an analysis of the concrete Soviet society. These trends must be theoretically interpreted. What the slogan essentially demands is truth from the artist... This does not contradict the fact that there is a Red romanticism in Soviet literature that expresses the writer's emotional implication in the reality he depicts, his forecasts and his dreams of the future. The slogan « socialist realism » demands from the writer that he tell the truth of life. »

Preparations for the second plenum of the organizing committee of the future Writers' Union's (February 1933) gave rise to many articles, meetings and debates. There was still light to be shed on the meaning of the notion. A. Tolstoï again claimed his inspiration from « monumental realism », stating that the concept of method was, in the final analysis, a scholastic concept. The only method in this event was to destroy in each individual case all existent methods. Slavin declared there were « as many creative methods as there are writers. As for « socialist realism », I wonder if we really need a new word. It is time in my opinion to have another look at all literary terms. Even realism by itself is vague enough as it

¹⁸ Kirpotin refers to a letter Marx wrote Ferdinand Lassalle about his historical drama *Franz Von Sickingen* on April 19, 1859 in which can be read « ...In these conditions, the noble representatives of the Revolution--whose slogans of unity and liberty still hide the dream of the Ancien Regime and of the rights of the strongest--should not have taken as much importance as they did in your work : the peasant representatives (especially these) and urban revolutionary elements could have formed an important backdrop. You could have thus expressed to a higher degree those most modern ideas in their purest form. But now, apart from religious liberty, political unity remains the main theme of your drama. You should have *Shakespearized* your drama, not *Shillerized* it as you did. I consider this transformation of men into spokesmen of the spirit of the century your greatest fault... » quoted by Claude Prévost in *Lukács : Ecrits de Moscou* (Paris : Editions sociales, 1974), p. 272-273. This letter was used a lot in the thirties. In his article « Down with Shiller », Fadeev referred to Marx to develop his theory of the typical as opposed to schematism.

is. »¹⁹ In the course of a debate on drama, the poet Sel'vinskii confessed he was not at all comfortable with the phrase « socialist realism » : « The word socialist after the word realism makes as much sense as the commissioner who doubled the military official during the Civil War. The problem of Soviet drama is to reorganize the world by staging life in its general cycles. Whether realist or symbolist, the methods through which playwrights portray this reality are their sole concern. »²⁰

Pogodin stated that romanticism suited him better than realism. Romanticism is bound to the epic and can account for the Dneprostroï. Vishnevskii was surprised to see Shakespeare associated with realism : « Many critics insist on using the word realism and the phrase « the need to Shakespearize »; they do not realize that these notions of realism and Shakespearizing are incompatible. Since we must carry on with our analysis : Shakespeare, whom we approach with such fear and inhibition, is to say the least hyperbolic, immoderate and surreal; he keeps his distance from reality, like all great artists who search for generalizations and imposing formulas, who aspire to find the existence of a higher, more sacred meaning. »²¹ Olesha wanted a more precise definition of « realism », wishing to avoid saying anything and everything : « If Shakespeare tends towards realism, then take the blood stain in *Macbeth*. Indelible stains, witches, spirits, sleepwalking -- is this realism ? How are we to ascertain realism ? as form, content, thought or product ? Marx said that reading Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin* gave him a better understanding of his own society than any scientific treatise could have, yet *La Peau de chagrin* is a fantasy... Realism in this case is not reality in itself but rather truth in reality... »²²

As we can see, there was no consensus on the notion, and writers were even questioning realism. This oddly resembled the

¹⁹ *Sovetskoe Iskusstvo*, 5 (January 26, 1933) in V.F. Vorob'ev, A.M. Gor'kii o sotsialisticheskom realizme, p. 133.

²⁰ *Sovetskoe Iskusstvo* debate related in *International Literature*, 3 (1933), p. 136-137.

²¹ V. Vishnevskii, « Obstînement vers l'art nouveau, » from his 1933 diary, in *Document du programme de représentation de « La Tragédie optimiste »* under the direction of J. Joudtheuil, p. 12, partially in *International Literature*, 3 (1933), p. 140.

²² Iu. Olesha, « Discussion on Drama, » *International Literature*, 3 (1933), p. 140.

remarks Pertsov had made in *Novyi Lef* in 1928 to the effect that no one knew what realism was, especially proletarian realism in art. At the second plenum, Lunacharskii had also tried to define the new notion. He opposed new realism to old, distinguishing three phases of bourgeois realism : an ascending phase (Balzac), a pessimistic phase (Flaubert) and a naturalistic, petit bourgeois phase (Zola), which invaded Europe. This critical realism, progressive in its time, has become reactionary today because it is static and does not, therefore, see the general direction taken by society. The new realism is *oriented*, knows where social evolution is headed and thus discerns the new from the old : « It goes without saying that many things are left to be done in our edification, that we can come up at every turn against inadequacies, even scandals and also perhaps various sorts of tedious details. The artist is not obliged in any way to pass over these in silence. But should he see in these phases of evolution elements to conquer, which are in fact being conquered, one conclusion is drawn, different from the total criticism of our fight and from the outright condemnation of our society, which are essential when considering these phenomena to be integral parts of our system... »²³

Socialist realism then has a direction, a goal, an objective. It is dialectical and active : Lunacharskii cited to that effect Gor'kii's *Klim Samgin*, Sholokhov's *Podniataia Tselina*, Maiakovskii and Bezymenskii. Furthermore, socialist realism does not exclude a certain romanticism. Like Gor'kii, Lunacharskii distinguished between a subjectivistic and reactionary romanticism (chimera) and a progressive and active romanticism, stirring and anticipatory, never supplying any illusions. Lunacharskii's speech contained all the themes which were greatly focused on, between 1933 and 1934, in major literary journals and in theoretical texts.

Gor'kii in his « On Socialist Realism » and Kirpotin in his 1933 articles in *Literaturnyi Kritik* added nothing more, nothing new to the debate. From that time on, the discursive framework was set, even though the objects of the debate were vague. One will never know whether socialist realism is a style, a method, one of the methods (the first drafts of the Union statutes mentioned the plural « methods » ; the subsequent change to the singular in a state of uncertainty the restriction of possible aesthetics in 1934), a trend, a form or a theme, what its relation is to the old realism, to

²³ A. Lunacharskii, « Le Réalisme socialiste, » *Les Destinées de la littérature russe* (Paris : EFR/Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1979), p. 100.

naturalism, to modernism and to factography, and how it integrates aesthetically a certain romanticism and a return to the epic and the monumental. Between 1932 and 1934, the editorial committees of the major literary journals were reorganized; literary platforms were adapted to suit socialist realism. In a way, everything had been said, formulated and discussed, without having been elaborated or defined. This led writers either to fear the worst or, thinking the phrase meant nothing, to interpret socialist realism for their own purposes. Such was the case of A. Tolstói : « Socialist realism is the national heir of a great culture that has given itself new goals. Building upon the best models of realism, it develops them in such fashion so as to write the story of a new man in a new society. »²⁴ And thus we come to the 1934 definition.

This conjectural emergence must not hide the fact that before the moment when the phrase was coined, fierce debates on the search for a new realism highlighted the 1920s and 1930s. Some years ago, Léon Robel, in a study on « socialist realism », gathered about ten definitions that marked the 1920s like a litany. Let us review them. « The new literature developing in the U.S.S.R. is characterized on the whole as a trend towards *social realism* with reference to the classics, » said Pereverzev in 1925. Two years later, Lunacharskii used the same notion : « The common feature of literature in the third phase, in the actual phase, is the definite trend towards *social realism*. » These meanings do not differ much from those of A. Tolstói who still used « *monumental realism* » to describe the great realist tradition evoked in a new society and invested with a socialist content. Another set of definitions stressed the necessary renewal of realism. In the case in point, Lezhnev and Pereval's platform formulated almost word for word what was to become the socialist realist platform.

In 1925, the Krug group defended the diverse and plural possibilities of realism : « The artistic means used by writers to carry out the program can be as diverse as the individuality of such-and-such author but *Krug* considers the interpretation closer to its platform as being that which bases itself on a realistic way of feeling and understanding the world. » This new realism, which Voronskii foresaw in naming it « *neo-realism* » as an « original combination of romanticism, symbolism and realism », stood against classical realism inasmuch as it took into account the community and the

²⁴ A. Tolstói, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 13, p. 313.

individual's social status. Wrote Stavskii in 1926 : « Our *realism* is of socialist content. It is warmed by the ardor of the final goal. In opposition to *bourgeois realism* which focuses its attention on the isolated character, our *realism* will study the personality and the conditions which surround and act upon it. » Zonin did not say anything different when he used the phrase « proletarian realism » in 1929 : « *Bourgeois realism* perceived the world impulsively through a psychological analysis of the individual. *Proletarian realism* strives to combine the psychological analysis of man, especially the new man, and the representation of reality to a dialectical materialist understanding of society. » The proletarian writers' platform, introduced in 1928 by Libedinskii, one of the leaders of RAPP, defined the method of « living man », this new realism, as « the proletarian realist method » : « What do we see around us ? The development of a cultural revolution, a more complex characterization, psychological enrichment, the general rise of the masses. Showing these growing processes is exactly the task of proletarian writers : showing them not in an abstract manner but through the conflicts (the mutual relations) between man and his environment. A writer must be cultured; he must choose among a thousand distinctive features the most fundamental and necessary, from the standpoint of class, to his hero; he must also show, using the *proletarian realist method*, the individual's place and role in society. »

The same concern was also expressed in 1928 by the peasant writers' platform : « The essential course that the development of peasant writer work must follow is that of *artistic realism*. That is not to say a formal literary school but a general creative method, where the writer who works on matter supplied by life itself in its progress and in its diversity, with living men in their relationship to the present environment and society, with classes and class struggles, presents in his work an objective and detailed description of his era and where he embodies essential ideas of his time in synthetic, living and artistically perfect images. Of course, this does not exclude the presence of revolutionary realist elements. »²⁵ Few writers and theoreticians saw in realism anything more than the renewed quest for representation. Referring to Voronskii's formula, Zamiatin gave new meaning to the words : « What is realism,

²⁵ These definitions are excerpted from Léon Robel, « Entretiens, » *Action poétique*, 44 (1970) (an issue devoted to Socialist Realism), p. 24-25.

in general ? If you examine your hand under a microscope, you will see a grotesque landscape : trees, ditches and stones instead of hairs, pores, moles and dust. Is this realism ? In my opinion, this realism is more authentic than primitive realism. If we further compare, while neo-realism uses a microscope to look at the world, symbolism uses a telescope, and pre-revolutionary realism an ordinary mirror. This will naturally influence the images and the entire formal structure. »²⁶

For most writers, the problems were altogether different. Social realism, monumental realism, neo-realism, authentic realism, detailed artistic realism, proletarian realism, revolutionary realism, tendentious realism, dialectical realism, the twenties searched in vain for a phrase that would define the new aesthetics ; yet it was there, its contents and problems were there. There was also, especially among proletarian poets and play wrights, a resistance to this process that implied (we witness it from the aforementioned definitions) the inscription of psychologism. It is, therefore, false to claim that Socialist Realism emerged suddenly and was officially imposed on reticent writers. From the 1917 Revolution to 1932-1934, the critical and literary scene shows, in its obsessive roundabout and its repetition of formulas, exactly the opposite. The hold of sociologism, the transfer of basic postulates from 19th-century realist aesthetics, the primacy of content, even if thought of in terms other than Pisarev's, the need to integrate the figure of man in fiction, in his social relations, his intentions, the question of articulating the psychological, the typical and what was already termed « revolutionary romanticism »--thus was the ground prepared for Socialist Realism as it was formulated in 1932.

B. Lafite's article takes into account, in great detail, the climate in 1929; it is a good observation post for studying the recurrences and stirrings of the treatise. Having myself studied these complex filiation problems, I will say that what persisted from the 19th century to the 1930s is what I have called the discursive complex, the discursive basis of realist aesthetics : a kind of granite base that from Pisarev to Gor'kiï and Plekhanov makes aesthetics and literature into a mirror image of reality, where social utility must find its place. What changes somewhat, and here again Korolenko and Gor'kiï are the moving force behind this change) is the

²⁶ A. Zamiatin quoted by G. Struve, *Histoire de la littérature soviétique* (Paris : Ed. du Chêne, 1946), p. 43.

prescriptive romantic aspect, which would later be called revolutionary romanticism, prescription having remained to this day at the forefront, a necessity from the standpoints of Party, working class and Communist idealism. Socialist realism emerged from this complex of elements, some dating back to the 1860s, others combining around 1900-1910, still others being searched for and coming to life in the 1920s in the quarrel over the disbandment of RAPP.

(Consult table on following page)

In *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Michel Foucault elaborates on the notion of « adjoining field » to a set of statements. He shows that a statement formulates itself in an existent space of preceding statements, on which the new statement bases itself either to prolong, to reformulate or to deny them. The statement is immersed in the field of enunciation in which it takes place : « It is also constituted by the network of formulations to which the statement refers (whether implicitly or not) either to repeat them, to modify or adapt them, to contradict them, or to speak of them; there are no statements which do not, in one form or another, update others (elements of ritual in a story; propositions already acknowledged in a demonstration; conventional phrases in a conversation)... »²⁷ These resurgences of formulations constitute what J.J. Courtine has called, based on Foucault's remarks, the « *domain of memory* » of a discursive complex. This is a basis of statements which for specific historical reasons will coexist with other statements formulated later on and in other circumstances; and this is a basis of statement-events which play the role of evident *cultural preconstructs*, whose quasi-systematic recall will inform in the very long run the expressible and the thinkable of society. Thus, discursive memory concerns the historical existence of basic statements, unavoidable, obligatory, forever updated in their variants, their movement, their transfers, their translations and their invisible transformations. What is meant by this is that the problems put forward by Belinskii, Chernyshevski, Dobrolubov and Pisarev, although greatly different from one author to the next, articulate during the entire 19th century fundamental statements on aesthetics and realism : statements which make up the discursive basis and the domain of memory in on which any thought, any later statement will graft itself and then rework the basis, refine it, shift some of its questions and answers, and reformulate some notions (for example, the relation between sociological approach and artistic

²⁷ M. Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris : Gallimard, 1969) p.129-130 (note 33).

approach for Plekhanov, or Lenin's reflection theory). Nevertheless, this basis and this domain of memory constitute a granite socle on which new statements will be produced.

A Matrix of Realist Aesthetics at the End of the 19th Century

ART BASED ON	SCIENCE IS A	REPRESENTATION	OF REALITY AND	AN ACTION UPON SOCIETY
*thought through imagery	*conceptual thought	*realist reproduction, not copy	*funda- mental category	*no pure art
*concrete thought	*that categorizes	*whole representation	*reality is first and foremost : materialist postulate of a realist attitude	*art serves an idea -- even if the latter is unconscious
*artistic qualities	*that analyzes	* dynamic		*the vulgarization of science
* « talent »	*that explains			*social utility
*imagination granted to reality	*that shows			*life manual
*reasonable language	*reasonable	*typical		
*clarity	*knowledge	*popular		*anticipatory dream
*must be *tension between the being and the must-being (devoir-être) *tension between reproduction and representation *tension between the being and the dream				

Thus the perpetual intertext, the reference-reformulations, the meditation on the ancestors; thus the linear filiation thought. This whole network is rendered thinkable and credible because of the existence of this discursive basis of Russian realist aesthetics. One can look for divisions : division between pre-Marxism and Marxism, division between populist utopia and Marxist science, division between Plekhanov's « blunders » or his « Menshevism » and Lenin's « sound » plans and analyses. But these divisions, whether real or imaginary, do not invalidate the discursive basis.

Indeed, from 1890 onward, a new wind blew sweeping decadents and symbolists alike, also sweeping the forerunners of the acmeist and futurist avant-garde, all parties that tried to shake this discursive basis to no avail. We claim that this discursive basis resisted the turmoil of the Revolution and that the debates, which rocked the end of the twenties, from Voronskii and Pereval to RAPP, from proletarian leaders to Gor'kii, on the necessity to renew realism, to surpass 19th-century critical realism and on finding a new phrase : « tendentious realism », « monumental realism », « social realism », « proletarian realism », « revolutionary realism » and finally « socialist realism », these debates reformulated and reworked the basic discursive memory which has been touched upon, in its nuclear statements, in its mass of ideologems, in the overt contradictory tension of questions asked but unresolved : between the being and the must-being (devoir-être); between report and prescription; between the status of realist representation (copy, non-copy, typical, non-typical) and the nature of reflect (anticipation or non-anticipation of the future); between « talent », imagination, « form » and content, thought; between artistic representation and ideology; between the idealization of the « popular » (later on the proletariat) and its truthful description; and between the representation of agitation, of propaganda, of mobilization, and the representation of psychologism (whose unsurpassed model was set by Tolstoi). This entire network constituted of cited, recited and reworked statements and of cultural images cannot be fathomed without the preeminence, the solidity of this discursive basis. Burning Pushkin's statue was only possible in the poet's imagination. Pushkin and Gogol' are as deeply rooted in fiction as Belinskii and Chernyshevskii are in criticism. That a social revolution such as that of October 1917 could not, in spite of formalist/futurist, constructivist and Lefist pressures, shake this discursive basis validates its stability and place.

As for the writing of the aesthetics, it can be seen, by further study of the problem, that it is through these complex filiations that it emerges from aesthetic compromises between the advocates of proletarian aesthetics, of *agitka*, and those who wished the return of the grand tradition of realism through « living man. » Finding *the moment* of Socialist Realism's emergence may be a project doomed to failure, but the emergence was definitely twofold and contradictory.

It is the same contradiction that exists on the level of articulation between didacticism and literariness. Didacticism is in contact with the normalization of language everywhere, and that tends to destroy literariness. Gor'kii went to war against the *skaz*, modernism, ornamentalism or ordinary discourse. He confronted what Bakhtin called « authoritarian discourse. » His fight against the *Bruski* from Panferov is a typical example.²⁸

What was it about in actual fact ? Panferov's first three books, *Bruski*, are spread over the period from 1928 to 1933 (the last one, *Creation (Tvorchestvo)* was only published in 1937). They are a great epic of collectivization in the Volga region.

Kirill Zhdarkin, the main character in Book Two, *Plotina*, published in 1930, tries to set up a commune. The novel is full of characters; none of the difficult collectivization period is idealized. Seventy-three homes become members of the artel; they transport their dwellings to the place called « *Bruski*. » The village thus finds itself divided into two : the artel run by Zakhar Kataev and the other part run by Il'ia Gurianov. The radio (which in Panferov's portrait has a quasi-autonomous role) announces the adoption of the First Five-year Plan. Stefan Ognev and Zakhar Kataev organize two collective operations at Zaovrainoe (148 homes) and Burdiachka (128 homes), taking the best lands. The second group sets up its own collective, which they call the « necessity » kolkhoz. Zharkov represents the concern of the « officials » regarding the requisition and stocking of wheat. The peasants, who are restive, are harrassed; they hide their wheat everywhere. Little by little, under pressure from the village activists, the peasants reluctantly bring their wheat, with bad grace. Then the river breaks up. Stefan Ognev organizes the defense of the dam and comes out of the incident completely paralyzed. The artel crews break up. The Regional Committee gives

²⁸ I owe much to the work of H. Elbaum, a member of our research team (see note 33), who worked with great keenness on Panferov's novels.

our hero, Kirill Zhdarkin, the responsibility of putting the dying artel back together. He is flanked by the agronomist, Bogdanov, but is not very well received at the village; his new ideas are looked upon as dangerous innovations pitch-forked onto the village by the city : « Here's a new overlord come to visit us. » The former members of the artel do not want to work. They call Kirill the *novyi pravitel'* (new Governor). But gradually everything falls back into place and the commune prospers; everything goes so well that Zhdarkin becomes elected to the Central Executive Committee. Then a hail storm destroys all the crops. For the first time in the *diegese* sabotage is evoked as a motive. Shortly afterwards, horses die, a tractor is flooded, the hay starts to burn. Kirill insists on running his commune as a business. He makes his kolkhozniks work hard for a better yield; he entices them with material incentives : his men work until they drop. Realizing his error, he proposes limiting work hours but his men revolt against him. The peasants who want to get rich through the expedient of the commune do not want to listen to him and, once again, call him an overlord. At this point in time, demoralized by his failure, Kirill learns that his wife Ulka has been unfaithful to him with Bogdanov, the agronomist.

The lexical richness of the characters in Book Two is to be noted. Each talks at his social level. Everyone mispronounces words ; the most highly-educated correct the others. This has a parodic effect which Gor'kii would have been more sensitive, had he been less obsessed with his idea of « language pollution. » The descriptions of nature are very bountiful, very penetrating; it all endows the *diegese* with a rythm, a dynamic that never seems oversimplified.

When we meet up with Kirill in Book Three, (published in 1933 and hotly contested in 1934), he has started to drink and is followed in this pursuit by the entire village. An extraordinary drinking bout commences and spreads over almost the whole region. The peasants have a foreboding of the horrors of the new wave of collectivization and prefer, in their helplessness, to bury their heads in the sand, and get drunk. As a counterbalance, the radio and the voice of the loudspeaker *shriek* Socialism, collectivization and the eradication of Capitalism in the countryside. This entire scene is depicted from the eyes of Nikita Gurianov, who does not understand very well what is happening; thus the loudspeaker and its bellows appear unfamiliar; an effect of oddness is created. The official speech resembles a deafening background noise that rings false. There is,

on the one hand, its sour note of enthusiasm, and on the other the reality that unfurls before Nikita's eyes, the slaughter of animals. It is written as a tragi-comedy; the voice of the narrator is lost by the focalization through the eyes of a naïve character. F. Panferov was reproached in 1934 his escaping classification, his not having adopted a narrative style, the *authoritarian discourse* that would have permitted him at all times to have a hold over his characters and the development of the narration, to evaluate, to judge, to decree what is right and what is wrong. Panferov took cover behind his characters to express collectivization in his own way, but in the words of others, either peasants or their unfortunate leader Kirill, who as a result of the drinking bout is expelled from the Party (he is later restored to his former position). Furthermore, Il'ia, Gurianov, Nikita's son, is called a kulak and relieved of his functions.

The third chapter of the book is a true song of praise to the earth, a farewell to a social saga that is disappearing, and its pages are truly ambiguous. The inner monologue of a peasant is disclosed through a discourse that starts like a neutral official speech, with the peasant's regionalisms, his down-to-earth lyricism, lexical repetition, and inversions. After two lyrical pages, where the identification of the reader has full play, one discovers that these are the words of Nikita Gurianov, the peasant who dreams of a fertile land, beyond the kolkhoz, without collective farming. Once again, the narrator's voice has migrated, disseminated and remains out of sight. The reader is left confronted with this hymn to a moribund world, a lost paradise. Nikita senses the anger of the people in the face of forced collectivization and the requisitions. He goes as far as to liken the new authorities to the Czar : « The anger that swept Nikolai the Cruel and threw regiments of lords into the Black Sea rises up... »

The village enters the most acute stage of *dekulakization*. Families are deported. In the face of so many disasters, and having heard of Moravia, a country without kolkhozes, Nikita departs, leaving everything. It is then that the uprising of a neighbouring village breaks out. It is learned by way of hearsay, indirect accounts, gossip and rumors. The aroused peasants sacked the kolkhoz, killed the president, massacred the stock; the massacre is depicted in completely naturalistic detail. This scene is also related from the standpoint of a peasant and not that of the narrator. The peasant evokes the uprising with thoughts of Pugachev, at a time when, « the muzhiks hanged their overlords, » and his voice chokes with

lyricism. He even finds the poetic terms and traditional archaisms to speak of the uprising : « ... All of great Russia (Rus') rose up, from one end to the other. We were laughing with her. We were eating our children, we would eat ourselves, like that, one piece after another until the last, but we would not surrender. »

The rumor is then carried by Shilov, Secretary of the District Committee, the voice of social discourse, the « it is said. » « It is said that the Secretary of the Komsomol was killed in Nikolskoe, that a policeman was buried alive in Grodnia... »

Shilov and Britov, with all the local Communists, are massacred by the peasants in a very metaphoric narrative where the image of the wolf, the stereotype of the counter-revolutionary, is in the foreground as is the snow storm, the description of which resembles a peasant gathering-in of crops : *siverka vs metel' muzhitskaia*. This classic parallelism between the raging elements and the social outburst is a strong point in Panferov's descriptive style. A good part of the narration is in the form of inner dialogues : that of the Military Commissioner, Kirill Zhdarkin, who must put down the revolt by himself and that of Il'ia Gurianov, leader of the revolt.

As expected, the revolt is put down by the villagers themselves, by those who are aware that collectivization is logical and necessary. In this way, Panferov's work conforms to the ideological message required in literature. In fact, this is the least convincing passage in the book, because the suppression of the revolt appears as an unexpected kind of miracle. Il'ia Gurianov is shot. During this period, Nikita Gurianov leaves in search of Moravia, the lost paradise without kolkhozes where each is master of his land. He arrives at the village of one of his friends below the Volga, but it is in the middle of collectivization. Disappointed, he leaves to work in a factory; but not wanting to produce combine harvesters destined to kolkhozes he leaves the factory and wanders in the Khopior region, the region of the Cossacks, which is however experiencing profound upheavals. Nothing is stable. The people leave...for the neighbouring kolkhoz. Next he makes his way to Dneprostroi, to the great hydro-electric site but he is in poor spirits. He is homesick and leaves the site in desperate search of Moravia. He parts with a group of uprooted peasants who, like himself, are fleeing collectivization. He reaches the Black Sea, but then decides to return home. After further tribulations that cause him to discover saboteurs (an obligatory theme of the thirties), Zhdarkin widens his power.

As one senses from these few lines, Book Three has the makings of a utopic novel, is rich in peripeteia, lyrical episode, evocations of nature and Russia's past; it is rich in peasant dialogues, literary intertexts (from *Don Quixote* to Stenka Razin or Pugachev from Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*).

This book, called propaganda, which anthologies always quote reluctantly but which is never read, presents the perfect model of unmastered tension, typical of Soviet fiction of the thirties to which we will return. It only interests us here because it catches the authoritarian discourse in a trap; it thwarts it by wandering from the focalization. The narrator escapes identification, hidden behind his characters, or behind the murmur of the steppes. History, like the wind, is born by sunflowers, and like their seeds, loses itself in storms.

The desire for clear and precise writing that gets directly at the essential was a desire to banish stylistic effects, which are perhaps excessive in the long run. But they constituted, nonetheless, a truly experimental laboratory where Russian modernism searched for an identity in pursuit of a change in writing. It was desired that writing espouse the novelty of a frenzied and opaque evolution of history; it was desired that writing not cling to the writing of a bygone age, represented by the incomparable stylists, Turgenev and Tolstoi.

How can we look at the M. Gor'kii of 1934 without seeing a kind of Kalafat who wanted to bring order to words, and the processes of writing, to make language clear by labelling and categorizing it. The prose of the twenties, from Zoshchenko to Platonov, from V. Ivanov to Leonov, is a whirl of the epic and the lyric, emphasis and concision, all the poetic processes, the word for the word, the word for the sound, for its power of evocation, suggestion and its metaphoric strength. It is a prose that mixes elegant narration at the same time that it reimmerses itself in popular sources through popular tales and *skaz*. How can this be suppressed without undermining the specificity, the singularity of literature?

Gor'kii did not want to take any risks. He feared the debasement of the language of these young writers born of the soil and half-illiterate, as he feared the peasant's mind, or in the past, the crowds that assaulted the Winter Palace. He confused ignorance of the code with its transgression, the rules with the norms. He ended up, in his fear of the idiolect, confusing Leonov with the *udarniki*. The tragedy of his position can be understood, but the damages that such a normalization of language would entail cannot be

overlooked. The consequences were not felt immediately, and one of the fundamental theses of this book, is that during the thirties up until the war there was an unprecedented textual resistance. Great literature was still written--when the physical liquidation of the great purges failed to silence the voices--from *Road to the Ocean* to *Peter I*, from *People from Lost Places* to *Pushkin's Youth*, from *The Quiet Don* to Bul'gakov and Platonov's texts that remained unpublished. Work continued, however, and when the phenomenon of rewriting proceeded at full speed, at the beginning of the war and after the war, the significance of language normalization could be evaluated.

Take for example the rewriting of F. Gladkov's *Cement*. This novel was published in 1925 in the magazine headed by Voronskii, *Krasnaia Nov'*, issues 1-6. It was immediately hailed as a great work, the first proletarian work whose theme was not the Civil War but reconstruction and work, at the end of a heroic period such as that of the Civil War.

It is the story of the hero Gleb Chumalov, demobilized from the front in 1921. He returns to his home in Novorossiisk on the Black Sea. What he finds upon arrival resembles neither the world of combat that he has just left, nor the city he left behind to fight the Whites. The cement works (from which the title is derived), the crowning glory of the city, is abandoned, invaded by weeds and goats. Now that the war is over the underfed inhabitants of the city are waiting for a return to their former lives and better days. Everything is neglected; everyone becomes demoralized. Against all odds, Gleb Chumalov takes as his goal the reopening of the factory and the restoration of the workers' courage and reason to live. Amongst the obstacles he must overcome are the bureaucrats; members of the party ravishers of women; leftist dreamers close to the worker's opposition; and women like Polia, who do not want to abandon the revolutionary romanticism of the Civil War and do not accept entry into a new, more prosaic combat where tons of cement replace great calvalcades.

The novel, set in 1921, was written at the time of the NEP and evokes the disillusionment of that period, the debates opposing those who defended efficiency even when it meant the resurgence of new social iniquities and those who, strengthened by hard combat and the brotherhood of arms during the Civil War, did not accept this « treason » and remained nostalgic about that horrible, yet romantic period. Gleb gains the upper hand in the end, and even convinces

the engineer Kleist (his former enemy), to cooperate with him; at the end of the novel the factory has resumed operation and the workers have regained their dignity. Intermingled in the novel's framework is the second theme of the unhappy relationship between Gleb and his wife, Dasha. When he set off for war, she was a submissive wife, who interiorized the dominant values that made women submissive to their fathers and then their husbands.

The war has completely changed this state of affairs : Dasha has become an emancipated woman, an activist; she is independent, having found social and sexual freedom, freedom unbeknownst to her until that time; she cannot accept the type of personal relationship that Gleb—who has not changed on that level—offers her; she can no longer accept to be his companion, and to be in a better position to fight, to see through her social tasks, she has entrusted their child to a communal home, a kind of orphanage, where the hungry and sick child ends up dying. An enormous restlessness pervades the novel. If Gleb is victorious on the social level, his personal life is completely ravaged. Then again, it is necessary to qualify the optimism of the ending : it is efficiency that triumphs over the idealists and the Romantics, all however, good militants. The novel gives the impression that even though the factory starts up again, nothing is resolved, because it is necessary, in the aftermath of the heroic age of the Civil War, to find a new equilibrium and a new language between the necessities of economics and politics, and the renewal, no less important, of enthusiasm. As for the interpersonal relationships between men and women, everything remains to be done, is still to be invented.

This epic of the necessary return to work after a heroic age, published in the middle of the NEP and exposing the genuine problems of that time, is written in a highly ornamental style that constantly plays with language for its own sake, for its rhythm and its sonority, using a number of metaphors, comparisons, animalizations of human beings, playing equally with dialectalisms, localisms and blunt, crude language.

The author, moreover, in a good many passages does not deny eroticism. It is a very modern prose that is being dealt with, mixing a revolutionary theme of the new Soviet literature and an experimental research on the materiality of language.

Three attitudes are apparent in the critics' reception of the novel. We will touch on them briefly because our subject here is

not controversial battles over the definition of a new aesthetics, but what becomes a work of great talent when under normative pressures of a linguistic, ideological and political nature, it is rewritten.

A first group of critics, Serafimovich and M. Gor'kii spoke very highly of this novel. Gor'kii, in particular, found in it romantic tendencies, that new romanticism he defined and extolled a few years later. He saw in the romanticism of *Tsement* a « romanticism of people that know how to rise above humanity, who dare to regard the latter as rough material and who know how to conjure up positive aspirations from this negativity... » Gor'kii nevertheless criticized the language, the overdone, affected, verbose and prolix style, and especially, the localisms of the Novorossiisk region. But he was favourable to the novel, overall. On the other hand, the entire movement around the *Lef* and the *New Lef*, personified by Tret'iakov and O. Brik in particular, loosed its fury on *Tsement*. The movement saw a resurgence, a rebounding of the realist novel, disastrous in their eyes, traditional, conservative and unable to serve in writing epics of the new era.

In an essay revealingly titled *Pochemu ponravilisia « Tsement »* (« *Why Did Cement Please ?* »), O. Brik tries to demonstrate the weaknesses of the novel : double plot poorly articulated (the story of the factory and the relationship between Gleb and his wife, Dasha); the fairy-tale heroism of a fairy-tale (Gleb, superman, overcomes the obstacles somewhat too easily). Its characters are stereotypes (Gleb-Achilles, Gleb-Roland, Gleb-Il'ia Muromets, and Dasha, a kind of Joan of Arc). The monumental heroism is an aesthetic error, as is the realist portrayal. And Brik opposes, as did Tret'iakov this resurgence of the realist-epic novel to the biography of the object, a shorter form opposed to the novel, the authenticity of the ocherk opposed to the referential illusion of the novel.

Between the two are the critiques of a Voronskii and a Fadeev who, far from being hostile to the search for a new psychological realism, on the contrary reproached Gladkov for a lack of depth, psychological width, a heroization that turns to the archetype instead of portraying classic examples. Yet everyone recognized in *Tsement* a great novel or in any case hailed it upon its publication as *an event*. Moreover, several years later, this novel would become a prototype, a precursor of Socialist Realism.

M. Gor'kii, however, criticized the language and the style. Gladkov rewrote the novel from 1932 to 1950 under the pressure of the new normative aesthetics. The first changes from 1932-1933

were minor, even insignificant. They concerned certain dialectical terms; they eliminated vulgarisms, the uncouthness of certain dialogues; language became more civilized, especially that which came from Dasha's mouth; certain sexually evocative terms were eliminated in favour of euphemisms; certain typical aspects of twenties ornamental prose were touched, for example, metaphors animalizing the human world were abandoned. But all this was still insignificant and in no way touched the novel's characteristic stylistics, its force of conviction, its tragic grandeur, at the same time as its uneasy optimism.

It was from 1941 onward that this work became unrecognizable, colourless and unreadable. Not only the language changed, but also the characters and even the material of the narration. Compare these two passages extracted from the 1925 and 1950 editions : « Comrades, let's not abuse words. We have abused pigs and goats enough without adding that. That's enough. The factory is no longer a factory but a cattle pen. We're imbeciles. Does that settle the bargain, comrades ? Man, you see, can do two things : live from hand to mouth or fling his fist in his mouth. It all depends on you : just how much of an imbecile are you ? Our hands weren't made for goats and pigs... Our hands are completely different. We know it, hard as iron, and such hands, such souls, such minds. » And the 1950 version : « Comrade we'll not continue long like that. We've forgotten our duties as revolutionaries. Our factory is no longer a factory, it's a farm. We plunder public property for our own ends. Is that a good thing, comrades ? Two-faced men, my friends... Your hands can be put to other use. We are Bolsheviks of a special type. Such souls, such hands, such minds ! »

As can be seen little remains of the crudeness of Gleb's speech. Pigs and goats have disappeared, replaced, if you like, by the duties of the revolutionary, Bolsheviks and public property.

The second example deals with the prudishness that was introduced into Soviet literature at the end of the thirties, especially after the war. The 1925 version of *Cement* evokes the lovemaking of a couple of workers in these terms : « Opposite, on the other side of the alley, drunken shouts escaped the barracks' windows in breathless outbursts. The bass voice of Savchuk, the cooper, thundered, intermingled with the hysterical cries of his wife, Motia. Gleb left his bundle where he was and headed towards Savchuk's dwelling : a room with walls covered in soot, stools and old clothes thrown on the floor, glimmering white spots of flour everywhere.

Unaccustomed to the dark, Gleb searched a minute for the Savchuks. Then he saw two bodies wriggle convulsively. His attentive eye made out the Savchuks : he, his shirt in tatters, his back arched, from his underwear around his neck, his ribs protruding under his skin like rings; Motia, her dress pulled up to her stomach, her bulbous breasts shaking under his hands and under her own. Gleb grasped Savchuk under the armpits and pressed against his ribs. The bones shrieked under the shoulder blades. 'Hey, muzhik ! The effort is driving you crazy, old man ! Breathe a minute. Stand up ' »!²⁹

The 1950 version : « On the other side of the alley, in the little stone house with the open windows, Savchuk, the drunken cooper, was creating an uproar. Motia, his wife, was yelling hysterically; Gleb lent an ear to the sound and came to life. He got up and entered the Savchuks home. The room was dirty and nauseating. On the ground clothes and stools were spread disorderedly; a teapot was lying in the corner. There was flour everywhere. Motia was stretched out on heaps of potato sacks, holding on tightly, while Savchuk, his shirt in tatters, hurried towards her, tousled, and started to beat her with his fists and bare feet, grumbling maliciously. Gleb lifted him from the ground and threw him behind himself. « Savchuk, you've gone crazy, you idiot--calm down a bit. »³⁰

A violent scene of amorous relations is transformed into a settlement of accounts, a naturalist, miserabilist scene in which a man beats his wife, a traditional topos as it were. The whole text is thus transformed, neutralized and normalized. Such rewriting processes affected the whole of Soviet literature.

These transparent fantasies have far from disappeared from the Soviet cultural horizon as P. Seriot's article shows. The fact remains that the problem of literariness cannot be erased easily. If H. Elbaum is principally attached to the ideologies surrounding industrialization and « primitivism, » my essay, as well as that of M. Souchard, tackles head on the problem of ideology in the novel, of idea novels, didactic novels, of romans à thèse and

²⁹ F. Gladkov, *Le Ciment*, French translation (Paris : Juillard, 1970), p. 22 (1925 version).

³⁰ F. Gladkov, *Cement* (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 34-35 (1950 version). On this topic see Robert L. Busch, « Gladkov's *Cement* : The Making of a Soviet Classic, » *Slavic East European Journal*, 22, 3 (1978) 348-361.

of contradiction, of tension in the work throughout the period between the *thesis effect* (the basis of ideas, the social discourse) and the *text effect* (the work in and on the language, the metaphors, the fictional trope). Maryse Soucharad tries to determine the specificity of the Soviet novel of the thirties, by putting forward the fundamental vectors of monologism; for my part, I try to grasp what distinguishes the novels that are still readable today from those that do not manage to go beyond didacticism. Claude Duchet³¹, in his socio-critical approach, looks at the novel from the angle of the information that refers to the elements of the extra-textual reference : such-and-such a village, such-and-such colour, such-and-such trees. He looks at it in a second light, that of the landmarks, in the sense that every text designates a cultural space of references, values, cultural stereotypes, elements of social discourse, representations, the space of socio-discursive concretions. And finally, he looks at it from the angle of the value, precisely a cross-reference to the « literariness » that he calls « value » in the Saussurian sense of the term, by the place that a specific element of fiction takes with respect to the other elements, by the specific difference that it establishes. It is this angle that establishes the work as an aesthetic work, it is it that creates the fictional reality. We believe we have shown that the text resists for a long time, by language, by its metaphorical richness, by its excess of levelling. Please excuse my inclusion of this long quote of Geoffrey Hosking's, which is still of current interest today : « Most western commentators, however, deny any literary standing whatever to Socialist Realism, seeing it as a purely political doctrine. Edward J. Brown, for example, speaks of 'this meaningless authoritarian term,' while Gleb Struve calls adherence to it 'tantamount in practice to an undeviating toeing of the current party line.' And in a recent general work on Soviet literature, Marc Slonim comments acidly : 'Had the theoreticians of Communist aesthetics said that a « good » work of art is one that supports Communism, and a « bad » work one that either does not do it or does it half-heartedly, they would have avoided many further troubles.' These diagnoses are, of course, quite correct, as far as they go. The extent to which the party manipulates literary output can be judged by the merest glance at the long list of independently thinking writers who were forced to devote themselves to journalism or translation, to fall silent, or were even physically liquidated : Babel', Zamyatin, Pil'nyak, Olesha, Bulgakov, Mandel'shtam, Pasternak, Akhmatova, Zoshchenko--most of the major names of the twenties and thirties. But as an

³¹ Claude Duchet, *La Socialité du roman*, to be published.

explanation of what Soviet literature actually said, even during the Stalin period, such judgements are very negative. A political line cannot determine the actual content even of bad fiction : it can only establish the frontiers within which that content takes shape. A country's landscape cannot be adequately grasped by surveying its borders alone, but in our approach to Soviet literature, we are often like hostile frontier guards, peering suspiciously at the few landmarks discernible from our vantage point. We reproach it for what it has not done, instead of trying to analyse what it actually says and wherein lies its appeal. Brown, for example, evokes the 'monotonous uniformity in the content and form of Russian literature during the Stalin period,' without telling us very much about that content and form, except in a few unusual works which, by his own admission, do not conform to the stereotype. Slonim, likewise, focusses mainly on the confusions in the theory, denying that Stalinist literature can have a coherent aesthetic or deal seriously with the important questions of man's existence : 'Basically, Socialist Realism negated human limitations and avoided the problem of death and the human condition in the universe.' Rufus Mathewson makes broadly the same point : a continuing theme of his book is that official Soviet literature is aesthetically invalid because it excludes both psychological complexity and the possibility of tragedy. He does at least describe something of the positive content of Socialist Realist fiction in tracing the tradition of the 'monolithic, functional, political man' from Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov to Ostrovsky's Pavel Korchagin, but denies that such a figure can be the hero of a successful novel. 'The novelist's obligation to reveal the whole of man in all his meaningful relations runs full tilt against any pressure to advocate or celebrate virtue in fiction.' Western readers may agree that novelists do have such an obligation, but then why in blockaded, starving, wartime Leningrad did people queue up to buy Ostrovsky's *How the Steel was Tempered* ? Were they just puppets responding to propaganda, or was there some real spiritual hunger driving them on ? That is what is so difficult for westerners to understand ».³²

Our re-examination of this literature shows the contradictory, ambivalent character of Soviet culture during the thirties, the rise in monologism, the normalization of the language, the will for

³² Geoffrey Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism* (London : Granada Publishing, 1980), p.2-3.

clarity obsession with transparence, the authoritarianism but also enrollment of the popular, the collective new discourse--even reprobate--the pressure from the reader who made known his desires and specific needs, the popular absolutism and the cult of personality to return to the notion substituted for the word « Stalinism » by the Soviets--in one word, the plebeianization of the culture, to quote Marc Ferro's felicitous expression³³.

Régine Robin
April 1986

³³ This special issue of *Sociocriticism* brings together researchers from three horizons. First of all, a research team under my supervision (R. Robin, M. Souchard and H. Elbaum's articles) that worked within the context of a grant from the *Canadian Council of Research in Human Sciences* on the general theme of « Social Interdiscursivity and Cultural Specificity of the Soviet Jewish Minority of the Yiddish Language 1929-1938; » and a grant from the Quebec *Formation de chercheurs et d'action concertée* program, co-directed by M. P. Malczynski, on the theme of « The Tendency Towards Unification, Multiculturalism and the Inscription of the Popular Culture : The Tensions of Soviet Social Discourse from 1928 to 1941 in Light of the Principal Concepts of M. Bakhtin. » We wish to thank at this time the subsidizing agencies. Other students and researchers who are members of this team were not able to find a place for themselves in this issue. They are D. Michaud, Robert Saletti and D. Therrien.

B. Lafite represents another group lead by Irène Sokologorskii at the Université de Paris III. They took the corpus of *Pravda*, choosing one particular year : 1924 in the work of Christine Revuz on the question of campaigns; 1927 in the thesis of Laure Iddir-Spindler on the discourse on literature; and 1929 in the case of B. Lafite on the discourse on literature and the arts.

Finally P. Seriot, a linguist and slavist, has just published his thesis, outstanding on all accounts, *Analyse du discours politique soviétique* (Paris : Institut du Monde soviétique et de l'Europe centrale et orientale, 1985), and reminds us here of the still current importance of language representation and the obsession with transparency.

A final note that this issue was inspired, to a great extent, by R. Robin's work, *Le Réalisme socialiste : une esthétique impossible* to be published by Editions Payot.

TOWARDS A SEMIOTICS OF THE IDEOLOGICAL NOVEL

Maryse Souchard

« Pour boucher toutes les fissures qui s'ouvrent dans la cloison qui sépare la réalité réelle de la réalité idéologique », ¹ there is, of course, terror, writes Alain Besançon. But, before that, there is discourse; there is « une profession de foi pathétique et incantatoire en la force des mots. »²

Among the possible « mots » or words that will circulate or be put into circulation in the USSR, from the Twenties up until the War, one could look to newspapers, journals, posters, orations, lectures--making listen, making read to make understand. Among these possible « words, » the novel cannot be ignored. To learn History through tales, to learn to read into History. To unite, to gather around texts (epics or biographies) with a view to prompting discussions--the reflections that are indispensable to the events of the time. « Ainsi, pour faire passer la réalité idéologique dans la réalité réelle, il suffit d'un discours. La boucle est bouclée. »³

The novels that we have analyzed, as part of a research team brought together by Régine Robin, fit in with this general concept.

Translated by Pat Turenne.

The translation of this article was made possible by a grant from the Centre de Recherche du Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface.

¹ A. Besançon, *Présent soviétique et passé russe*. Paris, Le Livre de poche, 1980, p.154.

² N. Werth, *Etre communiste en URSS sous Staline*, Paris : Gallimard, 1981, p.99.

³ *Ibid.*, p.100.

They lend support to political effort. Or so one might think at first glance. According to Susan Suleiman, the socialist realist novel is « une œuvre qui représente une idéologie officielle soutenue par les appareils d'Etat. »⁴ Being « propaganda literature, »⁵ the socialist realist novel is the exemplum of the ideological novel in which the technique of the novel is used for the sole purpose of transmitting ideas, the « message » imposed upon the author by some « They » (State), some center of power. Simplified in the extreme to ensure that it will be understood, the social realist novel would seem to be less a novel than a Communist manifesto.

By analyzing, at the outset, the socialist realist novels⁶ published in the Thirties, we were seeking to understand and show how and why the critics always considered these texts to be classic examples of the *roman à thèse* or ideological novel. We also wanted to describe the « positive hero » figure, the philosophical thesis in the text, the ambiguities which could contradict the ideology expounded by the text, the historical link established by the text. At the level of the uttered enunciation, we wished to focus on the contract and the relations between the narrator, the narrated and the narratee, assuming that the explicit presence of the author, the « omniscient narrator, » would be characteristic of this « literary genre. »

⁴ S. Suleiman, *Le Roman à thèse ou l'autorité fictive*, Paris : P.U.F., 1983 (Authoritarian Fictions : The Ideological Novel) p.242.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.241.

⁶ The following novels were analyzed by the research team :
Terre défrichée (Virgin Soil Uplifted), Sholokhov, 1930
Kara Bougaz, Paustovskii, 1932
Energie (Energy), Gladkov, 1932
Time Forward I, Kataev, 1932
Et l'acier fut trempé (How the Steel Was Tempered), Ostrovskii, 1934
Le Deuxième Jour de la création, Ehrenburg, 1930
La Route vers l'océan (Road to the Ocean), Leonov, 1935
Hydrocentrale (Hydrocentral), Shaginian, 1932
Pétrolier Derbent (The Tanker « Derbent »), Krymov, 1938
 We also analyzed some novels which do not fall into the period of immediate interest to us :
Que faire ? (What is to be done ?), Chernyshevskii, 1862-63.
Tchapaev (Chapaev), Furmanov, 1919
L'Année nue (The Naked Year), Pil'niak, 1920
Ciment (Cement), Gladkov, 1925
L'Envie (Envy), Olesha, 1927
Le Voleur (Thief), Leonov, 1927
La Défaite (The Rout), Fadeev, 1927
La Jeune Garde (The Young Guard), Fadeev, 1946

These first analyses certainly allowed us to give a superficial account of the narrative structures of our novels. But they remained at the level of generalities bringing into question the very specificity of our corpus, a specificity universally affirmed. Yet we had to find a satisfactory description of these narrative structures in order to be able to pursue the analysis at the level of the discursive structures as well as at the level of the relation of the text to the ideology.

At the very outset, we were faced with the problem of determining the « genre », being faced with three different levels (the « ideological novel », the « novel of ideas », and the « fictionalization of ideas in the novel ») which the critics generally confuse with one another. These « ideas » indicated, simultaneously, the presence of a philosophical thesis in the text, the effect of the thesis on a reading, and the ideological novel as a genre. It could then be thought that there was a contradiction in the generally accepted hypothesis that a realist novel could be ideological or, quite simply, that the criterion of « ideology » was perhaps not relevant at this stage of our research.

We therefore turned the problem around, approaching it from the other side. No longer was it a matter of showing how these texts were examples of a literary genre which remained to be defined, the specificity of which we were no longer sure existed, nor, above all, how it was manifested, but rather one of seeing what these texts had in common. What was left to do was to discover what this common denominator was, what factors would be significant for the purposes of comparison.

METHODOLOGICAL GROUNDWORK

Recent research carried out by Philippe Hamon⁷ dealing with the analysis of the ideology found in texts which are not « ideological » enabled us to make a preliminary delimitation of the scope of our study. Indeed, Ph. Hamon restates the question of the analysis of ideology in terms of a textual semiotics. Beyond a specificity of the ideological text, he postulates an organization which is articulated on two axes (paradigmatic and syntagmatic)

⁷ Especially *Texte et idéologie*, Paris : P.U.F., 1984. Also *Le Personnel du roman*, Paris, Drez, 1983, and « Un Discours contraint » in *Poétique*, 16, 1973, pp. 411-445.

common to all the texts.⁸ From this point of view, ideology will be considered

comme un système de valeurs, système qui possède une dimension **paradigmatique** (tout texte construit des hiérarchies, des échelles, des taxinomies, des systèmes d'évaluation où du positif est opposé à du négatif) et une dimension **syntagmatique** (tout texte manipule des scénarios narratifs impliquant des actants-sujets qui évaluent des moyens en fonction de finalité).⁹

Therefore, Ph. Hamon focuses on two ideas, that of « evaluation » and that of « norm », based on five propositions : - to study the « ideology-effect » of the text rather than the ideology « of » the text; -to take into account the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic dimensions **simultaneously**; -« ne pas restreindre l'analyse des rapports texte-idéologie à l'analyse de corpus ou de genres déjà circonscrits *a priori* » ; - to look beyond the key words, even if they are studied in context; - to strive towards a « semiotics of knowing » integrated with a general theory of modalities.¹⁰

These principles allowed us to reorganize our corpus, or rather to modify the viewpoint of our analysis. We had become aware of a problem with exposing the ideology « of » the text in a genre set up *a priori*. By following Ph. Hamon's programme, we removed the ambiguities which seemed to be hampering our analysis. So as to free ourselves from the « pré-dit » of our corpus, we somehow had to neutralize it, to approach it from a new angle, preferring an analysis of the text over a projection of the context. This approach involved no longer considering the novels as a « collective actant », as interchangeable, equivalent. On the contrary, each of these texts had to be analyzed independently, at first, of their

⁸ Ph. Hamon, in *Texte et idéologie*, op.cit., quotes this definition proposed by A.J. Greimas and J. Courtès, *sub verbo* « idéologie » in *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage* (Paris : Hachette Université, 1979) :

« il paraît opportun de distinguer deux formes fondamentales d'organisation de l'univers des valeurs : leurs articulations paradigmatique et syntagmatique. Dans le premier cas, les valeurs sont organisées en système et se présentent comme des taxonomies valorisées que l'on peut désigner du nom d'axiologies; dans le second cas, leur mode d'articulation est syntaxique et elles sont investies dans des modèles qui apparaissent comme des potentialités de procès sémiotiques : en les opposant aux axiologies, on peut les considérer comme des **idéologies** (au sens restreint, sémiotique, de ce mot) ».

⁹ Ph. Hamon, *Texte et idéologie*, op.cit., fourth page.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.9-11.

belonging to a particular « novelistic group. » Our search for the common denominator was carried through by bringing out the special features of each novel. This also amounted to considering each text as an individual act of writing, of communication, thus contrasting « genre » with « uniqueness. » Dividing our corpus into as many novels as it contained, having so many sub-corpora, considerably simplified the methodological problems which, until then, had seemed insurmountable. This approach may now seem obvious, self-evident, but in order to arrive at it, we had to call into question the homogeneity which had been assured by years of consensus among the critics. Furthermore, this perfectly methodological operation proved to be extremely fruitful. We could not « compare » one novel, the sum total of all the texts belonging to the same historical period. But we could analyze **several** novels so as to then put together a common organization of their narrative structures, if and only if such an organization could be justified.

Keeping « absence » as an *a contrario* sign of ideology in the text, Ph. Hamon proposes to determine the modalities of its **localization** : their status, their origin and their function.¹¹ This concept of absence did not seem relevant to our research - we were dealing with texts in which, on the contrary, « presence » was manifested to the highest degree. It was impossible for our novels not to speak of the Revolution, of the existence of opponents to the regime and their means of action, of successes and defeats, even if the latter were often represented as deferred successes. Furthermore, by accepting that « l'idéologie et son travail de filtrage se laissent...appréhender dans l'écart qui existe entre modèle construit faisant office de norme, et un donné », ¹² we were circumscribing our problematics. It became possible to consider that if the hypothesis of a common narrative organization proved to be true, we could then use this hypothesis to show the similarities **and** the differences between our novels, to describe the ideology-effect.

The ideological loci of the text are brought to the attention of the reader by highlighting techniques, by inflating the vocabulary of modelization and of law.¹³ One of these loci is the hero,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.17.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.20-21, where Ph.Hamon presents his hypotheses. Also pp. 34-41 where he defines these ideological loci (based on four planes of mediations : linguistic, technological, ethical, aesthetic) and stresses the problems left unresolved.

considered « non pas tant comme un personnage de l'œuvre, mais comme un 'point' de l'œuvre, comme un lieu, un lieu textuel qui circonscrirait et définirait, d'emblée et *a priori*, le genre du texte. »¹⁴ The focalization upon the hero-central character of the novel is quite relevant to our research. Our first analyses had demonstrated that the narrative was articulated around one character, who was the bearer of « values. » Ph. Hamon's propositions allow us to view the subject-actant as an important locus of semantic investment. By focusing the analysis on the central character, we were able to show, through a network, the ideological trajectory. Indeed, there is a basic contradiction between defining (or writing) a « realist » novel and showing or bringing the hero-character to the attention of the reader. In a « realist » framework, the hero should, by the very fact that he « represents », be as close as possible to a norm, to a mean. Furthermore, the reader should be able to identify with him. But the narrator is duty bound to designate him as a hero-character. In order to do this, he magnifies his features, involves him in spectacular actions; in a way, he draws him out of « reality. » This evidence of the setting of the tale produces some slippage (ideological or not) in the narrative and in the actions of the hero-character.¹⁵ What we have here is a second kind of deviation which operates, in this case, on the subject-actant, allowing for comparisons between the novels.

Not only are the characters credible or not in relation to a reality defined by the narrative, but they are also qualified. Ph. Hamon advances that

ce discours d'escorte évaluatif tendra à regrouper, dans le récit, à certains emplacements privilégiés, à se concentrer sur les deux aspects principaux du personnage : son être... (résultat d'un faire passé ou état permettant un faire ultérieur), son faire et plus particulièrement certaines actions codifiées.¹⁶

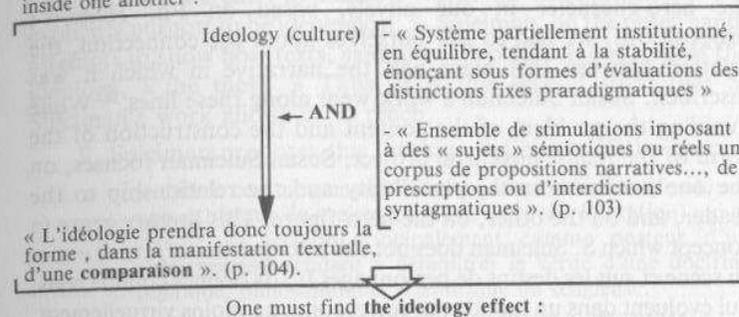
Therefore, the character exists as a figure in a narrative, in a given setting. But it is not enough to discern this evaluative discourse. The character must also be « made to speak ».¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 58

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-70. See also how Ph. Hamon describes the phenomenon of banalization, pp. 71-77 and that of the collective actant, pp. 78-79.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 105. This evaluative discourse preferably accompanies the **outlook** of the characters (p. 116), their **semiotics** (p. 136, p. 147), their **work** (p. 166), and their **savoir-vivre** (p. 191, p. 202). On this point, see also pp. 105-108.

¹⁷ Ph. Hamon's proposals could be summarized by this outline which sets them inside one another :



(the three following categories not being equivalent but being set in one another. Thus, we go from the general to the specific, each category being encompassed by the previous one).

I. Within the text

where we have two ideological intersections : (a) 1 semiotic object, (b) 1 body which are the ideological engagers.

the ideology-effect being manifested :

- (a) on four mediation planes : linguistic, technological, ethical and esthetic;
- (b) on the inter-textual inscription;
- (c) on the inflation of the vocabulary of modelization;
- (d) on the inflation of the vocabulary of law.

II. Within the evaluative escort discourse

which focuses on two main aspects of the character : (a) his being (the result of a past doing or state making an ulterior doing possible); (b) his doing (especially the actions already coded) (p.105).

the ideology-effect being manifested :

- (a) on the outlook (knowing-how-to-see)
- (b) on the semiotics (knowing-how-to-speak)
- (c) on the work (knowing-how-to-do)
- (d) on the knowing-how-to-live

and

III. Within the hero

which stems from two levels :

(a) hierarchy : « le personnage-héros organise l'espace interne de l'œuvre en hiérarchisant la population de ses personnages ». He organizes and places the **statement** of the work into a hierarchy. He is a product of structure.

(b) value : « il (le personnage-héros) renvoie à l'espace culturel de l'époque, sur lequel il est 'branché' en permanence, et sert au lecteur de point de référence et de 'discriminateur' idéologique » (p. 47). He calls upon the **presupposition** of the work. He is a product of reading.

the ideology-effect being manifested :

- (a) on local or overall dominants
- (b) on internal architectural redundancies
- (c) on scales
- (d) on hierarchies
- (e) on polarizations (p. 53)

In order to determine further the parameters of the place of the hero-character in our novels, based on Ph. Hamon's propositions, we had to ask ourselves about the connection, the relation between this place and the narrative in which it was inscribed. Susan Suleiman's work went along these lines.¹⁸ While avoiding the problem of the content and the construction of the form of the realist novelistic project, Susan Suleiman focuses, on the one hand, on truth, plausibility and the relationship to the reader, and on the other, on the hero-figure. This literary genre (a concept which S. Suleiman does not call into question *a priori*) « met en scène et suit les destins de personnages fictifs donnés comme réels, qui évoluent dans un monde qui correspond, au moins virtuellement, au monde de l'expérience quotidienne du lecteur. »¹⁹

In the case of the ideological novel, we are dealing with a literary genre which « dares not give its name. » Calling a novel « ideological » is tantamount to evaluating and interpreting it.²⁰ If S. Suleiman still retains the concept of ideology, it is to use it as a criterion of description rather than one of evaluation. A novel will be ideological if it « se signale principalement ou en premier lieu comme porteur d'un enseignement doctrinaire. »²¹ At the same time, a novel may be considered to be realistic if it has

le désir de faire voir, de faire comprendre quelque chose au lecteur à propos de lui-même, ou de la société ou du monde où il vit.

Thus, the realist novel gives more importance to the communicative function than to the poetic function.²²

Shifting Ph. Hamon's approach to the problems to the one set up by S. Suleiman enables us to shift the focus of our analyses to

¹⁸ Especially her book *Le Roman à thèse ou l'autorité fictive*, Op. cit.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21. The definition proposed by Régine Robin in her seminar of the winter of 1984 seems to us to be even more explicit :

le roman du réalisme socialiste est un roman réaliste de type classique avec un point de vue progressiste de classe, lisible, mettant en scène une intrigue dans laquelle figure un ou plusieurs héros positifs porteurs de l'idéal, jouant sur les conflits dramatiques mais jamais tragiques car il existe toujours une solution par-delà la mort des protagonistes.

²⁰ S. Suleiman, *Le roman à thèse ou l'autorité fictive*, op.cit., p. 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 29, p. 31. See Régine Robin's article, in this issue, for the definition of realism proposed by Susan Suleiman.

the question of realism and that of the ideological thesis. As we have already stated, Ph. Hamon works on texts which do not explicitly purport to be ideological. S. Suleiman, on the other hand, attempts to show how texts, said to be ideological, encompass the ideology, « the thesis. » Thus, it is this second stage that S. Suleiman's work allows us to reach.

S. Suleiman proposes this intuitive definition of the genre :

je définis comme roman à thèse un roman **idéaliste** (fondé sur une esthétique du vraisemblable et de la représentation) qui se signale au **lecteur** principalement comme porteur d'un **enseignement**, tendant à démontrer la vérité d'une doctrine politique, philosophique, scientifique ou religieuse.²³

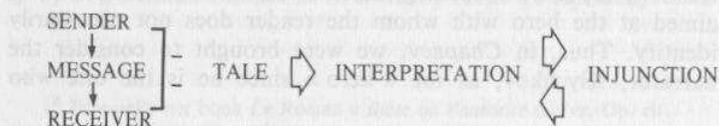
Here, the term « enseignement » or « teaching » seems fundamental to us. It is through this term that we are able to explain the problems that we came across in applying S. Suleiman's model on *Chapaev*, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, and *Cement*, for example. By taking « teaching » perhaps too literally, we came up against the limitations of the model, for S. Suleiman proposes a restrictive definition of « doctrinaire teaching, » being careful to avoid too broad an understanding of the term.²⁴ *Remembrance of Things Past* may be read as an ideological novel, the doctrine taught being that of salvation through Art. Even if such a reading were too narrow for the novel, it would allow certain aspects to be brought to light by integrating them into the overall system. S. Suleiman goes further, adding that any work of fiction therefore lends itself to an ideological reading insofar as it is always possible to draw a general maxim from it. But she never challenges the idea of a teaching, « presenting it as fact. However, this concept covers at least two aspects : a teaching aimed at the reader, and a teaching aimed at the hero with whom the reader does not necessarily identify. Thus, in *Chapaev*, we were brought to consider the narrator, Klychkov, as the « hero » since he is the one who

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 14. This definition avoids the trap of form vs. content, that is to say it is directed at a formal description of the texts. But we shall see that she desemanticizes the texts far too much, which makes for a confusion of the themes and therefore of the structures which articulate them.

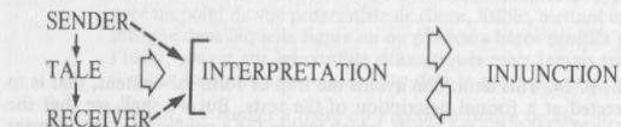
²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

undergoes the learning. At the same time, S. Suleiman's definition has the advantage of stressing the didactic aspect of the text, independently of what is being taught. The ideological novel therefore implies a making-know which may lead to (but not necessarily so) a making-do, the making-know going through the figure of the hero-character while the making-do is aimed at - involves - the reader.

S. Suleiman uses these three structures to try to give an account of the ways in which texts are « ideological ». Working on the narrative organization of the texts she analyzes, without paying much attention to the content that is manifested, S. Suleiman first examines the model narrative (fable or parable) and the relation this literary genre bears to the ideological novel. The model narrative encompasses three micro-narratives which involve both the making-know and the making-do mentioned earlier. First, there is the tale, that which is told, the anecdote which is to be the foundation upon which the model narrative will be built. The next step is an interpretation, involving the narrator in the narrative which, in a way, decodes its own message to ensure its being understood. Finally, an injunction, also assumed by the narrator, clears up the ambiguities which may remain as to the kind of making the narrative is proposing to the reader. The relation between the tale, the interpretation and the final injunction is defined by S. Suleiman as a chain of implications: the tale involves (calls for) interpretation which, in turn, implies - but is also implied by - the injunction. This is to say that, from a specific event (the tale), a generalization can be arrived at (the interpretation) which enables another specific event to be reached (the injunction), this one being expressed in the imperative mode. S. Suleiman depicts the trajectory thus:²⁵



or thus



²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47, p. 51

These three micro-narratives represent three levels of the narrative structure which articulate every parabolic text: the narrative level, the interpretive level, and the pragmatic level to which will correspond specific discourses. The purpose of the narrative discourse is to tell a tale; that of the interpretive discourse is to comment on the tale in order to reveal its meaning; that of the pragmatic discourse is to deduce a rule of action from the meaning that has thus been revealed.²⁶

What especially interests us, though, is the relation which S. Suleiman establishes between the structure of the model narrative and the ultimate goal of the ideological novel. As in the model narrative, the tale told in the ideological novel is essentially teleological. It is determined by a goal which pre-existed it and which goes beyond it. It requires a single interpretation which implies a rule of action applicable to the life of the reader. The interpretation and the rule of action can be expressed by the narrator, but also by the reader, based on textual and contextual indices. The tale lends itself as little as possible to different ways of reading. Finally, the ideological novel, like the model narrative, puts forth values which lead to the rules of action.²⁷

Setting the model narrative into a tale thus enables one to describe or understand setting the ideological novel into a tale. As in the system of redundancies which she analyses at great length,²⁸ S. Suleiman stresses the narrator-narratee relation in her comparison of these two types of narratives. This relationship is certainly fundamental to the description of the ideological novel. But, at the same time, her definition, in which she includes all the texts pertaining to this « genre », attaching more importance to the narrator-narratee relationship, is far too broad. Based on this single relationship, it therefore seemed difficult to establish the specificity of the texts in our corpus. In other words, this relationship was an

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69

²⁸ We will not be dealing with this particular point of S. Suleiman's work. We refer you to R. Robin's article in this issue.

element of comparison which was not relevant to our research. In order to find criteria for comparisons, we had to delve more deeply into the narrative organization, the actantial structures as such. It was along these lines that we followed S. Suleiman's approach. As we have already mentioned, she defines three levels of structure to account for the organization of the ideological novel. If the first level, the model narrative, shows the narrator-narratee relationship, the other two, the learning structure and the antagonistic structure, are related to the level of the tale, of the utterance, by revealing the place accorded to the hero-character in the narrative. Using these two structures, we were able to constitute a preliminary description of our texts, which enabled us to compare them.

Syntagmatically, a learning tale performs two transformations :

ignorance (of oneself) → knowledge (of oneself)

or the passing from a state of passivity to action.

Paradigmatically, the actantial categories of subject, object, and receiver are syncretized into one single actor, the hero of the novel, who goes out into the world to get to know himself (object) and who is himself the beneficiary of this knowledge (receiver).²⁹

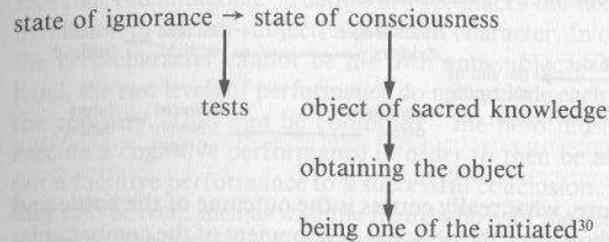
Our analyses have shown that this structure is reproduced in the socialist realist novels only by replacing knowledge of « oneself » with knowledge of « truth », at the level of the seeming of the narrative structure, since the hero knows truth, even if he has not yet proven it. But, most of all, if his performance enables him to acquire a better self-knowledge, the fact remains that his quest has another, much more important, purpose. The hero-character seeks to know truth so that the whole group (society), which is the receiver of his action, may benefit from it. A positive hero who pursues an action which would be only selfish or self-centered, would be a contradiction in terms.

Two structures of exemplary learning have been discovered : a positive one and a negative one. Positive exemplary learning can be depicted as follows :

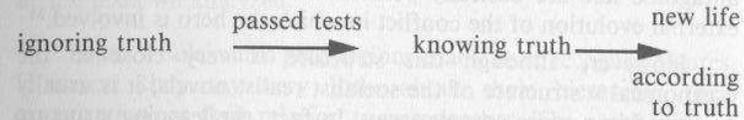
affirming error → denying error → affirming truth
ignoring truth → knowing truth

²⁹ S. Suleiman, *Le Roman à thèse ou l'autorité fictive*, op.cit., p. 82.

Thus, we pass from

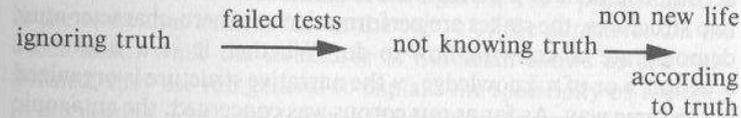


or :



PASSIVITY → WORTHY ACTION³¹

Negative exemplary learning may be depicted as follows :



PASSIVITY → WORTHY NON-ACTION³²

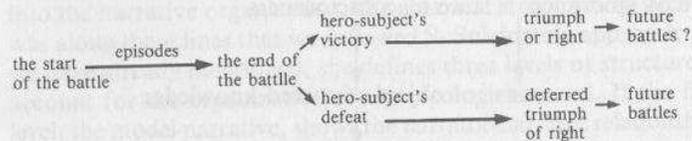
On the other hand, the protagonist of an antagonistic tale can be distinguished by four main features. From the very beginning of the tale, he has the right values, his are right. He is part of a group with which he almost becomes one. As a member of the group, he struggles to acquire the right values. As for his adherence

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97

³² *Ibid.*, p. 106

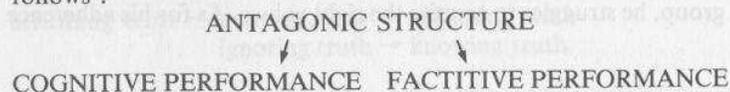
to these values, and therefore his most basic personal development, it does not change.³³ Thus we have :



Therefore, what really counts is the outcome of the battle and not the psychology or the personal development of the combattants. Whereas the stakes in the learning tale are basically cognitive - the protagonist's main test is one of interpretation - the stakes in the antagonistic tale are basically performative : it is a matter of the external evolution of the conflict in which the hero is involved.³⁴

However, although this structure is very close to the « canonical » structure of the socialist realist novels, it is usually expressed in a more complex way. In fact, the learning structure is often embedded in the antagonistic structure. Either the hero has to acquire a learning to carry his struggle through to a successful conclusion or, more often, one of the episodes of the struggle makes the other protagonists carry out a positive exemplary learning program. The problem would seem to arise because S. Suleiman does not consider the acquisition of knowledge as the accomplishment of a performance. It could be stated that, in these two structures, the stakes are performative - the hero-character must demonstrate a knowing-how-to-do. Whether it is a matter of « action » or of « knowledge, » the narrative structure is organized in the same way. As far as our corpus was concerned, the antagonistic structure would become, more and more, the all-encompassing structure. Among the possible structures by which what S. Suleiman calls « episodes » were defined, could be found not only the learning structure, but also factitive structures which, for the moment, can only be contrasted with cognitive structures.

The embedding of these structures can be represented as follows :



³³ *Ibid.*, p. 131

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138

What preserves the specificity of the texts of our corpus is the fact that the antagonistic structure always places the hero-character in relation to an anti-subject, a **different** character. In other words, the hero-character cannot be his own anti-subject. On the other hand, the two levels of performance do not exclude each other, quite the contrary. They can be combined - the hero must be able to execute a cognitive performance in order to then be able to carry out a factitive performance to a successful conclusion. The reverse may also be true, such as with the figure who asks the hero-character to make the other protagonists execute one or both of the performances, with all the possible combinations. These, then, are the criteria of description which allowed us to preserve the specificity of the texts we analyzed.

Thus, S. Suleiman's propositions enable us to recognize figures. However, they say very little about their hierarchy, their organization, or their relation to one another. The preciseness of S. Suleiman's model makes it possible to describe narrative structures found in socialist realist novels. The antagonistic structure and the learning structure as presented by S. Suleiman are, in fact, two frequently-used forms of the setting of the narrative to be found in our texts. At the same time, the importance these structures give to the part the hero-character plays in the actantial relations as a whole, allows for an accounting of the figure of the « positive hero » in the sense that he is in fact at the centre of the narrative. On the other hand, while the structures S. Suleiman shows us are well-defined, they are too general to explain the specificity of the texts in our corpus. They tend to erase the differences remaining between our texts as to how the hero-character is installed in the narrative. They make the texts comparable, but only by making them similar. They organize the texts indifferently, without showing the variations, the differentiated inscriptions of narrative systems which do preserve an autonomy, an independence with respect to the « genre » to which they belong. Although these structures do, in fact, make it possible to categorize the genre of the « ideological novel », they need to be defined in order to carry further the description of socialist realist novels.

By not taking into account the isotopies that underlie the narrative, one runs the risk of making « incompatible » comparable texts. Of course, it is not a matter of limiting oneself to the « content », to what is being related. But, at the same time, the

narrative cannot be completely neutralized without trivializing its semantic investments.

« I AM DOING, THEREFORE THEY CAN »

We therefore concentrated on the redistribution of the actants, upon examining the actantial relations according to the descriptive and the modal doings, according to the contracts that link the hero-subject to the other actants, and upon examining the competence and the performance of the actants, thus establishing concepts which made it possible for a first grasp of the « positive hero's » fictional-actantial specificity. Based on these facts, we have established five **nodal vectors** of monology, which are necessary and sufficient to categorize a text as being a « **Soviet socialist realist novel of the Thirties.** » In order to deal with a novel of this category, these five nodal vectors must be present in the narrative structure and must be assumed by the subject-actant, that is to say that they must be an integral part of his quest :

- relations between the actants are as equal-to-equal;
- transmission of competences takes precedence over blind action;
- initial competence strives towards being actualized;
- the task (the goal) to be fulfilled is clearly defined;
- the social being takes precedence over the psychological being.

These five vectors must be explicitly assumed by the subject-actant. They must be taken on by him, evoked by him, represented by him, commented by him. As for the narrator, he finds himself in a more complex situation. He generally underlines, reinforces the doing and the commentary of the positive hero and/or the other actants. What he is not allowed to do is to betray the five nodal vectors, to be too scornful of them or to reduce them to a utopia for which he only has the key, the hero being unable to incarnate them. On the other hand, the five nodal vectors do not lie within any hierarchical relationship : they are all five of equal importance and it is their combination that gives rise to the figure of the positive hero. Each of the texts that we have analyzed contains the five nodal vectors. They all do so in an « original » way. If the N.V.s are truly present, it is at different levels, different intensities. This is what makes it possible to preserve the specificity of each of the texts while

at the same time ensuring their compatibility. This is also what makes it possible to understand why modern critics of the texts we analyzed have rejected or praised such and such a text. Based on these N.V.s, we can say that a text does not belong to our category and explain why it does not. When, on the other hand, we are dealing with a text that fits into our category, we are able to demonstrate to what degree it does so. This operation of description is, of course, but a first step. It nevertheless serves as a basis to determine how these texts serve or have served (or, on the contrary, have not served) the extratextual ideological goals.

The N.V.s always keep the same « semantic content » regardless of the narrative structures by which they are accounted for. This is how their capacity for generalization is realized. The narrative variations are demonstrated by the intensity of the presence of the N.V.s, thus respecting the different isotopies that may be found in the texts of our corpus. The N.V.s are therefore not applicable to texts which stem from isotopies different from those of Social Realism. For example, in right-wing novels (Barrès's *Les Déracinés*, to name but one), we were not able to find content which was the inverse of that of the N.V.s, which would have been another way of finding it. What we did find was « something else » which belonged to another kind of narrative organization, another kind of actantial structure.

The first N.V. makes it possible to describe the relations between the actants inserted into the narrative. Firstly, the relation between the subject-actant and the other actants stems from the reflexive doing : they give **themselves** a task to fulfill, they are their own senders, even though an arch-sender may be found - society, the group to which they belong. These relations, in turn, stem from the symmetric doing, that is to say that the actants form an **association** to fulfill a common task, the subject-actant being wholly included in the constellation of actants whom he does not dominate. These relations encompass a transitive doing, that is to say that the actants are able to fulfill one task in preparation for another one. This doing can be understood in two ways : - it pre-supposes a previous doing; - it implies a future doing. Given the occurrence of an anti-subject, the relations stem from the anti-symmetric doing, that is to say from an adversative dissociation which generates a struggle, a polemic. On the other hand, it is **impossible** for a relation to be established between the actants surrounding the hero-character (the adjuvants, among others) which stems from an asymmetric

doing, that it to say from an unequal association, from a vassalization between the actants devoted to the same cause, since the hero-character does not dominate his partners.³⁵ The basic postulate is therefore an equal-to-equal relationship between the actants.

The second N.V. explains the organization of the relations between the subject-actant and the other actants, this time in terms of cognitive performances. It is a constant of socialist realist novels that there can be no factitive performance without first acquiring the necessary knowledge. Transmission of this knowledge therefore has precedence over blind action. The subject-actant is not interested in manipulating others, even if it were implicit in the knowing and the knowing-how-to-do. On the contrary, the aim of the subject-actant is to transmit a knowing so that « the others » might be able to do what he does and thus become autonomous. This transmission of knowledge, of knowing, constitutes a symmetric contract insofar as it is not an inscription of simple relationships of power, but rather a didactic, pedagogic and cognitive strategy. It is a matter of knowing, of wanting in order to be-able-to, and of knowing what one wants. Socialist realist novels appear primarily as a search for knowing-what-to-do in order to act effectively.

The transmission of the object of value in the subject-actant's narrative program leads to establishing a dual competence, different from the modelization from which the subject-actant realizes his competence, but nonetheless necessary to the realization of this competence. Thus, the contract established between the sender and the receiver is realized, on the one hand, around the institution of a **making-believe** (persuasion) by which the sender shows truth to the receiver. In order for the sender to fully carry out his program, the making-believe will have to become a **making-know** where the transmission of knowledge will also enable the receiver to carry out his program.

However, Pierre Boudon shows that

...cette transmission est loin d'être un acte innocent : elle peut être interrompue, brouillée, détournée, restée en souffrance; actantiellement, c'est le rôle du traître... qui caractérise cette transmission défectueuse : tromperie, déceptivité, duperie, mensonge, dont le rapport au sujet n'est pas tant adversatif que proprement versatif.³⁶

³⁵ The organization of the semiotic concepts that articulate our analysis is based on an article by P. Boudon, « Le Logos greimassien : narrativité et discursivité » in *Recherches sémiotiques/Semiotic Inquiry*, 3(4), 1983, pp. 376-408. Here, see p. 381.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 387

It is only once the subject-actant has triumphed over all the circumstances of interference that he will be able to carry out his program : the positive hero succeeds in this before the end of the novel. If such is not the case, the narrative lets it be understood that he will. Lastly, it must not be forgotten that the transmission of knowledge is a special kind of transmission. Indeed, unlike other objects of value, knowing has the special feature of remaining the « possession » of the person who transmits it at the same time as it is acquired by the person who receives it.

The purpose of the third N.V. is to clarify the second. At the fictional level, initial competence in socialist realist novels strives towards being actualized, which is to say that the narrative postulates an initial **competence**. Anyone can do what the positive hero is doing, but the actants are not aware that they are able to do so. They must become conscious of their competence before they can act clearly and effectively. It is often the positive hero who has the responsibility of « revealing » this initial competence to the other actants, by « proving » to them that they are able because they know. It is a very important feature of socialist realist novels that everyone is competent at the start. Birth, education, physical strength or weakness, or ethnic origin are just so many obstacles to being-able-to-do.

On the basis of the analysis Pierre Boudon makes of the competence/performance relation, it can be recognized that

la primauté d'une compétence sur une performance réside dans une capacité **déductive** édictant certaines conditions nécessaires à l'action; mais cette primauté peut être mise en échec dans une interaction stratégique où un faire ne peut être déduit strictement d'un autre faire; on ne peut que l'inférer. Il y a une épreuve de vérité (pragmatique) qui oblige le sujet à partir de sa performance pour remonter aux termes de sa compétence et la modifier en conséquence. Faute de quoi, il y aurait discrédit, disqualification.³⁷

Thus, the positive hero adopts this special dimension of the modal trajectory which leads from a competence to a performance. It is by realizing his performance that his initial competence will be recognized by a positive sanction from the judging sender. This competence may only be virtual at first, for example the desire to know truth without really knowing it. But the actions of the positive

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 389

hero will always be well-considered (thought out) according to this competence. Competence exists then at the level of being. One of the positive hero's tasks will be to give importance to its manifestation at the level of seeming, thus adequating the two levels, for himself as much as for the other actants.

The fourth N.V. makes it possible to describe the way in which the goal of the quest is inserted into the narrative. In the socialist realist narrative, the task to be fulfilled, the goal to be reached is clearly defined. Thus, in a novel where learning is of prime importance, this clearness will come when the hero is born to true knowing, in the action. While he discovers the clearness of the goal, he also becomes aware of the fact that he always had, right from the beginning, the possibility to act. This is why the object of value is conflictual only in relation to the anti-subject and his adjuvants. Within a group that shares the same values, the object is above the contracting parts, like a common good for which all must strive together. Very early in his quest, the positive hero **knows** where he is going, what he is striving for. This is what he must make the other actants see, by involving them in his quest. The positive hero cannot act alone - this is one of the distinguishing features of the socialist realist novel. Nor can he act « above » the other actants, his adjuvants. Indeed, few if any figures of manipulation are to be found in the narrative schemas of the novels of our corpus. If such were the case, an omniscient sender would attempt to make a defenseless, non-competent, receiver do « something, » making certain that the receiver does not acquire any of the knowledge on which the sender's authority is based, which knowledge might enable the receiver to contest the sender's authority. On the contrary, the often explicit will of the positive hero to transmit knowledge so that the contract - sometimes set up beforehand - can be fully carried out, is the product of the symmetrical doing and completes this doing which was mentioned previously. The goal of the quest is therefore clear to **everyone**.

The fifth N.V. is a basic feature of the socialist realist novel : the social being takes precedence over the psychological being. Here is a powerful fact of the social contract - a deliberate wanting on the part of the subject-actant who, against all odds, does not allow himself to be swayed by the adventures of the psychological being. The contract binds him to the group, and it is through the group that he will assert his identity, his values, indeed be transformed. If this often makes him lose his individual freedom (this happens

in the absence of a social contract), it is nevertheless the way in which he takes his place within the group. Individual freedom is thus manifested in the recognition of the **real** social contract.³⁸ Indeed, it may happen that the positive hero refuses a contract which a limited group of society proposes to him. He is then following and defending a « meta-contract » which has been defined by a more important group. Often, this group is society, even if it remains implicit. This figure is generally encompassed only at the level of the being of the discourse, without interfering with the level of the seeming of the narrative. It is therefore by knowing which is the « right » contract that the positive hero shows he is truly free. In other words, he transforms a having-to-do imposed by the group into a wanting-to-do that he assumes. When this transformation is achieved, his « private life » is willingly put aside so as not to impede the realization of the quest.

Because of their ability to describe, the N.V.s work more as « extra-textual » isotopies than as narrative programs. Indeed, the N.V.s form a meta-discourse which encompasses the texts of our corpus. These vectors allow for different but comparable readings of our texts. The N.V.s allow the belonging to a « genre » to be defined without « wiping out » the differences that exist between the socialist realist novels. Herein lies their importance. But they also make it possible to understand some of the misapprehensions of the critics as well as some of the phenomena of historical-literary filiation. The fact that the N.V.s are specific to the social realist novels of the Thirties has been verified through an analysis of texts from other literary genres. Furthermore, and most importantly, they explode the category of « ideological novel » by defining a group which, until now, had always been considered to be a component of this category. On the basis of the N.V.s, it becomes possible to go beyond this very - too - broad division of literary texts. In other words, it can be demonstrated that not all « ideological » texts are so in the same way, that the philosophical thesis and especially its narrative inscription can be further defined : not all theses favor the same narrative structures, the same actantial relations. Along these same lines, socialist realist novels are not, as is so often heard, prototypes of the ideological novel.³⁹ The differences do not

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 400-401. See A.J. Greimas, *Sémantique structurale. Recherche d'une méthode*, Paris : Larousse, 1966, p. 210, as quoted by P. Boudon.

³⁹ S. Suleiman, *Le Roman à thèse ou l'autorité fictive*, op. cit., p. 241.

become actualized depending, as S. Suleiman supposes, on whether the thesis is or is not the expression of an official ideology. It is more on the basis of semantic investment of the narrative structures that the differences between the ideological novels can be discerned.

In spite of our conviction that the conclusions we have drawn are operational, there is still a great deal of work left to be done before these problems can be more fully understood. As Régine Robin writes,

...le roman à thèse, ne l'oublions pas, doit trouver l'équilibre entre, d'une part part, le vraisemblable, les codes culturels du lecteur, ce qui est socialement reçu et la matière même de la fiction; et, d'autre part, le didactisme du texte et du message, point de rencontre entre ces mêmes codes du vraisemblable, le « réel du lecteur », et l'interprétation, l'idéologie montrée-démontrée-figurée de la fiction.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ R. Robin, *Le Réalisme socialiste : une esthétique impossible*, Paris, Payot, 1986 (to be published), p. 444 of the manuscript. In this work, R. Robin presents the model of the N.V.s pp. 454-462 of the manuscript.

THE FIGURES OF SOCIALIST REALISM : THE FICTIONAL CONSTRAINTS OF THE « POSITIVE HERO »*

Régine Robin

• The Roman à Thèse

We have already established the difficulties, indeed the frame of impossibilities, from which the « Positive Hero » was to emerge at the end of the 1920s and in the 1930s. Was it a return of the faintly-etched positive hero of the XIXth century, that of a Shtolts, an Insarov, a Bazarov or a Rakhmetov ? A renewed inventiveness centering on the archaic ? Or rather an attempt to embody this theoretical compromise between realism and revolutionary romanticism ? A new hero who believes he is an iteration or one who thinks of himself as completely unprecedented, having entered fiction without glamour and without any true ancestry ? Afterwards, he will invent ancestors and relatives for himself : Gor'kii's *The Mother*, Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*, Gladkov's *Cement* and Fadeev's *The Nineteen (Razgrom)*.

In 1934, the first issue of the literary journal *Oktiabr'*, devoted to the XVIIth Congress of the Communist Party, published a list

* The following is the translation of an excerpt from Robin's forthcoming book, *Le Réalisme socialiste : une esthétique impossible*. The Reader will undoubtedly encounter references to preceding chapters of her book. The author chose to leave the text as such so as to give the reader a better understanding of the great and complex nature of the problem of socialist realism.

Translated from the French by Anne Vassal and Dominique Michaud.

of 92 titles including not only novels, but also poems and dramatic works considered to be great realizations of the new Soviet literature. Among them : Fadeev's *The Young Guard*, Gor'kii's *Klim Samgin*, Vishnevskii's *An Optimistic Tragedy*, Leonov's *Skutarevskii*, Kataev's *Time, Forward!*, Panferov's *Bruski*, Shaginin's *Hydrocentral*, Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* and *Seeds of Tomorrow*, Gladkov's *Energy* and A. Tolstoï's *Peter I*.

An official tribute, therefore, that covers a large part of the new literary output. But what accounts for the specificity of this output ? What allows it to be singled out for distinction by both the government and the critics ? In what way and by what means can the « Positive Hero » be distinguished from the old positive heroes of the XIXth century and from the problematic heroes ? What are the fictional constraints of the positive hero and how does his sociogram begin to move, settling, creating stereotypes, freezing into an archetype or migrating once again towards new combinations and new inscriptions of aesthetics and ideology ?

The socialist realist novel is first and foremost a realist novel. As a result, it is submitted to a number of constraints outlined with great authority by Philippe Hamon¹. In order to dispel any misunderstanding, it must be understood that by realism we are not referring to the historical movement that emerged, bearing this polemic name, from literary history, nor do we confine the term to the XIXth-century novel, from Balzac to Tolstoï and from Zola to Turgenev, notwithstanding the fact that this novel serves as a paradigm to realism in general, considered as a genre. From this viewpoint, we will not follow in the footsteps of Lukács, who despises Zola and naturalism, turns his nose up at Flaubert whom he sees as a symbol of the ebbing into decadence of the genre, and only deems Balzac worthy of the literary Pantheon. To us, there is a realist position, a realist project that transcends the various schools and the different stands. Nor do we mean the term in the Brechtian sense, that is the unveiling of the essence of social relations, whatever narrative technique, writing, textual or dramatic device may be used. To us, there exists an entirety which forms a system and which can be called « realism », realist writing position

¹ See in particular :

Ph. Hamon, « Un Discours contraint », in *Poétique*, n° 16 (1973), pp. 411-445;
Ph. Hamon, *Le Personnel du roman : le système des personnages dans 'Les Rougon-Macquart' d'Emile Zola*, Genève : Droz, 1983;
Ph. Hamon, *Texte et idéologie*, Paris : PUF, 1984.

or realist project. Basing ourselves on Hamon, Claude Duchet² and Henri Mitterand³, we will say that the realist project postulates the existence of an external world (the extra-text), one that is real and material, cognizable, that this reality will « enter » the text through transparent writing that does not create this reality but voices it, and that the elements of the text will be arranged in such a way as to be homologous to the various elements organized in the extra-textual reality. It is a matter of presenting a world identical to the real world, one that would contain the same time-space relationship.

Through this « mimetic » writing device, the reader will believe he is dealing with something of the real world, something that relates itself through the transparency of the narration. This has been called the « referential illusion ». In order for this illusion to be effective, the realist text must be readable, in such way Barthes differentiates between *writable texts* (in which the act of writing is the primary material of the text, the text referring back to itself so that the message is, for that very reason, rendered opaque) and *readable texts* devoid of harshness and opacity. Readability implies the setting up of an hypotaxic device that guarantees the stability of the signs, the cohesion, the coherence and the consistency of the textual universe which mimics or shows the extra-textual universe. Such a device aims to ensure the transit of reading : necessity, adjacency and metonymical relationships ; stability of the actants, of the narrative functions, of the narrator's status ; isotopic coherence ; in other words, the presence of all the elements that guarantee logical and semantic cohesion : anaphora, discrypticisms, redundancies, repetitions, recalls, enhancement of flashbacks, of prolepses, of commentaries, etc.

To be effective, this referential illusion still needs a certain mode of narrative presence. Even if the point of view shifts, one will always notice a tendency towards omniscience, since the narrator per se must be as invisible as possible. Of course, one can always trace his voice in the text, in the form of detachable utterances, maxims, locutions or clichés which reinforce the readability. The

² C. Duchet, « Une Ecriture de la socialité », in *Poétique*, n° 16 (1973), pp. 446-454;

C. Duchet, « Positions et perspectives », in *Sociocritique*, Paris : Nathan, 1979, pp. 3-9.

³ H. Mitterand, *Le Discours du roman*, Paris : PUF, 1980.

narrator can appear indirectly in the course of the relation of the text as an evaluating norm, but he cannot intervene in his text in order to exhibit his writing methods, his exemplifications, without entailing the disappearance of the referential illusion. The narrator is the voice relating the story and, as such, he has to remain in the wings. A remarkable mode of narrative presence indeed, and the inscription of a specific kind of writing as well. Indeed, the realist text presupposes a transparency of writing which, as both vehicle and method of communication, is the support of representation, the means of expression, and is not in itself an end. Second in rank to reality, writing designates, shows and judges this reality.

The realist novel builds, and builds itself, a cohesive and consistent universe, one which is readable, decipherable, cognizable and most of all recognizable. The connivance established between narrator and reader, which is indispensable and regulates the reading contract against a backdrop of the true and the believe-it-to-be-true, implies the implementation of codes of verisimilitude without which the narration could not be credible. According to Gérard Genette, « the verisimilar story is therefore a story whose actions answer like applications or peculiar cases to a body of maxims recognized as true by the public to which it addresses itself, yet these maxims, hence recognized, remain most often implicit. Therefore, the relationship between the verisimilar story and the verisimilitude system that it compels itself to is essentially silent -- the conventions of genre function as a system of laws and material constraints to which the story obeys without noticing and obviously without naming them »⁴.

The novelesque utterance must comply with these sets of knowledge, constructs, presuppositions and preassertions that constitute cultural wholes and prevailing, if not doxic, values. This stability of cultural codes, of habits, of mentalities that can reinforce or displace stereotypes, of the referential illusion, of hypotaxies and of exemplifications of verisimilitude is a necessary frame to realist fiction. As a representation of the real world as it is apprehended, or rather as a representation of relationships, realist fiction summons into the text the maximum of extra-textual elements : political and technical knowledge (from which often stems the importance of descriptions), an historical horizon, an already emioticized reality carrying within it diverse and complex

⁴ G. Genette, « Vraisemblance et motivation », in *Figures II*, Paris : Seuil, 1969, p. 76.

connotative networks and already judged social practices. Two important consequences can be drawn from this. On the one hand, the realist text incorporates a maximum of « reality » from its period. It is a « serious » genre, writes Auerbach, that is just as preoccupied with the upper classes as it is with the humiliated and the offended. It sweeps the entire social spectrum. « The serious treatment of contemporary reality, the rise of vast groups of socially inferior humans to the status of subjects of a problematical and existential representation on the one hand -- the integration of the most common individuals and events in the general course of contemporary history, the instability of the historical background on the other hand ; these we believe are the foundations of modern realism, and it is quite natural that the full flexible form of a prose novel should have imposed itself to convey such diverse elements »⁵. On the other hand, the realist text works on pre-founded, pre-objectified and pre-constructed ideologies or ideological messages, thus revealing entirely ideological textual procedures. Nevertheless, its way of inscribing social discourse adheres to complex and varied procedures that force it to maintain a perpetual balance between the referential effect (reality entered into the text which can destroy it by dint of descriptions, references, taxonomic stamping), the ideological inscription of social discourse within the text (which can also destroy it permanently by the said and the demonstrated instead of the represented), and the « text effect », that is the poetical function as defined by Jakobson.

While it does constantly refer to itself as reality, the realist text must also be able to refer to itself as literature. This is a tricky process, since the referential illusion, the stability and cohesion of the signal, the codes of verisimilitude and the perpetual remotivation favour clarity and « univocation » in the text. « Realist discourse will very likely be characterized by an utopian endeavor towards 'univocation' of terms and units handled by the narrative. This will occur on a number of levels so as to reduce the text's ambiguousness. Hence the refusal of puns (except when voiced by a character explicitly described as witty) and the confusion between the literal and the metaphorical. This may also account for the tendency toward the rather distinctive semiological systems formed by numbers (ordinals and cardinals) and by morphologically transparent technical vocabularies. As in the case of any discourse,

⁵ E. Auerbach, *Mimesis : la représentation de la réalité dans la littérature occidentale*, French translation, Paris : Gallimard, 1968, p. 487.

realist discourse can undoubtedly be characterized by the discourse it mimics, in this case by the discourses of knowledge, of science (numbers, symbols, diagrams), of technology (oriented sequences of programmed events) and of history (proper nouns, citations). This explains the frequent references to the « learned observer » or to the *historian* considered as guarantor (as in Balzac, for example). This mimicry of scientific discourse is often noticeable in titles and subtitles of works (history, chronicle, physiology, morphology, etc.) that thus attempt, once again, to conceal themselves as poetical discourse (in which the only relevant categories are the readable and the unreadable, or the writable : cf. Barthes) in order to better integrate discourses whose relevant categories are those of the apt or the unfit (instructions, recipes), the true or the false, the reproducible or the non-reproducible, the verifiable or the unverifiable (...) »⁶

Thus, the realist text always finds itself in a precarious state. First, it is constantly trapped by the writing itself, unable to forget it is a trope. One may recall how Barthes revealed Balzac's *Sarazine* to be a studded, plural text, never reducible to the despised cohort of readable texts. Belief in the representative power of language always accompanies realist writing, but this realist prose always finds itself outdistanced, exceeded. In the case of Flaubert, for example, even if the arbitrariness of the narrative is always well concealed, it nevertheless reveals itself in a description, in a setting, in the fixation of an object, on scenery, which leads to a phantasmagoric staging that breaks away from purely representative fiction. One should not caricature, therefore, the constraints of realist fiction. These constraints do exist; because a text is text, however, it always succeeds in partly detaching itself from them. This is what Bakhtin proposes on several occasions when he opposes to the tendency towards monologism the polyphonic novel or, more simply, the novel's multilingualism, the dissemination of voices, the non-authoritative, persuasive style of reported speech that makes the narrator impossible to locate, the message undecidable, and prevents one from finding a univocal answer to the question « Who is speaking ? ».

The realist novel constantly wavers between its specific constraints that produce cohesion, verisimilitude, consistency,

⁶ Ph. Hamon, « Un Discours contraint », pp. 437-438.

representation, clarity, univocation and the possibilities of narration as a « literary text » producing a « text effect », undoing by way of its literariness the frame of semantico-logical constraints which play upon adhesion (the true, the believe-it-to-be-true) and identification (Aristotle's catharsis). Still, beyond the real intricacies of realist fiction, when Hamon looks for components of the pragmatics of realism he enumerates the following seven points that bring us back to the tendency towards monosemia :

1. The world is rich, diverse, plentiful, discontinuous, etc.
2. I can transmit information about this world.
3. Language can copy reality.
4. Language is second in rank to reality (it expresses reality, it does not create it, it is « exterior » to it).
5. The support (the message) should remain as much as possible in the background.
6. The act which produces the message (style) should remain as much as possible in the background.
7. My reader must believe in the truth of my information on the world⁷.

This is realist fiction yet also didactic fiction. It now is clear that within the enormous amount of literature devoted to realism in general, only that which borders on the ideological sustains our attention. Not the general problem per se of how the ideological comes into text, how it takes form as text, crossroad scenes where evaluating norms are inscribed in the text, nor even the problem of the ideological produced in turn by the specificity of the textual make-up. We shall find these problems in the concrete examples or in the generalizations we will be able to abstract from some 15 Soviet novels the sample corpus of our investigation⁸. We will reflect instead on the type of novel that tries to persuade, to

⁷ Ibid., p. 422.

⁸ We have analyzed with Maryse Souchard, Robert Saletti, Denyse Therrien and Henri Elbaum : D. Furmanov's *Chapaev*, F. Gladkov's *Tsement (Cement)*, A. Fadeev's *La Défaite (The Nineteen)*, M. Sholokhov's *Terres défrichées (Seeds of Tomorrow)*, F. Gladkov's *Bruski*, I. Ehrenburg's *Le Deuxième Jour de la Création (Hydrocentral)*, F. Panferov's *Bruski*, I. Ehrenburg's *Le Deuxième Jour de la Création (The Second Day of Genesis)*, L. Leonov's *La Rivière Sot' (Soviet River)*, N. Ostrovskii's *Et l'acier fut trempé (How the Steel Was Tempered)*, L. Leonov's *La Route vers l'Océan (Road to the Ocean)*, A. Tolstoï's *Pierre I (Peter I)*, A. Malyskhin's *Les Gens des coins perdus (People from Lost Places)*, I. Krymov's *Le Pétrolier Derbent (Tanker Derbent)*, L. Leonov's *Skutarevskii* and A. Fadeev's *La Jeune Garde (The Young Guard)* (the latter is without our corpus for it was published after the war).

convince : that is to say performative novels that put themselves forth as narrative and illocutionary speech acts and aim at a demonstration-mobilization, that convey along with the information and a « story-diegesis » explicit messages, a moral, that attempt to force an adhesion to the values they unravel in their text. Such type of novel I name « thesis novel ».

In order to place these ideological workings within the text, that is to say these plays on monology, I shall refer to the invaluable work of Susan Suleiman⁹. At the beginning of her book, Suleiman presents us with an « intuitive » definition of what must be understood by « thesis novel » : « I define as thesis novel a « realistic » novel (based upon an aesthetics of verisimilitude and representation) that presents itself to the reader as bearer of an education which aims to demonstrate the truth of a political, philosophical, scientific or religious doctrine »¹⁰. The thesis novel, illocutionary by nature, « shows and tells » and thus endeavours to manipulate and to program the reader. Not only is it necessary to let him see the facts, the story; it is also necessary to convince him of the validity of an action or a moral by provoking him through identification into adhesion or confirmation. The thesis novel, which draws its inspiration from the exemplum, the parable, the fable or the apologue is *teleological*. Its entire story and the narrative that sustains it are determined by a pre-existing end. It then follows that the narration stops any plural reading, any glimmer, any escape of meaning. By the excessive naming of signification, as Barthes would say, this readable text is monological, unequivocal, leaning permanently towards disambiguity. The value system is always clearly expressed by either the characters or the voice of the narrator. « Any ideological conflict represented in the work is solved by a narrative super-system, ideological in itself, that evaluates and judges the conflicting ideologies. »¹¹ According to Suleiman, two narrative structures which are not inherent to the thesis novel seem most often realized : the apprenticeship structure and the antagonist narration.

In the apprenticeship novel (whether positive or negative), the hero evolves from an ignorance of truth and from passivity towards

⁹ S. Suleiman, *Le Roman à thèse : l'autorité fictive*, Paris : PUF, 1983.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

a knowledge of truth and self, and towards action. This itinerary is enhanced by an omniscient narrator who escorts the character on his journey and who tells, shows, designates, judges. En route, the character, overcoming a certain number of obstacles, must meet Truth (cleave to a doctrine), and it is this knowledge of Truth that transforms him and enables him to take action. The hero's quest is a quest for *certainty*, and the passage from ignorance to truth takes the shape of an « initiatory scenario ». A Manichaeian novel, the thesis novel is also fond of the antagonist narrative structures. In this second plot framework, the hero is right from the start; he possesses the good values, will not change, but has to face obstacles, enemies, anti-heroes or some opposition. He is the herald of a group that cleaves to his values. He fights to realize his aim, he wins or dies, but the narrative in the latter case takes over to inform us that it is in fact a deferred victory. The thesis novel transforms reality into a binary system, simplifies contradictions, clearly shows the division of factions and value systems. Although Suleiman does evoke the possibility of a « dialogization » of the thesis novel (André Malraux's *Hope* for instance), this is but an extreme case which does not define the classic « ideal ». Intended therefore to bear a clear message, that is to be a novel of disambiguation, of teleology, of the « de-problematization » of the individual, one can but ask how fiction manages to achieve such a degree of ideological linearity.

Suleiman gives great importance to an element which is fundamental to the realist text in general, in that it ensures its coherence, its cohesion, its transitivity -- in sum, its readability. When Hamon writes : « The realist text is therefore characterized by hypertrophia of the anaphoric procedures of redundancy meaning to ensure the cohesion and the disambiguization of the transmitted information through the correlation of disjointed units of a same statement at a same linguistic level, of different linguistic levels of a same statement, or of elements from two separate statements, »¹² he points out in effect that this redundancy, this excess of information, is a means of disambiguization. Suleiman consequently proposes to take stock of the typical redundancies of the thesis novel by studying not only the story level (« who tells »), the focalization (the point of view from which the story is told), the temporal disposition (the order of events as they are told as opposed to the order of events as they unfold in the recounted story),

¹² Ph. Hamon, « Un Discours contraint », p. 423.

but also the plot level (the *actants*, their qualifications, functions and relationships). The squaring of the story level with that of the plot enhances the *interpretive* function of the narrator, his evaluating commentary, which escorts the actants step by step. Hence, Suleiman draws out five kinds of distinctive redundancies in the thesis novel.

First Redundancy : The *Doing* (the characters' system of actions) is a repetition of the omniscient narrator's interpretative commentary. In fact, it is difficult to imagine in this type of novel an ironical narrator, or one who invalidates the doing of the positive hero, even if we can find in some narratives that border on the genre what Suleiman, referring to Bakhtin, has called the « dialogization » of the thesis novel, a narrative voice that plays a part other than that of reinforcing, of underlining the positive *Doing* of the hero.

Second Redundancy : The *Doing* of an exponent-character of the author's narrator or of the ideological system inscribed and valorized in this fiction is redundant with the narrator's interpretative commentary. One character is enough to effectuate, on a global level, the primacy of the interpretative discourse.

The two following redundancies do not relate to the doing of the character or characters, but rather to their interpretative commentary, to their evaluating discourse.

Third Redundancy : The narrator's interpretative commentary is redundant with that of the characters.

Fourth Redundancy : The narrator's interpretative commentary is redundant with that of an exponent or herald character.

These four redundancies guarantee the text's dominant « *interpretative line* », its illocutionary value by way of hyper-cohesion, absence of contradictions, of larger voids, forever sealed. The fifth redundancy has to do with the actantial function. The characters and their actions are redundant with their qualifications. The physical aspect is redundant with the moral qualities. The operation merges culturally recognized traits with traits whose pertinence is specifically ideological by conferring them to either « important » or « minor » characters. Suleiman adds : « This merger process is one of the most obvious processes of the official propaganda material (this explains that in the socialist realist

novels, for example, the traitor is always presented with capitalistic affinities, notwithstanding his other despicable characteristics)... »¹³

We will come back to this redundancy that seems to be, if not the distinctive feature of Soviet novels, at least a characteristic of our corpus. This last process could undermine the verisimilitude of the realist code. If the characters are too emblematic, if they are but the incarnation of an idea, their « unreality » affects the genre as such. It should not be forgotten that the thesis novel has to balance itself on the one hand between verisimilitude, the reader's cultural codes, the socially acceptable and the very material of the fiction; and, on the other hand, between the didacticism of text and message, meeting point between those same codes of verisimilitude, the « reader's reality », and interpretation, the shown-proven-represented ideology of fiction. Suleiman finally shows that the thesis novel is unable to totally control the void, the escape, the scattering of meaning. There are always faults, ruptures, elements that are irrelevant or unwilling to enter the general configuration -- a phenomenon the author so aptly calls « the revenge of writing ». Rarely are texts deprived of this « excess » of language, this overflowing pertaining to « text effect », to the work of language as trope, to writing. Moreover, one never totally controls reception, and the scattering of meaning at reading, in spite of the univocity of the carried messages, can provoke many a surprise.

Suleiman concludes her work by arguing against Ch. Grivel's unusual text, according to which any novel (in this acceptance, the thesis novel would be but an extreme case, nothing more than exemplary) functions in the same way : « Novel means exemplification. The novel proves. It constitutes a parabolic, illustrative discourse; it subscribes to a meaning. Storytelling presumes the desire to teach, implies the intention both to dispense a lesson and to make it obvious. The narrative, in this particular case, offers (whether tacitly or not) a model : it shows, in a positive way, the code at work and forces one to draw from the spectacle the necessary conclusion of adhesion. »¹⁴ Rediscovering the processes used by Tret'iakov, Brik and the *Novyi Lef* group, Grivel asserts that the « socialist novel » is a theoretical contradiction in these terms :

¹³ S. Suleiman, op. cit., p. 229.

¹⁴ Ch. Grivel, *Production de l'intérêt romanesque*, The Hague : Mouton, 1973, p. 318.

« Now we know what is at stake ». Could our Red Tolstoï be a semantic anomaly, a monstrous, hybrid being ?

It is not easy therefore to free oneself from the explicit or implicit authoritarian discourse, even more so if it is the « unthought » of all novels. An immense and extremely stimulating work, Suleiman's reflection nourished ours and provided it, on a theoretical level, with a starting point. Of course, almost all our novels are thesis novels. They are all characterized (once again with variants) by the five redundancies that Suleiman brought to the fore. Nevertheless, in the quest of our object, while the examination of redundancy seems crucial, it is insufficient. It is too general, since it can also be applied to certain « idea novels », not qualified as such as thesis novels, bordering on ambiguity and disambiguation, for example : Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection*. Furthermore, given the nature of our argument, these redundancies cannot remain empty squares or formal points. They should be resemanticized if not rethematicized. Through this, one might see that Nizan's and Barres' novels do not pertain to the same model, even if both are Manichaean.

By this I do not wish to repeat the obvious -- that one's sender is not the other's sender. I am not focussing on « contents », but on narrative programs, actantial relationships, a modal system. In short, if our 1930s novels have a thesis, our problem is, *on the one hand, to show how the tensions between the poetic, referential and conative functions, between realism and didacticism, between text effect and thesis effect are negotiated; how the narrator supports or not the positive hero. On the other hand, we must seek the specificity of this exemplification into thesis and text, what is really common to our novels, not letting ourselves walk into the trap of the epoch's official denominations and of the critics' reactions. We must also verify whether a certain number of minimal elements could define the positive hero's sociogram. This would permit a number of narrative-discursive variants, compatible with these minimal elements, and forbid, despite apparent proximities, any writing that would not inscribe these minimal elements.* Thus, knowing that redundancy is a fundamental element of the « gnome », of the cohesion of our texts, we have to elaborate other models, other forms of analysis to resemanticize the general categories.

• Semio-Narrative Approaches

Katerina Clark, a specialist of the Soviet novel, proposes an analysis inspired by Propp and reads into Soviet fiction an initiatory

scenario, a ritual, a folktale in which « bogatyri » (legendary knights from the Middle Ages) circulate¹⁵. Referring to Fadeev's *The Young Guard* and Gladkov's *Cement*, Clark twice develops a model that quite freely uses the functions, the realms of action and the roles outlined by Propp for Russian folktales. *The Young Guard*, a war novel, was published in 1945. Rewritten to accommodate the storm of criticism that descended upon it, the final version of the novel came out in 1951. Gladkov's *Cement* was first published in 1925 in Voronskii's journal *Krasnaïa Nov'*, then shortly afterwards in book form.

In order to study the prototype of Stalinist Soviet fiction, Clark does not hesitate to analyze both a novel written before the model was fixed and a post-war novel. This creates a few problems. Many Sovietologists do not date their literature's forms. They will say that from 1929 to 1956 there is *one* Stalinist period. Prior to that, one finds elements that portend it as well as forms that still linger on today. We do not agree. For us, dating systems remain fundamental. We will distinguish a first period, in the 1920s, where the positive hero is in search of himself and is outlined with difficulty. From this point of view, *Cement* is the first novel to emerge from Civil war thematics and foreshadow those of construction and/or collectivization. Then, during the 1930s, socialist realism begins to exist as a syntagm within criticism and almost all literary works are thus officially named. A first break occurs around 1936-1937, when the positive hero evolves (as does the whole of fiction, barring exceptions) towards an idealism, a non-realism, a greater inscription of the thesis, a greater allegorization. The war will somewhat disturb this evolution, contributing to a thematic renewal while ritualizing to an even greater extent the actantial relationships. Lastly, an event upon which we will not dwell in this work, but which should be considered in itself carefully -- the Zhdanovist era of 1946-1947 which marks the Twentieth Congress and is held over for a while. It is this event that will freeze, archetype the figure of the positive hero and prevent his sociogram from evolving. Therefore, it is quite a risk not to take as a model a construction novel of the 1930s, such as *The Second Day of Genesis*, *Energy*, *Hydrocentral*, etc., or a typical apprenticeship novel that, one knows beforehand, forms the « model » for socialist realism, *How the Steel Was Tempered*.

¹⁵ K. Clark, *The Soviet Novel : History as Ritual*, Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1981.

In fact, Clark proposes an interesting dating system, but it is too systematic and its sectioning is uncertain. It distinguishes the novels from the First Five-Year Plan (1928-1931), from which it draws a horizontal model, that of the « brothers », ordinary men who have become positive heroes by working on construction sites and through collectivization. Then, as of 1935 (the Stakhanovist movement and the invasion of folklore), but especially as of 1936-1937, although this is not very detailed, a vertical model is construed, obsessed with the « always higher », with aviation in particular. That model modifies the egalitarian relationships of the first model, transforming them into hierarchical « father and son » relationships. Roughly, if we agree with Clark's first dating system, we will have some difficulty in outlining the second one. It does emerge in 1936-1937, but with great difficulty, since fiction does not automatically inscribe the transformations of social discourse which in turn tends to clot, to stereotype, to stratify itself.

Having taken these precautions, let us follow Clark in the Proppian scheme she ascribes to Gladkov's fiction *Cement*. Clark outlines six great sequences to show how the novel merges the story of the fulfilment of the task and that of the ritual maturing of the hero. First comes the « Prologue ». The hero is separated from the object of his quest. There is a want. Things are not the way they used to be. Having returned from the Civil War to his small town, Gleb Chumalov realizes that everything has run into great disorder and that the cement factory has been forsaken. He assigns himself a goal : to reopen the factory. The second sequence relates to this decision. To reopen the factory, the hero will face opponents (bureaucrats in particular, all sorts of people, including those within the hierarchy of the Party) who refuse to shake off their habitual passivity, and adjuvants, principally the people, that is the foundation. The third sequence, « The Obstacles », covers a certain number of episodes of the hero's adventures, which propel him towards the fulfilment of his task. The passage towards the object of the quest is difficult. The hero encounters obstacles both prosaic (realist isotopy of everyday life : worker apathy, white-collar incompetence or technical manufacturing problems) and heroic, dramatic in nature (mythic isotopy of grandeur : natural disasters, counter-revolutionary plots, saboteurs, etc.). The hero faces other failures. His relationship with his wife has abated; he does not understand the new person she has become; he is alone. His personal life is disastrous. The hero finally travels to Moscow in order to get help and attempt to explain his projects.

The fourth sequence is the threat encountered by the hero during his undertaking. This or these moments of the diegesis are particularly dramatic. On the one hand, the hero is threatened in his aim by counter-revolutionaries; on the other hand, braving so many obstacles, he questions his worth. In the novel, Gleb appears discouraged after the death of a worker killed by a ruptured cable. The fifth sequence is called « The Initiation » by Clark, whose approach is mostly centered on the ritualistic aspect of the fiction. These are episodes in which the hero is re-staged by a mentor who tells him what is True, what he is capable of, and who prevents him from despairing. In *Cement*, Sergei is cast in this role. The last sequence, « The Celebration », sees the victory of the hero (or the deferred victory if the hero is dead). In *Cement*, once the factory is geared up anew, the hero is recognized; he even has to give a speech at the celebratory ceremony. His discourse at last is performative. Literally, it is this performance that reopens the factory. Gleb Chumalov, whose private life is in a state of total collapse, accepts his fate and devotes himself to the collective cause.

Thus, there are six sequences : the « Prologue » which marks the want; the decision to accomplish the task; « The Obstacles » ; the threatened hero; « The Initiation » ; and « The Celebration » which marks the meeting between the hero and the object of his quest. Many Soviet novels from the 1930s could subscribe to this model, but so could many other types of novels. To a certain extent, any narrative, any diegesis could be thought of in these terms. It is to Clark's credit that she specifies them. We thus learn that the socialist realist novel is a novel about *work*, with a hero who undertakes a *task* (reopening a factory, building a dam, collectivizing agriculture, breathing energy into construction workers, uniting forces to realize a project, etc.) and who, in the fulfilment of this task, will gather *allies* about him (Komsomol youth, poor yet conscious peasants, engineers devoted to the proletarian cause, workers of a new kind, honest members of the Party who are not strictly career-oriented, etc.). This hero will also encounter *opponents*, from incompetent bureaucrats, the indifferent, those who remain ensnared in Old World values, to serious enemies, counter-revolutionaries, saboteurs, etc. We also know that in a complex plot where the hero faces huge obstacles and also problems in his private life, the end can only be a celebration, or a delayed victory. The hero's quest, both collective and individual, has been successful. Or, if he has failed on the way, others will relay him. Nevertheless, this very fruitful scheme seems too simple at the outset

to account for a number of disturbing effects occurring at the diegetic level.

Clark fully realizes this, since she underlines certain elements which suggest a restlessness, a certain faltering in the arrangement of the outlined type, which she blames on the date of the novel : 1925, the genre having not yet stabilized into stereotype. What are these elements ? Clark points out that Gleb Chumalov is not solely *identifiable to his function*. He is not a fictionalized idea ; he fights back as a character, albeit an emblematic one, one that is neither story-bookish nor a mask from the Commedia dell'Arte. Sergei the mentor is particularly ill-chosen. An intellectual, member of the Party, but originally from the middle class, he will be « purged », therefore excluded. This is a deviant mentor figure, not very well suited to convey the elating values of the ideological archisystem that Suleiman was referring to. As for Badin, man of the Party, rapist, ambiguous, Clark tells us that right up to the end, one cannot determine whether he is an antagonist character to Gleb, or a positive though complex figure. In other words, the main hero exists in a fictional fashion, he does not anonymously hold but a simple function; the mentor is not a mentor; and one of the novel's key characters cannot be called either adjuvant or opponent. This singularly complicates the simplicity, the linearity and the duality of the outline-type.

There is more -- Katerina Clark transforms the « Love Story », the relationships between Gleb and women, between Gleb and his wife Dasha, between Gleb and their friend Polia, into a secondary episode. She says that in the end, Gleb has accepted his personal unhappiness. It seems to us that on this point, the Proppian model is most unsatisfactory. It does not allow a distinction between the main narrative and secondary narrative programs, nor does it enable us to determine if the latter disturbs transversally the former's message. Never in a socialist realist novel is there any fusion between public, collective life (even if this is the proposed goal), the construction of Socialism and private life.

These are disjointed elements, distinct narrative programs whose articulation always *grinds*. If the task to be accomplished always prevails at the collective goal level (transforming the economy, the scenery, individual relationships and the profound self of individuals), this is clearly not the case of the search which takes place on the personal, private, emotional level, if indeed there is such a level. Gleb Chumalov is unhappy, rejected by his wife,

in a state of total emotional solitude. This dimension (personal unhappiness or collective success in spite of hindrances, death, illness, betrayals, personal failures, derelection, suicide, vs the certainty of one's social usefulness and one's ability to build a new society) is precisely the means by which a tragic dimension is introduced, otherwise forbidden by the basic narrative program, the redundancy system and the narrative itself. The celebration at the end of *Cement* unfolds against a backdrop of uncertainty : the factory gears up anew, yet there is Badin, more powerful than ever; Sergei has just been expelled from the Party; Polia feels that the era of revolutionary romanticism that characterized the Civil War is a thing of the past; and the victorious Gleb knows that he is returning to a forlorn home, his daughter dead and his wife having definitely broken away from him.

Is this the end of a fairy tale, of a « byliny », of ritualized heroes ? Clark transforms the positive hero into an allegory : « The Soviet novel is somewhat distinctive (from other novels) in that the hero's quest typically has a dual goal. On the one hand, he has before him a task from the public sphere. He may, for instance, aim to supervise the construction of a dam or to raise production yields. But his second, and more important, goal is to resolve within himself the tension between « spontaneity » and « consciousness ». Since the public and private goals are fused, the hero's personal resolution becomes a historical allegory. »¹⁶ This excerpt may give way to confusion. In fact, it seems to us that one should distinguish the basic narrative program, which is always aimed at an object within the public sphere, the collective life, from the secondary narrative programs, more or less inscribed in fiction and which relate to the character's private life. The two narrative programs are different and if, at the end, the object of the quest is reached on the collective project level, the private life, in sharp contrast, is often unfulfilled. When the novel ends, the personal problem very often remains unresolved, and, from this point of view, incertitude occurs. Clark nevertheless calls upon another type of goal, that of the character's desire to transform himself. To us, this misrepresents the problem. In actantial terms, the character assigns himself a social goal to be attained. He pursues his quest by way of actions, enters a process that can, depending on the case, be long, difficult,

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 162.

harrowing or easy, but nevertheless, at the end of the process, his being has changed. This transformation of self was not, in actantial terms, the goal to be attained. It is implied by the action process, and this changes everything.

That this spontaneity/conscience dichotomy be a very important theme of Soviet literature, that it should cross over a number of novels, that it be a crucial element of any apprenticeship novel, that the hero/subject should transform himself at the end of the journey, that his ultimate being differ from his initial being, all this indubitably constitutes the contract of apprenticeship novels. But once more, this transformation is a result and not an object of the quest. We presume that it is the Proppian model, not very functional in these fields, that limits Katerina Clark, otherwise so perceptive in her analysis. She does not go beyond the « story's » structure to notice what happens at the level of plot, textualization and narration. Seeing only the heroic, mythic, allegoric aspect, she loses sight of what is specific to our positive hero and to this fiction, that is, the tension between the realist and the didactic project, between the representative and the prescriptive text. If the transformation of self were first and foremost, the positive hero would be a problematic hero, something that he is not. Even if he is indeed psychologically detailed (a legacy of the Classics), he is never comparable to a Levin or a Bezukhov. Should the positive hero only have a collective goal, without existing in virtue of his own singular life, he would become a pure allegory, which he is not. If the two goals (collective and personal) that he pursues were to form an organic totality, we would encounter a new type of epic (the ultimate reconciliation of the individual with his cosmos and with society); and if certain elements of socialist realist fiction inscribe something of that order, the very nature of representative aesthetics, however, is to keep wedging a *fissure* between world and individual. This fissure is meant to be filled with values, projects and the certainty of a future, yet it nevertheless remains present in the « hic et nunc » of the diegesis. The crux of the problem is here : one must capture the specificity of this hero, who borders on the epic (the revolutionary romanticism dear to Gor'kii), within the writing of the verisimilar and the representative.

Once more, other models have to be tested in order to determine the specificity of the positive hero's sociogram. Still, we have taken a step forward. Thanks to Susan Suleiman, we know that the socialist realist novel is a thesis novel that allows us to clearly read

a philosophical, political or existential message through its redundancy system, which in turn ensures both cohesion and coherence and tends to freeze the narrative in a monology. As for Katerina Clark, she gives us a good idea of both the typical plot of this kind of novel and its avatars. We now have to outline more closely what renders its texture singular.

Maryse Souchard, in her article¹⁷, has brought to the fore, within the scope of our research work on the Soviet novel, *nodal vectors* that we think account for the common, minimal and recurrent elements of Soviet novels of the 1930s. Making use of both the teachings of Greimas, the Semiotics School of Paris and also of Pierre Boudon's remarks on the system of modalities¹⁸, Souchard has attempted to determine within our corpus actantial structures, actantial relationships, subject-to-object relationships and subject-to-other subject relationships according to the mode of action, of the doing -- that is of the descriptive doing as well as of the modal doing. A word of explanation here.

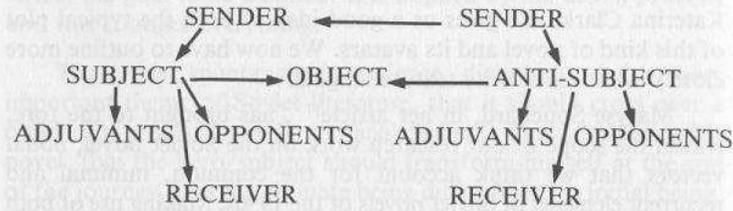
The evolution of semiology permitted us, at first, to go beyond the Proppian actantial scheme : « Considered in the 1960s and up until now by a great number of narratologists as the pre-eminent model of the narrative, it quickly became clear that it was in fact nothing but a learned intertwining of two narratives which had put face to face two subjects who followed, each in his own way, two distinctive and opposed paths, the distinctions between hero and traitor pertaining only to the narrator's moralistic coloration. Semio-narrative syntax was then able to distinguish from Propp's description the very principle of the confrontation between two subjects by interpreting it as an elementary binary structure based on the sometime contractual, sometime polemic -- let us say polemical-contractual relationships between two subjects whose paths are doomed to cross. »¹⁹

¹⁷ M. Souchard, cf. *supra*, pp. 47-68, « Towards A Semiotics of the Ideological Novel ».

¹⁸ P. Boudon, « Le Logos greimassien : narrativité et discursivité », in *Recherches sémiotiques*, v. III, n° 4 (1983), pp. 378-408.

¹⁹ A.J. Greimas, *Du sens II*, Paris : Seuil, 1983, p. 9.

Henceforth, the scheme of the basic narrative program will be the following :



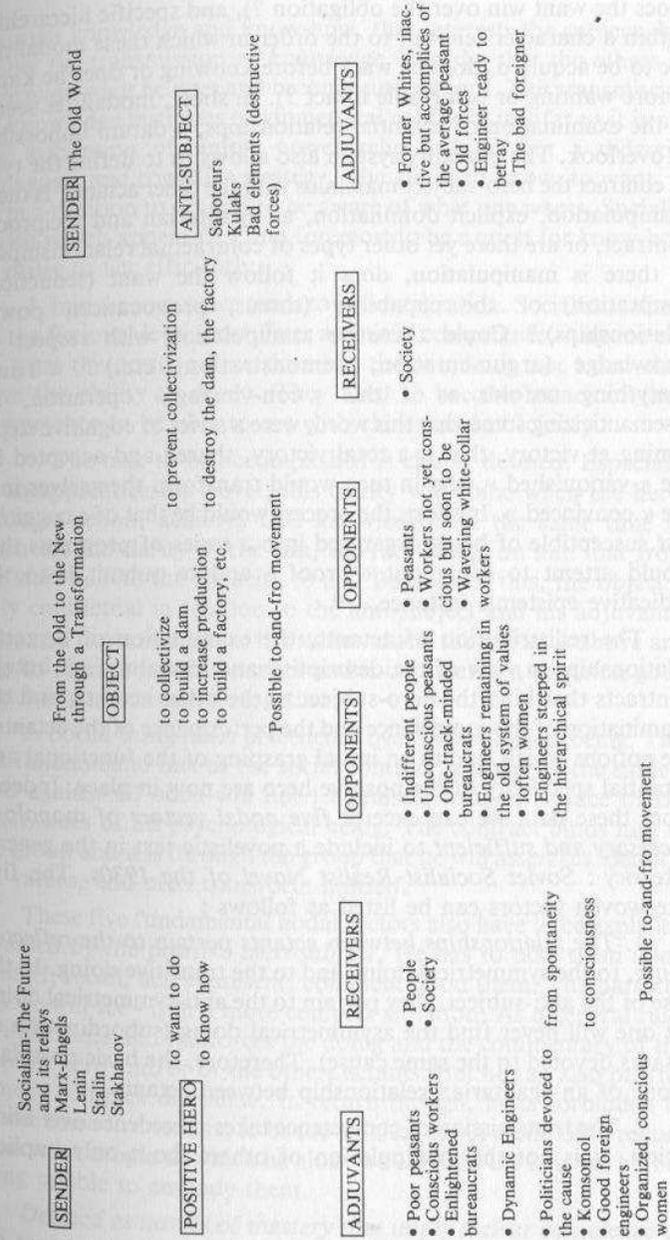
The subjects act, go from one state to another by virtue of *transformations* that are so many actions pertaining to a descriptive doing. The relationships between the subject and other actants can be described by chains of relationships that decline themselves as follows :

- a. reflected doing : the subject gives himself a task to accomplish;
- b. symmetrical doing : the subject forms an association to accomplish the common task;
- c. asymmetrical doing : the subject forms an inegalitarian association, which can develop into the subordination of the people;
- d. anti-symmetrical doing : the subject finds himself facing adversity, having raised a polemic or a fight;
- e. transitive doing : the subject accomplishes a task having in mind another undertaking considered as the ultimate target.

The description of what occurs between actants also necessitates the examination of *modal doings* that overrule the descriptive doings. This is a doing « modalizing a doing », to use Pierre Boudon's expression, who takes into account the subject's *competence*.

(Consult diagram on next page)

Competence designates the potentiality of the doing, whereas performance (two notions metaphorically borrowed from Chomsky) underlines the act of doing. It is the modalities that voice competence : the desire, the capability, the know-how, the obligation, the belief. This use of a modality chain permits a more acute definition of intermediary actantial classes in relation their capabilities, their know-how, their obligations, etc. This also permits the establishment both, of general hierarchies in the texts



(does the want win over the obligation ?), and specific hierarchies within a character relevant to the order in which these modalities are to be acquired (does he want before knowing or does he know before wanting or being able to act ?). In short, modalities seem, in the examination of actantial relationships, a datum impossible to overlook. The modality system also allows us to define the type of contract the hero-subject maintains with the other actants. Is there manipulation, explicit domination, an egalitarian and reciprocal contract, or are there yet other types of contractual relationships ? If there is manipulation, does it follow the want (seduction, temptation) or the capability (threat, provocation, power relationships) ? Could there be manipulation with respect to knowledge (argumentation, demonstration, etc.) ? « Thus, everything unfolds as if this « con-vincing » operation, by resemanticizing somewhat this word, were a series of cognitive steps, aiming at victory, that is a total victory, shared and accepted by the « vanquished » who in turn would transform themselves into the « convinced ». In short, the process would be that of a *cognitive test* susceptible of being organized into a series of programs that would attempt to bring out « proof » and to submit it to the judicative epistemic instance. »²⁰

The redistribution of actants, the examination of actantial relationships in view of the descriptive and modal doings, of the contracts that bind the hero-subject to the other actants, and the examination of the competence and the performance of the actants : the notions which lead to an initial grasping of the functional and actantial specificity of the positive hero are now in place. Indeed, from these data we can excerpt *five nodal vectors of monology necessary and sufficient* to include a novelistic text in the generic category : *Soviet Socialist Realist Novel of the 1930s*. The five interwoven vectors can be listed as follows :

1. *The relationships between actants pertain to the reflected doing*, to the symmetrical doing and to the transitive doing. In the case of the anti-subject, they pertain to the anti-symmetrical doing yet one will never find the asymmetrical doing (subordination of actants devoted to the same cause). Therefore, the basic postulate is one of an egalitarian relationship between actants.

2. *The transmission of competence takes precedence over blind action*. It is not the manipulation of others, be it only implicit

through knowledge and know-how, that interests the subject, but rather the transmission of *knowledge*, in order that the others be able to do what he does and become autonomous. This transmission of knowledge institutes a symmetrical contract, insofar as it is not the inscription of simple power relationships, but a didactic, pedagogic and cognitive strategy. The aim is to know, to want, to be in a position to act and to be aware of what one wants. Socialist realist novels appear first and foremost to be a quest for know-how in order to act efficiently.

3. *Initial competence tends to its actualization*. Socialist realism, on the fictional level, postulates an initial competence. Anyone can do what the positive hero does but the people do not know they have the ability to do so. They need to become aware of their competence to be able to act with clarity and efficiency.

4. *The task to be accomplished is clearly defined*. Especially in an apprenticeship novel, this clarity will come when the hero, through action, achieves true knowledge. At the same time he discovers the clarity of the aim, the fact dawns on him that from the start he had the capacity to act. Because of this, the object is only conflictual in relation to the anti-subject and his adjuvants. Amongst those who share the same values, the object is above and beyond the contracting parties and is considered a common good that has to be aimed at together.

5. *Social being takes precedence over psychological being*. This is a fundamental fact of the social contract, a desire of the subject who against all odds will not let himself weaken in face of the vicissitudes of his psychological being. The contract binds him to the group and it is through the group that he will assert his identity, his values, and even transform himself.

These five fundamental nodal vectors also have to be explicitly assumed by the positive hero-subject. He has to take them upon himself, recall, act, represent, comment upon them. The narrator - as we will see - is in a more complex situation. As a general rule, he underlines and reinforces the doing and the commentary of the positive hero and/or of the others actants. But he can also proffer a more complex discourse. In return though, he is forbidden to expose these five vectors, to be too ironical about them, or to reduce them to an utopia to which he alone would hold the key, his heroes being unable to embody them.

Defined as novels of mastery that imply a clear conscience of the targets aimed at, a transmission of knowledges through a

potentially generalized competence, as novels of pure conscience, of action and of knowledge that organize and render the action efficient, as novels of reason and of the triumph of science and technology, of collective values taking precedence over individualism, socialist realist fiction strives to be a portent of the socialist society's new social imaginary. As such, it fulfills the two functions that Marx detected in any revolutionary process at the imaginary level : the functions of magnification and of occultation.

Magnification ? That is easily understood. The task of the positive heroes and of their adjuvants is tremendous, perhaps even impossible. It is a long and very painful process in which and by which one has to change the economy of the country, the social structure and the hierarchy of power relationships. Not only does one have to fight against the elements, master nature, one must also transform, by way of the process itself, mentalities, the old ancestral habits, the relationships between men and women, between parents and children. This enormous task is magnified, soon (yet somewhat later) to be mythicized. There is occultation in the sense that this conflictual and antagonistic world (there is an anti-subject, saboteurs, counter-revolutionaries who have allies themselves), this hard world of mud and violence, this world of numerous deprivations is nevertheless a smooth world, experienced and interpreted from a point of view of certitude, a teleology. The knowledge that the new world will eventually win over, if not tomorrow then the day after, gives everything this particular « aura » that eventually moved toward the pastoral.

Occultation ? In the daily reality of the 1930s, notwithstanding the real enthusiasm of these willful Stalinist times, nothing of the smooth character of the social background postulated by the novels unveils itself, nothing of the egalitarian contract and of the triumph of reason. On the contrary, it is at the height of Stalinism that the positive hero, a convincing rationalist, plunges himself into chemistry books and handbooks on hydraulics... As we said earlier, these are novels of mastery in which an omniscient narrator very often (but not always) reinforces the doing and the interpretative commentary of the actants. These novels slowly but surely (and with some opposition) will follow Gor'kii's directives on the neutralization of language.

The march toward monology is thus totally engaged, since the main redundancy of our novels is the *univocal clarity of language*, redundant of the *one-sidedness of the message*, the *clarity of the*

nodal vectors and the point of view of certitude of the narrative. This is a mastery of disciplinarization in Foucault's sense of the word; mastery that in effect transforms spontaneity into conscious action, the language of tropes, which chases away meaning, into clear communication, the body into a tame body, often absent as such or else shown/hidden, and humor, satire or laughter into seriousness. It is not useless of Bakhtin to recall, in his work on Rabelais, the importance of the grotesque body and of the carnivalesque in popular culture, the inversion of values through the obscene, the displaying of the corporeal and of the vulgar, and through subversive laughter. Nor is it useless that, on another level, he opposes realism in general to grotesque realism. This is almost an implicit answer to what took place during the 1930s in terms of censorship of language, body and laughter. These novels of mastery postulate plenitude, a horizon deprived of an unconscious and therefore without want, in the psychoanalytic sense of the word.

As it presents itself, our model is perfectly operative, since it can account for both certain misgivings and certain phenomena of historico-literary filiation. Rufus Mathewson, in his book consecrated to the positive hero²¹, dedicates a chapter to the outlining of the new figure of the 1930s. On a thematic level, he compares four key works : Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Leonov's *Road to the Ocean*, Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* and A. Tolstoi's *Road to Calvary*. Beyond the unconvincing conclusions that Mathewson draws from this examination, we will say that his comparison is senseless in the absence of an operative model enabling him to know what he compares as to the questions that he asks Soviet fiction in general. His choice is both fascinating and unfortunate. It is fascinating because he picked four very different novels. In this way one is led to wonder what they have in common (apart from having been published at the same time and in the same society) and if they pertain to the same aesthetics.

But the choice is unfortunate precisely because the author cannot know what he is comparing without a minimum model. *And Quiet Flows the Don* has nothing to do with socialist realist narration. This novel, as we have seen, perpetrates the tradition of

²¹ R.W. Mathewson jr. *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature*, 2nd ed., Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1975.

XIXth-century realism, inscribes itself in a tragic conception of historical development (which Mathewson underlines well), and its main hero is a problematic individual in the Lukàcsian sense of the term. There are no egalitarian relationships between actants (except maybe in Book II, in the small group of Reds, roughly outlined, and secondary supernumeraries) and transmission of competence does not take precedence upon blind action. On the contrary, blind action is at the heart of the novel, reminiscent of Tolstoian fatalism. In this novel also, initial competence does not tend toward its actualization; on the contrary, it is the performance or feat that exemplifies the Cossack's competence. Never is the target clear, and this is precisely what is at stake in the text : the tragic zigzagging between Whites and Reds. As a novel perpetuating classical tradition, the psychological being, the quest of self -- Gregorii Melekhov torn between two armies and two women -- wins over the social being. That Stalin « protected » Sholokhov, that the novel entered the « pantheon » of so-called socialist realist works, once the first tense moment due to the critics' unfavorable reception had abated, does not eradicate the theoretic problem it raises. What is involved here is another aesthetic, another philosophical approach, another writing. On the other hand, the five nodal vectors are perfectly realized in Ostrovskii's novel, written and rewritten « on the spot ». Leonov's *Road to the Ocean* marks a limit of the genre. It does fit into the model, but with a considerable shift on the actantial and narrative levels. On the actantial level, Kurilov, the hero, is a sick man about to die. He devoted himself to the revolutionary cause and to the construction of socialism, but his private life is ruined. When he knows he is going to die, he questions his existence. This constitutes a fundamental perturbation since the positive hero should be full of life and active. Critics immediately pinpointed this perturbation. I.I. Grinberg does not miss an occasion to remind Leonov what the positive hero should be in fiction : « The Bolshevik hero, in our literature and in our era, is a man who is changing the world, an active man, with a strong will, whose actions are impregnated with the Leninist-Stalinist ideology, a man who grows up fighting, a man for whom the people's happiness is vital, as is the well-being of our beautiful and happy mother-country for whose defense he gave, gives and is ready to give all his strength, his abilities, his talents. »²²

²² I.I. Grinberg, « Geroi sovetskogo romana », in *Obraz bolshevika*, Leningrad, 1938, quoted by R.W. Mathewson jr, op. cit., p. 240.

A perturbation also occurs on the narrative level. The main hero seeks shelter in interiority, study, utopia and science-fiction. A number of passages from the novel are Kurilov's own visions : he imagines an « ideal » society, a society of the future that he calls « Ocean » -- myth of the inaccessible, the infinite, the very horizon of the want. This transforms the narration, since the character's reveries, thoughts and interior monologue replace the omniscient narrator. Otherwise, the five nodal vectors are quite present (even if the last one is rather disturbed) and the « optimistic » aspect is vehicled by a positive character, Liza, whose mentor so happens to be Kurilov. It is she who, through Kurilov's solitude and suffering, undertakes a positive apprenticeship.

The last novel chosen by Mathewson is Alexei Tolstoi's great saga, which was written over a long period of time (begun while the author was in the process of emigrating, its last volume was not published until 1940). It begins as a traditional realist novel, an apprenticeship novel, and toward the end slowly bends itself at once into a type of narrative and dialogue that induces Mathewson to say that because of the non-ironical inscription of social discourse in the characters' voices, the novel espouses socialist realism. The examination of the trilogy shows in effect that if at the beginning the psychological being wins over the social being, in the end the fiction inscribes the contrary. While the heroes, in the throes of pre-revolutionary incertitude and the chaos of civil war, are searching for themselves and their place in history, slowly (contrary to *And Quiet Flows the Don*) in Book II the target becomes clear and the social being takes precedence over the psychological being. On an experimental level, one witnesses the deproblematization of hero and narration, the clarification of ambiguities, and the setting of a progressive positiveness that will imply a point of view of certitude.

And thus, Mathewson chose four variants to outline the positive hero figure in the novel of the 1930s. The first one is without the model, the second one represents a borderline case, the third is a case-type and the fourth epitomizes the passage from XIXth-century realism to Socialist Realism. But one has to have a non-caricatural, non-intuitive idea of the case-type. Let us repeat that this is what the model outlined by Maryse Souchard permits. Furthermore, it enables us to explain why, for example (we will ignore Gor'kii's *The Mother* and Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood* so as not to burden our discussion), Furmanov's *Chapaev*, Gladkov's *Cement* and Fadeev's *The Nineteen* were chosen afterwards as precursors of

Socialist Realism, as if the latter were already a reality of fiction, when in fact the syntagm was still to be formulated and the « official » aesthetics were not yet established.

• The Novels Transformed into Precursors

Furmanov's famous book came out in 1923. It is less a novel than a mixed genre, a factography (genre that the Lef encouraged and promoted), a novelized autobiography, putting in relation Klychkov, the inspector (Furmanov in historical reality), and the legendary hero, Chapaev, leader of a Red warrior group. Furmanov's narrative intertwines omniscient narration, vocal dissemination, notes, Klychkov's diary, and confronts the conscious, organized hero, the inspector, and Chapaev, the disorganized, spontaneous hero who has to go through apprenticeship. The five nodal vectors of our model are present in the text's literary fabric, reinforcing themselves as the apprenticeship progresses, as the discipline is interiorized. At the time of Chapaev's death, they are realized to the maximum, notwithstanding some great perturbations. The narration, as we have pointed out, is very complex. The narrator-hero (the inspector) constantly comments on what takes place in the diegesis, while an omniscient narrator's voice sounds above the others. The reader is constantly summoned through a game of we/you that leads to identification, to political commitment.

There is also text within the text; Chapaev's biography, with its cortege of fresh, popular traits and an entire intertext, quite well defined in the narrative. Very explicitly, Chapaev says he read Razin Stepan's adventures, as well as those of Emelka Pugachev. The regiments bear the names of Razin, Doinachkino and Pugachev. Chapaev is constantly referred to these legendary chiefs and to their cortege of narratives such as Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*. An actantial perturbation follows. If there is an apprenticeship, it is reciprocal. Chapaev learns to discipline himself, not to scavenge, to know more about the cause he is fighting for, to transform his gang into a regiment. However, on the other hand, Fedor Klychkov also learns about courage, local context and the soldiers' way of life. Furthermore, in Chapaev's positive apprenticeship, the mentor is young, while the student is a bit older. He therefore goes through an unclassical adult's apprenticeship, but before his transformation is completed, he dies, drowned in « the waves of the impetuous Ural ». Notwithstanding these important perturbations, especially at the narrative level, the omniscient narrator, commenting both

on the doing and on Klychkov's commentary, presents the thesis in a very explicit way, whether it be in his own voice or through Klychkov's.

Fedor, when he was working out back, had indeed heard of the popular heroes who distinguished themselves in one or the other sectors of the civil war. He also knew them through the press. By looking more closely, he had understood that most of them were from the country and that very few belonged to the urban proletariat. The worker heroes were totally different.

Raised in a great proletarian center, witness to the coherent and organized textile workers' fight, Fedor always looked at the semi-anarchic and partisan endeavours of popular heroes like Chapaev with a bit of contempt. This did not prevent him from being very much interested in them, observing and exalting their heroic actions. But his apprehensions still lingered on. Just as today.

Chapaev is a hero, thought Fedor. He personifies all the impulsive, irresistible, spontaneous, ardent protestation accumulated in the heart of peasantry. But spontaneity ... does anyone know what it can lead to ! Haven't we seen some excellent leaders, in Chapaev's style, slaughter their political commissary, and not a rogue, nor a boaster, nor a milksop, but a perfect and courageous revolutionary ? Or better yet, haven't we seen some of them running away spontaneously to the Whites with their detachment ? ... The workers, well, that is another matter : they will never betray, whatever the situation, at least those who entered the fight with open eyes. Naturally, one also finds among the workers old-style peasants, unconscious people, others who are but too conscious, who are refined men with white hands ... but them, one knows immediately what one is dealing with. Whereas this temerary unconsciousness of Chapaev's partisans, what danger it conceals.

There is a need to come out of spontaneity, to teach Chapaev discipline, to give him a clear understanding of the target, revolutionary knowledge (the knowledge of fight is no mystery to him; nor is the want to fight), organization and thus efficiency : « Chapaev is now like a blinded eagle : his heart skips a beat; his blood is warm, he has passionate, magnificent yearnings, an indomitable will, but ... he does not know where to go, he is unaware of the path to take, he can neither imagine nor discern it ... And Fedor decided to enlighten him, if only slightly, to help him come out onto the main road. ... If he failed, no matter ! Nothing ventured, nothing gained. ... But should he succeed, what bounty ! Men like Chapaev, that is what the revolution really needs ».

Helping Chapaev to see the light, establishing an egalitarian contract with him, handing down to him the knowledge of discipline,

making him see what he is able to do but does not know, having him focus on the target and arranging for the collective aim to supersede the local stakes within the gang : these are our five nodal vectors at work in this apprenticeship inscribed within a factographic narration. We have seen these same vectors labour in Gladkov's novel *Cement*. They are, let us recall, perturbed by a second narrative program which is prone to become overwhelming and obsessive. But they are present here, whereas one would search for them in vain in *Babel'*, *Piln'iak*, *Olesha* and, obviously, in *Platonov*. *Cement* inscribed them in ornamental prose, animalization of figures, vulgarisms, eroticism, elements that will disappear entirely in the later rewritings, from 1940 onward.

Fadeev's *The Nineteen* is of another type. It is a Civil War novel, whereas *Cement* is already a fiction about construction. This is the story of a small partisan group directed by Commander Levinson, operating on the far-eastern borders of Russia where they are fighting the Japanese with the help of counter-revolutionary detachments. Outnumbered, they will be decimated though they defend themselves courageously; only nineteen will remain, undergoing a severe rout. The title of the novel stems from this. The five nodal vectors are present in Fadeev's novel; however, they are only faintly sketched and are constantly denied, either by the narrative as such, or by the protagonists' narrative programs that are not able to globally converge.

First there is a narrative perturbation. The novel quite often changes focus. At times, the narrator is omniscient but most episodes are seen through the characters' point of view. Very much inspired by Tolstoi, Fadeev enjoys this biased narration that permits the description of the characters' psychological motivations, doubts, incertitudes, personal and human problems in the midst of History's great rout. Next follows an actantial and modal perturbation. Who is the hero of the novel ? Commander Levinson, probably, but he is seldom seen; discreet and retired, he rarely unbosoms himself. Little is known about him, apart from the fact that he is Jewish, that he suffered in the past from persecutions, that he is married and human, that he loves his men but does not put himself forward as a role model. He refuses to be sender to either Metchik or Morozka. Metchik, the intellectual, could have been endowed by Levinson with the knowledge of leadership and fight, and could have become the positive hero, but this does not happen. Coming from the Maximalists' camp and having joined the Reds, wounded and

immediately entangled in sentimental problems, he finds himself « in the right camp », nothing more. Seducing Varia, Morozka's wife, without even wanting to, he will also end up a traitor without wanting to, propelled by a blind force.

Morozka, Levinson's servant and Varia's husband, is a mine worker who loves horses, a hotheaded man who has to be constantly put back on the straight and narrow, but who is also a courageous fighter. He represents useless spontaneity and has to undertake a positive apprenticeship to transform himself. He dies heroically without having achieved his transformation. Confronted with this failure, Levinson loses his bearing but then regains control : « Levinson cast a silent, wet gaze upon the vast sky and this earth, promising bread and rest, on those distant people sifting the grain and whom he would have to befriend soon, just as he had befriended the remaining eighteen who were still his friends, those who accompanied him silently; and he ceased to cry : he had to live and fulfil all his commitments ». This want/ought to live at the end is the text's ideological message that distinguishes itself from the cohort of novels to follow by the fact that the narrator, resembling his XIXth-century counterpart, makes us understand the text's system of values through figuration rather than by way of commentary.

In this sense, *The Nineteen* is not a thesis novel. The redundancy system brought to the fore by Susan Suleiman does not function. Nevertheless, there is an egalitarian contract between actants, transmission of knowledge, preeminence of competence over blind action, a clearly defined target (defeating the Whites) and primacy of the social being over the psychological being. All the elements are there, but the narrative framework and the thesis are amiss. The fact that the work was a success in its time was due to its Tolstoian impetus coupled with the presence of the nodal vectors which, notwithstanding the absence of a clearly expressed thesis, were felt to be something that produced a point of view of certitude even in fiction, once again thought of as problematic.

It is now clear why those very novels were the ones to be distinguished in the aftermath. *The socialist realist novel's genealogy is contained in the existence of these five nodal vectors, be what may the textualization, the perturbations of narration and writing, the inscription of social discourse in the text, the resistance of the text.* Now comes the time to penetrate the narrative width of our novels by examining certain neuralgic points in which aesthetic and ideological proceedings are concentrated, namely titles and endings

(much more so than beginnings) since in a Soviet novel, the text's exit recalls the different narrative programs and, more specifically, the overall ideological message or the moral. The exit calls attention to the specific way in which the five nodal vectors are programmed, and also to the modalities of the inscription of social discourse.

- Titles

Most titles relate to the problem of work, action, construction and the emergence of a new world. They clearly indicate the novel's basic program : the reexploitation or claiming of lands, the building of a factory, a dam or a power station. Furthermore, almost all of them can be read as metaphors, opening onto myth and intertextuality : *Cement* (construction but also solidity), *Energy* (electricity and willpower), *Hydrocentral* (electricity and therefore socialism), *Seeds of Tomorrow* (claiming of lands and new life). *How the Steel Was Tempered* relates to the apprenticeship of men and souls to the image of steel and iron.

Stalin comes from stal' which means steel. Iron is the metaphor that designates at the time the new world and its harshness, construction, solidity, modernity, as well as the forging of a new man, courage, heroism and sacrifice. *The Second Day of Genesis* refers to the Bible (Ehrenburg uses as his novel's epigraph the passage about the Second Day), and is a genesis of the new world issued from the chaos of the Revolution, of the construction yards. It opens to the myth of creation and the biblical intertext. Ehrenburg's novel operates precisely on a double-woven narrative. The story of the construction is traversed by a meditation on literature. *Time, Forward !* is a line taken from Maïakovskii. The title designates the cadence, the rhythm of construction, the projection into the future and the poetic intertext. Here again, the main story inscribes in its folds that of a writer questioning writing. *Road to the Ocean* has a double meaning : it could concern the building of railroads and in a more abstract sense, the road to the future, to the ideal society.

The Tanker Derbent is more neutral, but it also inscribes one of these work motifs since the story of a tanker does not derive from the same scheme as a novel about the quest of self, of individualism. *Bruski* is a proper noun, a place-name. The subtitles will bear each time the signification : « *Oborotni* » (The Werewolves) designates counter-revolutionaries, traditional superstitions and the Old World; « *Plotina* » (The Dam) refers to construction and the problematics of action; « *Tverdoi Postup'iu* » (With a Straight Gait) gives an

idea of solidity, of something acquired after a trial; « *Tvorchestvo* » (Creation) evokes a triumph, the mythical dimension of the New World. *Soviet River*, while a novel of construction, nevertheless concentrates on natural elements rather than on their taming, perhaps a sign of a disruptive factor.

In our entire corpus, only the historical novel *Peter I* and *Liudi iz zakhlost'ia* (People from Lost Places) really pertain to another model. The historical proper noun carries within it its genre and its connotative web which opens onto a multiple space (the past, the great Czar, the possible overlaps and closeness of past and present). The title of Malyshev's novel forbodes an anguish, a disquietness a priori. Its title is ill-tuned to the others' triumphant syntagms and words. Because of this, it must be set aside. These loud, heroic titles, urging commitment on the whole, portend very well the plot-types we have exemplified in our diagram on p. 89.

- Endings

The endings of these novels can be roughly broken down in the following way : most of them insist on the acquired, on the social target attained and that, at the end of the process, leads simultaneously to a transformation of the hero-subject, a reconciliation with himself or a reconquest of his own identity; in a word, to the forging of a new man. The ending of *The Second Day of Genesis* is exemplary in this respect : « Comrade Shukharev was right to say, echoing Lenin's words, that the essential foundation is steel - those were holy words. But right now I mean to say something else. Look at Kolka Rianov or at the other guys. I fought with them in Kuznetsk when the Cowpers' front broke. We fought once more with the dam. Mark my words : those are our essential foundations. With men like these, we will have steel, because they are sturdier than steel. And I, an old partisan, I shall say that I can now rest in peace because, comrades, we have real men ».

The ending of Leonov's *Soviet River* is a vision projected into the future and unveils a transformation of nature, economic landscape and man : « ... His impassive look penetrated darkness, and there he indubitably distinguished cities that would in time cover these immense horizons A flower-laden wind would play with the locks of a little girl whose face was familiar to Uradeev. All that he saw through the darkness of this March night was perhaps but a succession of the ingenuous pictures that illustrated Katia's alphabet and which would be printed a hundred years from now

on his own paper, Uradeev's. But from here, one could clearly see that the river's expression had already changed and that men had also been transformed ».

The ending of Malyshkin's novel is a reconquest of identity and a social reconciliation : « He turned away. Turned away and laid down on the grass. The coffin-maker started playing again. Maybe the memory of the small family dwelling, of the flowers behind the window saddened Podoprighora ? Or was he maybe longing for his children left down there in the house ? But so what, tomorrow the kids will go to kindergarten. Maybe a problem about work was tormenting him ? The airplane came closer to Krasnogorsk, on the side of the steppe, the mountains opened in a pass like a fragment of blue sea, the lake shimmered, and in the air, a first string of light detached itself under the aircraft, the construction yard advanced, unlimited, spinning. Podoprighora lifted his head, leaning against the coffin-maker's shoulder. Polia was smiling at him : was it a tender or a guilty smile ? And Podoprighora -- what else could he do ? -- smiled back at her. Meanwhile, the coffin-maker played on, ever on ».

In order to grasp the implications of this ending, one has to know that the main hero of the novel's first plot is a cabinet-maker and that he used to make coffins in his youth. He abandoned everything to come to the construction yard where life, for him and for others, has been terrifyingly difficult, almost intolerable. He was forced to do work that he knew nothing about and his abilities were not taken into account. He therefore decided one day to quit playing the accordion, his favorite instrument which he never put down. Attracted by Polia, he meets Podoprighora, the Party delegate, who is also courting Polia. The relationship between the two men will be tense at first : Ivan Zhurkin hears he will be arrested for speaking in favour of the workers, one day the paychecks had not arrived. Then, the Party delegate finds Zhurkin a carpenter job that will make him another man, allow him to regain a position in this society -- a society so difficult to create from the old -- and give him identity and dignity. Zhurkin will also discover a mate in Polia. That is why Zhurkin starts to play the accordion again and forever at the end of the novel.

There is a reconquest of dignity and social usefulness at the end of *How the Steel Was Tempered* since Pavel Korchagin, maimed, disabled, has written his exemplary autobiography. He receives from the highest authorities the following telegram :

« 'Warmly approved novel. Are beginning publication. Are celebrating victory.' Pavel's heart was beating tumultuously. His dream had come true. He had broken the iron circle. With this new aim, he had regained his position in the hierarchy and in life ». Other novels accentuate the new road to be followed, even if the realization is imperfect. Such is the case of *Hydrocentral* in which everything fails, where, notwithstanding the title, the power station will not be built, the plans drafted being poor, the bureaucrats one-track minded, where everything conspired to the project's failure and where the positive hero is absent. But the novel ends with a certainty : there has to be another attempt made supported by additional knowledge; one has to want to know before one undertakes, and success *will lie* at the end of the road.

For Malon, of Gladkov's *Energy*, there is social happiness, but his private life is uncertain. He finds his wife (but one does not know if they will live together again) and keeps hoping that he will find his son who became a vagabond, is far from his father and about whom little is known. The ending of *Time, Forward !* is complex; it comprises three episodes, and first and foremost is the poetic ending :

The nightingales echo, echo all night 'til dawn

They do not fear the train

Valleys of lilies and nightingales

UFA - Saratov

Clouds, elevators, fences, moravic sarapans, wells, tractors, steps, churches, minarets, collective farms, Soviet villages

And everywhere and wherever you cast your gaze - from right to left, from left to right, from West to East, from East to West, the high-voltage cables between the towers walked diagonally, in an open formation.

With six arms and four legs, they walked in a monstrous fashion, as Martians, throwing hesitating shadows over the woods and mountains, on the thickets and rivers, on the thatched roofs of villages. Never again shall we be Asia !

The end of the narration is more complex since the first chapter is positioned at the end, followed by an epilogue where the positive hero, the engineer Margulies, starts a new hectic day. Here there is a slogan ending : « Never again Asia », which contrasts with the ending (also consisting of three separate elements) of *Road to the Ocean*, more psychological and intimate. In these endings the message recalls that the psychological being is important too,

something that has been inscribed throughout the story.

The ending of *Seeds of Tomorrow*, on the contrary (the novel being an unfinished work), issues a warning in the form of the laconic « The past was beginning again ». The aristocrats and the kulaks plot against collectivization, everything always has to be redone, the process is neverending. As a general rule, when there is no happy ending on the personal plane, the point of view of certitude, of faith in the future, the realization of social tasks or the pursuit of transformation processes are a guarantee of a brighter tomorrow. These « constructive » endings in novels have to be present whatever the novel's temporal structure and the position assigned to the positive hero in this same structure may be. In most novels, the positive hero is such from the start. While accomplishing the task he has assigned himself, he will serve as mentor to other heroes who, when their time comes, will transmit their want to do and their know-how. He can also, in an apprenticeship structure, assert himself slowly as a positive hero (*How the Steel Was Tempered*).

Three other types of exemplification are more problematic but do not impede the functioning of the five nodal vectors outlined. Such is the case of *Hydrocentral* in which everything undoes itself and fails. In spite of this, all the schemes move toward an *aftermath* where everything will start anew, in the right direction this time. The ending is therefore conclusive. In *People From Lost Places*, it is only at the end, after an anguished itinerary, without any complacency toward the difficult times, that the hero discovers his position in society and comes to terms with himself. He will perhaps become, from *then on*, a positive hero. In *Road to the Ocean*, on the contrary, the hero *has been* (before the novel opens) a positive hero. We meet him at a time when, withdrawing into himself, he reflects on human destiny, which results in a blurring of the general message, and the ending is far from elating. It is clear that all temporal dispositions are possible. A past, a present already crystallized in its certitude, a conquest of certitude in the present and a future in which the hero will, at last, be able to realize himself. The point of view of certitude, the monology implied by the resolution reveal the specific labour of the five nodal vectors, absolutely indispensable and always present.

- The Inscription of Social Discourse

Finally, the inscription of social discourse, which widely spreads itself in our novels about construction and collectivization, can

follow distinctive modalities that will imprint on the narration as a whole particular characteristics, thus singularizing novels to such an extent that, notwithstanding the type-plot, they could not be confused with one another. One way to inscribe social discourse within Soviet fiction is to place it without irony, without distance in the depiction of protagonists, in the form of dialogues or interior thoughts that seem right out of *Pravda* or the complete works of Plekhanov -- or Lenin. This constitutes the most « undecipherable », dated, annoying aspect of these novels. The typical example would be symbolized by the « worst » novel, on the literary plane, of our corpus, Gladkov's *Energie*. Here is a good sample :

Vladimir Illich ! As always, he greeted Baleev with his usual friendly smile. Wearing a wide-brimmed cap tilted over his eyes, he was captured by the camera in full motion; emotion makes the wrinkles near his eyes, close to his temples, quiver ... « Illich, my dear Illich, you still have your air of 1919, very good, that's what I like the most about you ».

Each time, Vikenti Mikhaïlovich remembered Lenin's ardent voice : « We are building Communism in spite of the greatest difficulties. But we fear neither difficulties, nor eventual delays. The generation that is now 50 will not see Communism; but those who are 15 will; they will be the creators of the Communist society. It is our responsibility to build a socialist economy on the basis of the highest technology. And the foundation for this technology is electrification. For this, ten years at least are needed and by then we will have erected about thirty great power stations. There is no doubt, Vikenti Mikhaïlovich »²³

The novels are full of important quotations that can play a very important role on the diegetic level. In this respect, Sholokhov's *Seeds of Tomorrow* opens and closes on two important speeches by Stalin. The action of the novel occurs between January and May 1930 (this refers to the first part, the only one in our corpus). When Davydov, the hero, arrives in town he uses, in an attempt to impose his politics, a text by Stalin published in *Pravda*, December 27, 1929, on « the possibility of leading a decisive offensive against Kulaks, of breaking their resistance, and of exterminating them as a class ». The end of the novel uses the famous « Dizziness of Success » of March 2, 1929, a *Pravda* editorial that was to slow down the rhythm of collectivization and denounce the excesses committed and the career ambitions of some white-collar workers. In the novel,

²³ F. Gladkov, *Energie*, French translation, Paris : Editions sociales internationales, 1935, pp. 71-72.

« Dizziness of Success », called « Stalin's 'Letter' », plays a crucial role. After two-thirds of the book, after violent and highly colorful episodes (particularly the collectivization of poultry), Stalin's 'Letter' comes to town, throwing it into confusion.

This letter allows the narration to shift. In the diegesis, Nagulnov, the authoritarian secretary of the division, is to go before the courts. Davydov will be able to convince the peasants to enter the kolkhoz, the detente (with some mishaps nonetheless) will be able to occur. In short, Stalin is the extra-diegetic sender of the novel. Sholokhov has his own particular way of making this letter circulate: first among the anti-subjects, such as Polovzev the aristocrat, and those who are under his wing, and Lukich, who was in the counter-revolutionary faction. Now hesitant, he explains:

...And our old man has told you. We held a council and all decided, with respect to this *Pravda* article, not to rebel (read here against the Soviet power). It's just that our individual ways aren't the same. There you are! The administration, in our village, has made errors. It forced people to enter the kolkhoz. It was wrong to dispossess a number of average peasants. Good Heavens! It's because the people from our parts didn't understand that only a girl can be forced ... not an entire people. The president of our soviet, for example, well, he held us so tight that we didn't dare talk back to him at meetings ... So we decided to rebel, to join your « union », get my drift? But now, what's happening? These Communists from our area, the ones who, armed with sticks, pushed people into the kolkhoz and closed down churches without asking anyone's advice, Stalin's hitting them over the head - I say no less! - and is relieving them of their positions. This means that now, the farmer will be able to move about at will ... »²⁴.

The 'Letter' then arrives in the village:

...the three copies of the March 4 « Hammer » were passed around all the farms in the course of one day. By nightfall they were nothing more than greasy, damp rags. Never, since Gremlachi-log had been founded, had a paper assembled such a throng of listeners. They read, huddled in groups, in the farms, in the alleys behind the stables, in the barn lofts ... One of them read aloud, the others listened, fearing to utter a word so as not to break the silence. The article provoked violent discussions everywhere. Each and every one interpreted it in his way ... And almost everywhere, when Nagulnov or Davydov showed up, the

²⁴ M. Sholokhov, *Terres défrichées*, French translation, Paris: Editions sociales internationales, 1933, pp. 287-288.

paper was quickly handed on ... Thus it flew through the crowd, as a white bird, until it vanished into the depths of some pocket ... »²⁵.

It is clear from the above that Sholokhov is not content to simply allude to the article; the latter becomes the factor that ensures the progress of the action, the redistribution of actants from one faction to another, etc.

In *The Tanker Derbent*, Stakhanov is the initiator, the extra-diegetic sender whose writings will perform a role in the diegesis. If Bassov undertakes a formidable challenge, if he has the courage to fight one-track minded engineers steeped in the hierarchical spirit, incapable of forgetting their habits, it is because the example of Stakhanov inspired him.

Bassov knew the brief story of the miner Stakhanov by heart: his technical apprenticeship at the « Irmino » well, intertwined with the commotion caused by urgent work, his attempts to organize and distribute the team his way. The sustained attention he gives to the work process, each movement, each second being taken into account. It was certainly not easy. The head mechanic thinks about the engineer Neuman and the turner Eibat, about Nemirovskii's manual and the tuning of the diesel engines. Alekseï Stakhanov, he too must surely have run up against routine-minded engineers and bureaucrats. Maybe they tried to fill his head with quotes ... Alekseï Stakhanov had to sustain a long and difficult fight against certain administrators who kept on clinging to obsolete technical norms²⁶.

Here, social discourse is commented, re-evaluated and, through identification, a part of the hero's own practice. Finally, in *Kataev's Time, Forward!* there are quotations from Stalin. Using a poetic style and small, frequently recurring sentences without verbs, the narrator at one point shows a poet reading a report while he watches the countryside unfold through the window of the train in which we find him. Stalin's February 4, 1931 speech on management blends with the descriptions and the visions of the character.

We cross the Ural; shaking through the glass from left to right, spins the 'Europe-Asia' obelisk. The words are printed in white - the paint is peeling off. The obelisk is covered with inscriptions, like a provincial address. It is a station without significance. Now, it is behind us. Could we be in Asia? ... Strange. We are travelling eastward at an amazing speed and are bringing the

²⁵ Ibid., p. 294.

²⁶ I. Krymov, *Le Pétrolier Derbent*, French translation, Paris: Tribord, undated, pp. 162-163.

Revolution with us. We shant ever be Asia. 'Slowing down the rhythm means turning back, and those who turn back will be vanquished. We do not want to be vanquished. No. We will not go back. That is the history of Old Russia, always vanquished because of its backwardness. It was vanquished by the Mongol khans. It was vanquished by the Turkish beys ; vanquished by the Swedish lords; vanquished by the Polish and Lithuanian nobility; vanquished by the French and English capitalists; vanquished by the Japanese barons. It was vanquished because of its military backwardness, its governmental backwardness, its industrial backwardness, its agricultural backwardness. It was vanquished because the act proved fruitful and it went unpunished. That is why we can no longer afford to stay behind.' The train fled ... »²⁷ .

Despite the fact that it directly inspired Kataev's style, Stalin's text is developed throughout the entire novel by the engineer Margulies. It represents the « mise en abyme » of the plot; it functions, at the end of the novel, as an echo (« Never again Asia ») and represents the thesis and its entire argument.

The social discourse that breeds in our novels can be of an ironic nature. The narrator digs a distance, a void between this discourse, the myths and ideologies circulating in society, and himself or one of his herald voices in the text. In this fashion, Leonov, in *Soviet River*, describing an enlightened bureaucrat's enthusiasm for the construction of a paper mill on the river in his region, plunges into an ecstatic dream-vision :

Potiomkin tired his friends, spent his nights pouring over pamphlets from foreign firms, dreamed of a proletarian islet in the midst of the peasants' ocean ... Little by little, his dreams grew and acquired cumbersome forms ... The work is actively urged on. 5000 workers divided into three teams finish the buildings. The furnaces arrive from England, huge furnaces, far bigger than Potiomkin's office; America sends state-of-the-art instruments, never seen before in Europe; the turbo-generators and gauges are furnished by Germany, the steel monsters crawl lazily on the mosaic floors and they are harnessed to the motors with large leather straps. They are still sleeping, but one day they will awake, whistling and grunting, and on this solemn day Potiomkin drives the mysterious Zheglov to the pavillion where the pumps are ... Some locust trees are in bloom along the rectilinear streets of the workers' city ... the town at last knows about welfare; the labor problem is solved, the socialist guidelines come out of the closet to be embodied in life. The

²⁷ V. Kataev, *Time, Forward !*, New York : Farrar and Rinehart, undated, pp. 11-12.

muzhiks eat collectively, under electric lights, a calorie-enriched supper and admire a general view of the Sot'stroï while listening to the radio. Life to them is just as easy and pleasant as that of a new-born; yet Potiomkin does not give way to a well-earned rest. He rectifies and deepens the beds of ancient rivers, he quadruples their transportation capacity. Sot'stroï becomes the economic center of the three neighboring provinces. Potiomkin builds a Superior School of Paper and gives his famous speech on the usefulness of paper. Torrents of cellulose flow into foreign countries. Everyone is surprised by what is taking place and it somewhat surprises Potiomkin himself ... When they were reflected in his dreams as in a night river, the projects he formed during the day donned huge proportions... »²⁸ .

Most of the time however, social discourse is fictionalized, embodied by characters that carry an ideology or parts of one; such is the discourse of the labour opposition in *Cement* and in the first version of *How the Steel Was Tempered*. The opposition between Bukharinist and Stalinist theses regarding both the rhythm of collectivization and industrialization and the evolution of Soviet society is even more interesting. In Gladkov's *Energy*, this fictionalization is more *said* than exemplified. A good example of this process is the following dialogue between Miron, the hero, and Dubiaga, who is worried about the frenzy of construction :

- What do you mean by balance, Dubiaga ? This theory, Bukharin developed it better than you ... Don't shuffle around, Dubiaga. Talk straight. What balance are you talking about ? At a time when, in the country, deep layers are upheaved and tempests rage, does it cross one's mind to think of balance ? To resolve the problem of balance is to neutralize the struggle. But the Bolsheviks are the weapons in the battle. The country is going through a Revolution. Its rumblings fill our days ... Here we perceive the voice of Engels who, long before your birth, said that the factory built in the village inevitably creates the city, that is to say it abolishes the antagonism between town and country. Well then ! We're simply destroying mouse-holes.

Dubiaga's mustache was fretting with anger, falling over his chin :

- Okay. You're the expert at direct hits. But I'm not stupid. What is it that I'm saying ? I'm saying that in the country, we impose destruction over creation. This doesn't equal that.

- So what ? ... »²⁹

²⁸ L. Leonov, *La Rivière Sot'*, French translation, 6th ed., Paris : Les Editions Rieder, 1936, pp. 64-65.

²⁹ F. Gladkov, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

In 1931, even if Bukharin is politically finished, one could still pronounce his name without having the character immediately transform himself into an anti-subject or an opponent. On the contrary, when Malyshkin writes *People From Lost Places*, Bukharin has been arrested and in order to inscribe something from his discourse, the narrator has to fictionalize it, to allude to it, without clearly exemplifying the elements. This is what occurs in the second narrative plot of the novel in which Kalabukh, the political authority (notice that by inverting the syllables, one obtains « Bukha », that is the two opening syllables of Bukharin)³⁰, has one of his articles censored. He had written : « This year passed by under the sign of a decisive attack against the capitalistic elements of town or country (and here the same threat should not be forgotten). Our party is potent because of its foresight and its ability to see revolutionary theory and practice. We pursue this offensive of course without destroying at the same time the possibilities of production of the rural area ». Kalabukh learns shortly afterwards that « without destroying ... » has been cut from the editorial. This is the whole Bukharinist thesis, according to which an exaggeration of the First Five-Year Plan's objectives for industry risked creating an economic unbalance. Kalabukh will be forced to « recognize » his errors and to write articles against the right-wing opposition. In the novel, he is the mentor of Soustin, a young journalist in whom he confides, and who identifies Kalabukh's double discourse, that is his discourse in private, totally Bukharinist, and the discourse of the articles he writes, which is totally Stalinist. By way of euphemistic, very opaque, esoteric language, the narrator dialogizes his novel, authorizing the adversary's voice to appear if only indirectly.

There is a fictionalization of the anti-subject's discourse, which recalls word for word that of the Dostoievskian anti-hero of *Notes from Underground*, through Vissarion, *Soviet River's* strange and diabolical being :

Why does Uvadeev need love ? ... Why is there a king in England ? ... Why this cloud over Mauritius ? Everything is cut into bits and pieces and everything is known; but listen. It's a lie. One only knows a corpse and its dead parts; the living entity has disappeared and won't come back. The stone breaker

³⁰ Cf. Henri Elbaum's research on Malyshkin's *Les Gens des coins perdus* (*People From Lost Places*), Montreal, 1984, unpublished.

acquires the stone's hardness; it is not in vain that metal workers march at the head of the Revolution. The things, the knowledge of things have infected man ... and the soul is stoned and chased from the universe ... abundance and happiness will stifle a satisfied humanity. Social contradictions will disappear There will be no joy, no sadness, no whining ... a balanced crystal, ultimate happiness Man will shatter at last this blue shell and he will find himself amidst a world of a hue we don't know yet, where coldness and solitude await him. The soul will be absent from it, this small flame to which one can warm himself »³¹.

• Thesis Effect and Text Effect

Socialist realist novels and their main character, the positive hero, the new man, thus adhere to multiple narrative and actantial constraints. The hero is entangled in a plot-type whose elements have been discussed. He assumes not only the euphoric characteristic of the title and the resolution, but also the five nodal vectors of univocation and ideological clarity. Aided by the want-to-do and his progressive (or already present) know-how, he has to be able to convince, to undo the deceptiveness of those who speak well in order to make the authentic word of the being, of truth emerge. Furthermore, he has to occupy a rather precise discursive position in fiction, that of the political line, of the First Five-Year Plan or of Stakhanovism, of the necessity to increase the rhythm of production or to denounce the excesses of collectivization (following Stalin's famous 'Letter' on the « Dizziness of Success »). Many elements such as clarity of language, message, plot, dialogue and the hero's discursive stand, serve as a constant reminder of the thesis, making fiction illocutory, an interpretative and preemptory commentary on the present.

With so many constraints, how can fiction produce its « text effect », its literariness, its metaphoric system opening onto the « value » level defined by theoreticians of sociocriticism, onto the infinite unbinding of meaning ? If the meaning is constantly censored, frozen, fixed into already established significations, how can it escape, migrate ? Can the sociogram of the new man, once set into place by these internal constraints, still function ? Or can it only repeat itself ? In short, is the socialist realist novel a literary text ?

³¹ L. Leonov, op. cit., pp. 218, 222-223.

This dream of a generalized monology, of a mastery of self and the elements of society that recalls the puritanism of the *Pilgrims' Progress* is a utopia, an unrealizable trend. Language cannot be totally standardized, neutralized. Some linguists today, inspired by Bakhtin, even go so far as to think that polyphony is within language, that the speaker is never univocal, that he is always fragmented. Oswald Ducrot, for one, wrote recently that in any linguistic statement one had to distinguish, on the enunciative level, the position of the speaker and that of the enunciator. The speaker can identify himself with the enunciators, take charge of them, assume their illocutionary acts. The speaker can also distance himself from the enunciator, assimilating him with a distinct, undetermined person³².

If every statement is divided, if it always bears the trace of the words of another, if polyphony is already within language as a functional device and not as a simple potentiality, then it is obvious that in fiction, in the narrative space dug by the heterogeneous through multiplicity of foci, points of view and voices, in this constitutive heterology, the dream of a full, homogeneous, smooth and transparent discourse is utopic, unrealizable. Meaning cannot clot into the doxa. Discourse cannot simply manifest itself in the doxa, in a vacuum devoid of meaning, in preconstructs which can only function by erasing both the enunciating subject and universality. Meaning disseminates itself, it always escapes and remains indeterminate.

This is what occurs in our novels. The trend towards monology is strongly inscribed, as we have seen, and this is what has always attracted the attention of researchers and theoreticians. Nevertheless, it seems to us that what has been overlooked is in fact that the basic stereotyped scheme is constantly disturbed. What Susan Suleiman called « the revenge of writing » is what we will call here « the resistance of the text », that is the conflict between « text effect »

³² See in particular :

J. C. Anscombre, O. Ducrot, *L'Argumentation dans la langue*, Brussels : Pierre Mardaga, 1983, pp. 174 ff.;

O. Ducrot, « La Notion de sujet parlant », in *Recherches sur la philosophie du langage*, v. II, (Grenoble : Université de Grenoble, 1982, pp. 65-93.

See also :

O. Ducrot, « Puisque, essai de description polyphonique », in *La Revue romane* (Copenhagen), n° 24 (1983), pp. 166-185;

O. Ducrot, « Polyphonie », in *L.A.L.I.E.S.*, Paris : Presses de l'E.N.S., 1984, pp. 1-30.

and « thesis effect ». The perturbation is everywhere. Let us simply mention the paths it takes. The first one is the royal road of language. Gor'kii could storm all he liked, not all the writers had obeyed him. Sholokhov (before *And Quiet Flows the Don*), Alexei Tolstói (except for *Khleb*) and Leonov refuse to abandon their stylistic and metaphoric genius. Panferov plays with free indirect speech to hide behind his hero. He uses long, naturalistic descriptions, forces the detail and does not refuse the carnivalesque. His scenes of collective drinking bouts, in particular, leave a deep impression. The literary intertext is always summoned : Dostoievskian in Leonov, Pushkinian in Furmanov, medieval (« byliny » and « zhitie » or hagiographies) in Fadeev or Gladkov, while Tolstói's shadow hangs over *The Nineteen*. The historical novel, especially, remains the great safety valve where naturalism, Rabelaisian laughter, all types of disproportion, and rhetorical devices drawn from ornamental prose and « skaz » seek refuge. This can be observed from Chapygin's *Razin Stepan* to Alexei Tolstói's *Peter I*, from Tyn'ianov to Shishkov.

We would like to insist more specifically on a few especially rich types of perturbations. In Ehrenburg's *The Second Day of Genesis*, the problem of the hero is the novel's first displacement in relation to the model. Volodia, the main character, is not at all a positive hero; on the contrary, he is a being who cannot adapt to the new society and who will eventually commit suicide, not without having indirectly inspired a serious sabotage of the construction yard. Volodia, the refined intellectual, cannot get used to the idea of a new emerging culture. In a passage where the narrator's and Volodia's voices are merged, he later dwells upon himself : « Just like everyone else, he had gone through his dialectical materialist examination. But if one decided to verify his ideas as one verified a paper, then one would have to underline with a red marker any of his days. His whole being is an error. He does not explain Dr. Faustus' sadness by the phenomenon of an initial accumulation period. When it is springtime and lilacs bloom in Tomsk's old gardens, he does not refer to Marx. He knows that spring existed even before the Revolution. Thus he does not know anything. He is blunt and illiterate. He doubts even that he be a seminarist. He has a questionable background. His father read Mirabeau and Korolenko »³³. When he befriends the young construction workers, he worries :

³³ I. Ehrenburg, *Le Deuxième Jour de la Création*, French translation, Paris : Gallimard, 1933, p. 63.

Volodia came up to Korobkov, who was reading *War and Peace*. Volodia asked :

- Do you like it ?

Korobkov picked up a butt from under the bed, lit it and said, looking suspiciously at Volodia :

- I think it's garbage³⁴ .

Volodia sees his friends from the outside and does not understand them. To him, they accomplish mechanical gestures and are unable to think : « Come now, they are the builders of a new life, apostles destined to harangue, dialecticians who cannot be wrong ... Then Grishka started a song and all joined in. I notice that when they cannot speak to one another, they start singing. The song probably frees them from the necessity to think. I read recently a military specialist's book. I think the author, Svechikov, is an ex-general. He recalls that during the Imperial War, he ordered that the soldiers about to go into battle sing. He says that a singing soldier is a thoughtless man. Our guys follow this advice to the letter (...) »³⁵ .

Volodia, when very young, organized debating clubs. He spoke of Babel' and futurism, up until the day he was expelled for bourgeois deviationism. They snapped back that true literature « was a social fresco ». On the construction site, Volodia is separated from all these young Komsomol supporters, and in particular from Kolka, the positive hero. Nothing will really make them close. Kolka wants to learn, he devours books in a slightly anarchic manner and the future belongs to him. Volodia is even separated from Irina, with whom he has a liaison. Volodia is typically a XIXth-century « useless hero » displaced in the world of construction-of-socialism sites. The narrator clearly indicates this : « Why does Volodia Safonov have to repeat monologues of characters long since rotten ? He is not Onegin, nor Pechorin, nor Bolkonskii »³⁶ , and a few pages later : « In the Caucasus, it was not ore that Lermontov looked for, it was the devil. Bah ! There is a time for everything. Vladimir Safonov is condemned by history as being an untimely phenomenon ... »³⁷ . He could not care less

³⁴ Ibid., p. 66.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 139.

about the poetry written by the udarniki, about their taste. They like Bezymenskii and Zharov and do not appreciate either Blok or Esenin. He terrorizes Tomsk's librarian, who watches over her precious manuscripts as she would relics, meets on the site a French journalist who turns him quite off the West. His rebellion reaches an intolerable peak. He opposes the ant-hill to Shakespeare, Pushkin and Raphael. But certain signs let him understand that these young ignorants on the site are not without interest. He attends a meeting where the youths debate opera and poetry. The result is the following, strongly ironized by the narrator's and Volodia's merged voices :

Vaska Smolin was speaking :

- Some comrades said they were against opera. I know for example that at a contradictory meeting, the assembly unanimously declared itself against *A Night in May* because, so they said, it shows nudity and such is an action of the enemy class. But here I saw two operas : *Eugene Onegin* and *Carmen*. They were something We shouldn't let go of such a potent weapon, insofar as its purpose is the creation of musical circles....

Further on during the night, another youth cries out :

- At first, I didn't understand Maïakovskii. When I started reading him, it was as if my tongue broke. It's because of the rhythms to which we're not accustomed. Now I see that it is real poetry. And then, I also understood Pasternak ...³⁸ .

Volodia understands that the future is on their side, that they will end up by roughing it out and that beside the blast-furnaces, they will also build a new society. He ends up by saying not only « me » but also « us » in opposition to « them », yet old habits die hard. His quest will fail. He will not be able to become like Kolka or Irina. He seeks refuge in Dostoïevskii, and for him, Blok's is the exemplary destiny that awaits him : « Blok wanted to hear the 'music of the Revolution' at any price ; having heard it, he held his peace. He was lucky, he died in time ... »³⁹ .

The positive hero is Kolka, a young worker, an « udarnik », the new man whose mentor is the engineer Schaur, an honest scientist, humane, devoted to his work. The five nodal vectors indubitably run through the entire novel; they are assumed by Kolka, apprentice on the site. The problem stems from the narration : we

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 204-205.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 64-65.

are dealing with a focalization centered on Volodia and assumed by the narrator. Roughly, the message is the following : I know that there is a new man, that he will win. It is good that it should be so. But I still remain fascinated by Volodia, this outdated figure in which I cannot avoid recognizing myself. I shall write therefore a construction novel; nothing will be amiss but for the main hero who will be the useless man instead of the positive hero. You can always interpret it as the failure of he who cannot assume the clarity of his aim, who does not recognize the initial competence of others, who cannot establish an egalitarian contract with his companions, and whose psychological being still takes precedence over his social being. To sum it all up, I set off the positive hero by demonstrating the destiny of he who has neither want to do nor know-how.

This is a serious perturbation indeed, which enables the writer to develop an isotopy of literature functioning as a second narrative framework, to ironicize social discourse and to veil certitudes. There is also a textual resistance : in fact, disquieting factors are to be found scattered throughout even the most controlled novels. Gladkov's *Energy* is not a literary success. In the narration taken as a whole, there is however a kind of grain of sand that places itself in the euphoric machine's wheels : it is the theme of the son, long-lost and vagabond. Miron is a « real » positive hero. He is wholesome, quotes Marx and Engels at any given moment, is part of a shock brigade, yet he always believes, when on the site, that he is meeting up with his son. He is obsessed by this. Many times, these recurring hallucinations interfere with mobilizations, descriptions of the site, speeches about production, etc. And if the recurrence of the lost son theme is not enough to grant the novel a certain literariness, the text nonetheless resists because of this small disquieting point through which life enters.

Even in the most monological novels, defined as propagandist, something beyond writing itself resists the flattening of fiction. *And Quiet Flows the Don's* savage beauty was often compared to the same author's monological work, *Seeds of Tomorrow*, which was written on command and as propaganda, to make people understand the validity of collectivization. The narrative texture inscribes in it a positive hero, the worker Davydov, who is sent to the country to speed up collectivization. Sholokhov was often reproached his « painting in pink » of this collectivization, for it was well known that the event was accompanied by horrors and was in itself a second

Civil War. This comment is unfair since Sholokhov shows the deportation, exile and tragedy that ensue the slaughter of the livestock and the unbridling of passions.

But there is, in the large gallery of characters, a jocular old man, Chukar, half-motivated, and upon which one might reflect. He appears here and there in the novel, but his story interrupts the plot and constitutes a pause. The first time, after a dramatic episode, it is the story, related in folk-tale form, of Chukar's mishaps, twenty years before. Some bohemians sold him an old scrawny nag, making him believe that it was a sturdy mare. They had simply « inflated » it and on the way back, the animal had slowly deflated, making a great noise. The whole thing is told cheerfully, in a style laden with popular expressions. The same thing occurs with the second episode. Chukar, having oversalted the gruel, tries to cover his error, but the scenes becomes a farce, the company believing he has cooked frogs. There again popular style prevails. These very good scenes have often been interpreted as the author's desire to pause after dramatic, even tragic episodes, thus allowing the reader's attention to drift while showing him an almost « acceptable », ventilated collectivization. This is a possible reading, and precisely the one chosen by Roy Medvedev⁴⁰.

It seems though that, without contradicting the first one, another reading is possible. It is one based on pleasure, the carnivalesque, the popular, an intertext encompassing Russian folk tales and Don Quixote, the useless character, a grotesque and pitiful support of literary development. These elements do indeed make the narrative pause; their meaning, however, far from being univocal, echoes the novel's style, full of rude, sensual jokes, popular expressions and regionalisms. Of course, the novel is monological, but its writing is an excess, constantly overflowing, enabling the text to gear down towards the pleasure of the text, even though its primary ideological meaning is fixed. In the narrative, Chukar produces a « text effect ». It is as if Sholokhov or his omniscient narrator were telling us : « I am doing propaganda work, interrupting *And Quiet Flows the Don* which I cherish so much, I am staging a positive hero. My fiction will be exemplary, yet I cannot forget that I am first and foremost a writer, and at times in my story, I will interrupt myself to let this side of me speak also. » The « text effect » is here totally analogic with what Barthes calls

⁴⁰ Qui a écrit 'Le Don paisible' ?, Paris : Bourgeois, 1975, pp. 211-246.

the « reality effect » in the realist novel. In the Flaubert text that Barthes analyzes, the barometer on the piano is not there to add to the referential illusion, but simply to designate reality in its falsehood; in the same fashion, in Sholokhov's fiction, the episodes centered on old Chukar are there to designate the *text* in its *textual* thickness, its literariness. This means that the naive or trusting reader cannot read this novel without interest, indeed without pleasure. The perturbation here is the exit from the transparency of language, the reinscription of language as textual materiality, as primary material laboured upon by the writer.

The textual resistance is even stronger in the entire production of Leonov, and among the works of the 1930s, namely *Soviet River*, *Skutarevskii* and *Road to the Ocean*. In *Soviet River*, Uvadeev really is a positive hero but something in the writing and the diegesis makes us think that he is not satisfied with himself, that his fight for socialism is above all a determination to destroy the old, the monastery, the old way of life; in other words, a personal coming to terms with life. A solitary being, separated from his wife, he will never succeed in obtaining the favors of Susan, a young engineer on the site whose father, also an old intelligentsia engineer, commits suicide because he is not accepted, his competence is not acknowledged and he is suspected of sabotage. Uvadeev lives in the middle of a hostile environment made up of rough peasants who are unaware of the processes that take place before their very eyes, of unyielding workers, one-track minded bureaucrats and active counter-revolutionaries. His friend, originator of the cellulose factory project, dies of leukemia and at the end, Uvadeev remains alone. If he is indeed a positive hero, one of five nodal vectors of monosemia shifts somewhat. It is the second one relating to the transmission of competence and know-how that changes. Uvadeev is alone, cut off from the masses. He could encounter difficulties in accomplishing this point of the program.

There is an even more obvious shift in *Skutarevskii*, where the main hero is not the Communist Cherimov but the professor Skutarevskii, an internationally known physicist who has a great deal of trouble integrating himself into post-revolutionary society. He is a man devoted to science and lives only for his work. He is completely detached from his wife Anna, whose only goal in life is to collect black market « antiques ». He does not know what became of his son Arseny, also an engineer, and about whom one will later learn that he is unknowingly entangled in a sabotage affair.

Since the Civil War, Cherimov has been a friend of Arseny. It is he who slowly will unveil the plot and who shall be ruthless. Rumors are circulating about old professor Skutarevskii. They feed on a strange car accident that happened one night when the professor, wishing to go out, took his car and ran over a young girl whom he later brought home. When she gets better, she becomes his secretary, which increases his wife's wrath and multiplies the rumors. The action slowly unfolds. Anna sells her antiques, which turn out to be forgeries, Arseny learns that he was unfortunately mixed up in a dirty deal, and the intrusion of Skutarevskii's brother, the painter Fedor, introduces a long development on Brueghel, art and the hardness of times for artists since Fedor works as a craftsman, unable to give free expression to his art.

Skutarevskii risks going to court, but his student Cherimov shows him to what extent the young state needs its scientists. The novel ends on an optimistic note, old Skutarevskii is fully reintegrated into society, he speaks to workers and is warmly greeted. The plot summary shows in its schematism that, even if the five nodal vectors are present and will be assumed at the end by the apprentice subject-hero, something grinds in the narrative framework. In fact, the main hero is much more akin to a science-fiction hero or a technical adventure hero than to a positive hero. Devoted to science, to his discoveries and to his students, he lives only for science. He fears for the future, for the destiny of the individual in a new society. The novel is extraordinarily complex, using multiple narrative devices and foci, narratives within the narrative, lyrical digressions and the famous fox-hunt description in Chapter 15, which plays a triple role. As a lyrical digression, it establishes a pause; as intertext, it recalls Tolstoi and Turgenev; lastly, it metaphoricizes within the novel's thematics the old professor's position in society. Fedor's destiny, also to be considered, places the novel on another isotopy, that of the meta-discourse on art. Fedor was at the outset a member of the « perevedvizhniki », groups of realist artists which were most important during the XIXth century. Uneasy, Fedor tries to keep up-to-date. He paints « The Strike » ; after a number of mishaps due to false patrons, he ends up earning a living by copying the old masters' works. He fails as well. His other paintings are misunderstood by the masses that want only a utilitarian art.

Road to the Ocean engages a much stronger perturbation of the general scheme. The escape into dream, science-fiction, this

unattainable ocean city, town in an uncertain future, produces a terribly disquieting effect. As for the hero, he really *has been* a positive hero devoted all his life to the building of socialism but, on the verge of dying as the novel opens, he turns back to himself and reflects on the destiny of humanity, on the uncertain face of the future. Dostoïevskii's shadow constantly hovers over the work and gives it its opaque and fascinating polyphonic dimension. Maybe this is what bothered Gor'kii who, after reading the manuscript, wrote this letter to Leonov :

Dear Leonid Maksimovich,

I read your manuscript ... it gives me the impression ... that your material is ill-organized. It is possible that this impression is caused by the faulty development of the subject matter. As a general rule, it develops in a novel along the lines of a spiral that goes from top to bottom and from bottom to top. In your case, it moves erratically, as a feverish person's temperature. ... I, the reader, have a right to expect that an extremely interesting character will be shown to me, a modest man, a typical man, a « hero of our times » who works towards the reorganization of the railroads. ... I have the right to expect that Kurilov will be shown at work, that the secret of his technical mastery will be exposed ... You showed how Kurilov dies, but not how he works. His illness and death are not motivated enough. The reader ends up believing that Kurilov dies because the writer does not know what to do with him⁴¹.

Kataev's novel *Time, Forward !* does present a positive hero, but trapped inside a cinematographic writing, a writing that is also a collage, that is lyrical, epic, recurrent, with verbless sentences, words coming back obsessively, a rhythm that wants to imitate the vibrant nature of the construction site. It is an enormous feat of poetic writing that gives the whole text a poem-novel air, on the borderline of representative writing.

• The Positive Hero As Horizon

All these examples show to what extent, as a general rule, these novels are *never read*. General, global judgments are made about them, which never take into account what they consist of on the plot and story levels. More complex than the curse cast upon them, they do not fully realize monology. Somehow, they are trapped by the writing, by the romanesque space, by some otherness, some heterogeneity that dismantles their discursive control *to varying degrees, of course*.

⁴¹ In G. Harjan, *Leonid Leonov : A Critical Study*, Toronto : Arowhena Publishing, 1979, p. 106.

First, we notice a strange thing. These novels can be divided into two significant ensembles. One category would include *Hydrocentral*, *People From Lost Places*, *Road to the Ocean*, *The Second Day of Genesis*, *Time, Forward !*, *Skutarevskii* and *Soviet River*. The second ensemble would comprise *Seeds of Tomorrow*, *River*, *Bruski*, *The Tanker Derbent*, *Energy* and *How the Steel Was Tempered*. For each of these two categories, what seems relevant is the examination of the status of the positive hero, the upholding of the five nodal vectors of monology, and the type of writing unfurled :

Hydrocentral : no positive hero, a wavering one instead.

People From Lost Places : the story told by the novel ends afterwards, in the after-novel; the hero *might be* a positive hero (from this standpoint, one could say that at the end of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Gregorii, whose future is not known, could also become a positive hero; this is a possible reading of the text).

Road to the Ocean : the hero *has been* a positive hero, but when the novel opens, he is sick and seeks refuge in fantasy.

Skutarevskii : a *wavering hero* surrounded by failure who, at the end, will find his place as a scientist in society.

The Second Day of Genesis : the main hero is a *useless man*, the positive hero's opposite who, unable to adapt, commits suicide.

Soviet River : the main hero is a *solitary* positive hero, unable to anchor himself to the masses (a *disturbed* nodal vector).

Time, Forward ! : the main hero is a *positive hero* entangled in a *cine-poetic writing* that totally displaces the narration, almost makes it go beyond representative writing, and in this case, the positive hero is no longer the center of a small planetary system, to repeat Tretiakov's words, and the problem is thus totally displaced from the character's system towards the writing.

In all the other cases, whatever the disquieting factors and the stylistic spurts may be, we are dealing with a *positive hero* in the apprenticeship and/or oppositional structures who lies at the very heart of the novel and is its main emblematic character. These last novels are also the worst in terms of literariness, of text effect. Their textual resistance is the weakest, the inscription of social discourse is the least ironized, the monosemic vectors are the least disturbed, and notwithstanding popular language (*Reclaimed Lands* is a possible translated alternative to *Seeds of Tomorrow*) and puns on dialects (in Panferov), the language is the clearest.

Let us state again these remarks which are essential to our argument. A positive hero can *have been* (and the novel opens when, sick, he stops or, alternatively, when he is dead), he can *become*, in the aura that follows the end of the novel, one of the possibilities of the indeterminate in life, he can *hesitate* to face uncertainties, be unable to accept the *price he has to pay* in order to become this whole being, he can feel he is a true positive hero but within an epic-lyrical writing or poetic structure that gives him a whole new dimension and renders obsolete the tension between psychological and social being. Lastly, he can be a positive hero but alienated from the masses, with a distance, a tragic being to overcome. In short, the *positive hero* can be nothing more than a *horizon*, a *limit to attain in indeterminacy*, an *attempt*. In representative writing, he cannot be exemplified as such; his sociogram can then labour, stay active, play upon a border, a limit, a horizon. The sociogram of the positive hero becomes the trace itself of this attempt.

If the positive hero is nevertheless exemplified in realist aesthetics (such as in the novels in our second ensemble), he is by definition an aesthetic *failure* because he must incarnate this « perspective deformation » that Lukács wrote about, this pure prolepsis of an already present future. In this last case, fiction becomes allegorical, but allegory is not necessarily great art. One then has to look for other forms, other stylizations. Vishnevskii uses ancient tragedy, the chorus, paeans and hymns, and epic poetry; one can also use old popular forms : « byliny », epics, folk tales, « zhitie », hagiographies, « liubok », fairy tales, carnivalized forms, and also modern forms revived in popular sources : editing, collage, description, work upon the signifier, destruction of argumentative connectors, labour upon syntax, compound words, etc...or better still, renunciation of the long forms, work upon the sketch, the « ocherk », the stylized report, the rougher form, not « literarized », etc. Many experiments were possible in order to create the *new man*, the hero issued from the Revolution, the new allegory, but under the condition, let us repeat, of withdrawing from realism. What the Soviet critics of the 1930s did not understand was that *realism is not « the true portrayal of reality », but an artistic convention, a writing with its own constraints*.

Stalin saw in historical materialism a simple application of dialectical materialism. We shall say that realist figuration of the positive hero partakes of the same epistémè at the aesthetic level. The point is that of a singularizing exemplification (every hero

having a proper name, a past, some specificity), of a precept of certitude (the equivalent of dialectical materialism), of a prophecy substitute of a foreboding that must be able to unfold, like Hegel's absolute spirit, in its multiple incarnations and figures. To block indeterminacy was to block any aesthetic possibility as such.

Therefore, socialist realism can only present five aesthetic possibilities. It can be the continuation of XIXth-century realism with a problematic hero whose aim is not simply a quest for self, but a quest for personal and social identity. He can become a positive hero, as the new society provides him with a backdrop, but this possibility remains indeterminate (this concerns a few novels from the later half of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s). In another case, the writer puts forward the construction of the new world with *its* positive heroes rather than a positive hero, but also displaces the focus of the problems, that is from the psychological to the « biography of the object », from representation to *language as material*, from clear communication to rhythm and assonance, etc. In yet another case, the novel inscribes an emblematic character in representative writing, something that inevitably will not become mythical (that would become the « value » level, the poetic level of fiction) but propaganda-oriented; the *thesis effect* destroying perforce the *text effect*.

There is also a fourth possibility, that of Brecht : one can displace the hypotheses and present the problems differently. The intention is not to show heroes that one can thoughtlessly identify with, but to show problems exemplified in such a way that through distancing, the reader can gain access to reflection and not communion. How happy must be the countries that can go without positive heroes ! Utopia is a fifth possibility; the positive hero is exemplified by the narrator but projected into an indeterminate future, represented as nothing more than a possibility, and ironicized, held at a distance by the narrator. This is exactly what Chernyshevskii accomplishes in his *What is to Be Done ?*; even though the novel was very popular, its ironic narrative model was not repeated. Some removed its « positive heroes » from their narrative context, from the voice that represented them, from their genre. They were transferred into another structure, the realistic or naturalistic structure, and were quickly rejected.

One can easily see that three out of these five theoretical possibilities, relating in diverse ways to modernism, were forbidden in the Soviet society of the 1930s. Independent of physical

repression, the aesthetic and critical climate at that time had banned this type of experimentation. Even the first possibility closes relatively early. Something diminishes even more in 1936-1937. In January 1936, a *Pravda* article, « A Cacophony of Sounds Replacing Music », violently criticizes Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. This was not the first time that a musical, artistic or literary work was criticized, but one could detect a new tone. The contents of the work were not discussed, nor were its potential problems analyzed; it was violently anathematized without any argument. There was a kind of general revision of the values corresponding to the stabilization of the Stalinist regime, to the promotion of traditional great heroes, to family values, to an incomparable flourishing of the new folklore, of the new myths, of the « absence of conflict within Soviet society » theory, and to the necessity to eradicate satire. There were a few voices to resist this degradation, Lukács and *Literaturnyi Kritik* persisting in debating the problems of the novel and of literary theory, Makarenko lamenting the degeneration of the positive hero into a stereotyped figure, but the times were no longer to creativity. As early as 1930, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* under Blum's quill had formulated in a lapidary fashion the following program : « Any satirist in the Soviet Union disrupts Soviet order ». It worsened after 1937. Barring exceptions, we totally agree with the problematics Katerina Clark discusses with regards to Soviet fiction, including her idea that behind the myth, one can distinguish the ancient ideas of Gor'kii and Lunacharskii about « The Builders of God », as school of thought that had infuriated Lenin⁴².

Degraded into a story-bookish picture, a ritualized pastoral, this fiction becomes within its realist frame totally unrealistic. Grossmann in *Tout passe* writes : « The writers invented men, their feelings and thoughts, invented the apartments where they lived, the trains they took ... This self-called realistic literature was no less conventional than the pastoral novels of the XVIIIth century. The kolkhoziens, the workers, the peasants were derived from the refined and adorned country wives, the curly-haired shepherds that played the pipes and danced in the hills amidst white lambs with blue ribbons »⁴³. Tertz (Siniavskii), in his resounding pamphlet

⁴² See J. Scherrer, « La Crise de l'intelligentsia marxiste avant 1914 : A.V. Lunacharskii et le bogostroitel'stvo », in *Revue des études slaves*, v. LI, n° 1/2 (1978), pp. 207-215.

⁴³ V. Grossmann, *Tout passe*, French translation, Paris : Stock, 1972, p. 136.

published in 1959 in Paris in *Esprit* (« What is Socialist Realism ? »), after having recalled the official origins of the notion during the First Writers' Congress of 1934, questions this teleologic fiction. From Gor'kii to the 1950s, he sees the triumphant march of the positive hero unfold, from Gor'kii's *The Mother* to Ill'enkov's *The Great Highway* to Leonov's *The Russian Forest*. Far from seeing socialist realism develop from the XIXth-century novel (Tertz is far too open and tolerant for such an idea), one should compare it to the poetry of Derzhavin, Catherine II's official poet. In an inflated language, he celebrates the great Catherine, the Russian nation and enjoins the bordering nations to kneel before the Czarina. For Tertz, Socialist Realism is akin to this and uses the same language. The author of the pamphlet foresees an exit only through a new literature of fantasy, something to invent that would not be Socialist Realism anymore⁴⁴.

Whether the novel repeats the XIXth century or the official poetry of the XVIIIth century, it always refers to a harking back, something that borders on the archaic and cannot innovate. The positive hero is a character of mastery, clarity, monology, homogeneity and univocality. To be understood, this figure should be grasped not in regard to its fictional constraints but in regard to its functional hindrances, in the sense of Tyn'ianov who questioned the position of a textual series in relation to other textual series and the position of literature in relation to other areas of social discourse.

In Soviet society, the literary institution does not hold the place it does in Western countries. It plays an important part in the formation of the social imaginary, in the constitution of a collective memory, in the elaboration of a reading of the past and in the interiorization of the dominant value system. The important element is more its adherence to a minimal model permitting the evolution of consensus in the frame of the same fundamental values than its literariness. The positive hero corresponds to highly tense moments, to times of the settling of a *reform*, in the Calvinist sense of the word. This is the result of a primitive accumulation of socialism during the 1930s, calling for this puritan hero who aims at a total mastery of himself, like Rakhmetov of *What is to Be Done ?* who

⁴⁴ A. Tertz (A. Siniavskii), *On Socialist Realism*, English translation, Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1982.

slept on a silica to discipline his body. During the post-war period, the Cold War isolates the USSR which has to rebuild itself after the incredible damages caused by the Second World War. Once again, this puritan, « bourgeois » hero, aiming at only one goal, confident in its values to the point of sacrifice, is required, summoned and inscribed; but at one point, Society having evolved, the hero cannot be credible anymore, his sociogram cannot change and even his archetypes cannot be repeated. From that point, after the harking back, the archaism and the repetition, a new heroic image emerges. But does it still subscribe to Socialist Realism ?

• Conclusion

We started off with the cacophony of the First Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934; it was then that the notion of Socialist Realism was made official. Immediately, we noticed a tension that would labour Soviet aesthetics as a blind point : the tension between the necessity of realism, repeated as a litany, and revolutionary romanticism, that is heroism, used as a specific characteristic of socialism, and the unheard of, singular way to repeat and outstrip bourgeois realism. We wondered, through a frantic odyssey, about the origin of this tension, this realism/didacticism obsession, this impossible inscription of the description/prescription oxymoron. Returning to the heart of XIXth-century Russia, we tried to encompass the discursive basis of realist aesthetics which sets itself within tension also, and the contradiction with Belinskii, then with Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov and Pisarev, and finally with Plekhanov and Lenin.

Early on, some key syntagms and discursive stands appear : « thought through image », « form-content », « primacy of content », « social utility » and « clarity of message ». We also saw early on fiction become a fiction of ideas, making the polemic images shift; these images were emblematic of social discourse (boots and Pushkin, the Crystal Palace, etc.) and fiction was attempting to exemplify a hero « of our times » who would outstrip the « useless man », would cling to the authentic man, the problematic man, when he would not open onto a first sketch of the positive hero figure. We then followed Soviet culture through its numerous doctrinal disagreements about aesthetics and the exemplification of the hero. We noticed an evolution leading to an accentuated univocity and a repetition of the figures, despite a displacement of their meaning. Prescription pervades fiction and betrays somewhat

the already very utilitarian message of the 1860s generation.

The repetition or harking back despises modernism and experimentation; it believes itself to be innovative but only inscribes the archaic. Somehow, while repeating itself, it does create the unprecedented : *allegory fictionalized within realism*. What a strange trick of aesthetic reason ! Aiming at true representation, this fiction ends up, in the Zhdanovist period, by exemplifying neo-Platonic ideas, essences, by eradicating any « text effect », leaving only (despite some exceptions) fictionalized social discourse to proliferate. The typical is recuperated by the political, and the pastoral is substituted to the conflict. With its thesis over-inscribed, the novel becomes a story-book image. The positive hero's sociogram clots, exemplifies itself and becomes an archetype that cannot evolve nor be renewed.

After the scandal created by Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, after the Siniavskii and Daniel trials, after Solzhenytsin's odyssey, after the haemorrhage of talents that fled to the West, Soviet fiction, as Siniavskii prescribed it, had to renew itself. It was impossible to revive the positive hero, dead with the Twentieth Congress, of a symbolic death of course. This did not prevent certain writers from keeping on writing as before, nor Chernenko to recently recall the great principles of Socialist Realism, too much forgotten in his opinion. A new hero emerges with the new war prose, the tragic rereading of the 1941-1945 period; the peasant literature violently attacks the way in which 1930s fiction exemplified collectivization and operated a new reading of the history of Soviet society. With a prose of the daily, through the portrayal of crowded dwellings, lines in front of stores, alcoholism, difficulties within couples, through the new labour literature, with its motifs of administration and participation but far removed from the « Art Magnitogorsk », and through the new national literatures, written in Russian or not, a new problematic hero emerges, unsure of himself and of his society, carried by a narration that again inscribes, in a way, the indeterminate, the polysemia.

Ch. Aïmatov's last novel is a long metaphoric meditation on memory through an old Kazak legend, that of the « Mankourt ». It is a torture inflicted on prisoners in order to completely erase their memory : « They began by shaving their heads thoroughly; they were careful to cut each hair at the root. When the head was perfectly shaved, like experienced sacrificers they killed an adult camel just a few paces away. They flayed it; first they ripped the

heaviest and thickest part of its neck. Then they cut it into large parts and, while it was still warm, slipped it on the prisoner's shaven head. It stuck to it immediately, as a plaster or as one of these rubber bath caps that people wear nowadays. This was called the skin mask torture. He that underwent such a treatment died, if he could not withstand the pain, or else he lost his memory forever and became a « mankourt », a slave incapable of remembering his past ... The « mankourt » did not know who he was or what tribe he came from; he did not know his name, remembered neither his childhood, his father nor his mother; in a word, he did not realize he was a human being. Deprived of his conscience, deprived of his « I », he presented a great number of advantages to his owner. He was a mute creature and thus perfectly tame and harmless; he never thought about running away. The most terrifying thing for a master is always the rebellion of his slave. Every slave is a would-be rebel. The « mankourt » was a unique exception »⁴⁵ .

Even if Soviet critics proffer the opposite, having recently discovered that Marquez's *A Hundred Years of Solitude* fitted perfectly into the frame of this verisimilar portrayal of reality, Socialist Realism exists no more in our opinion. It marked a historical period of Soviet society. Its central concerns were the aesthetics of transparency and clarity, a monologic dream of cultural and ideological homogeneity, and the quite specific figuration of the positive hero.

In a first period, from 1926 to 1937, this positive hero is an uncertain figure and is inscribed in a complex way as a horizon. His sociogram stays open, but in the precariousness and the instability of an impossible model, narration is reproblematised in the frame of the continuation of great realism. The heroism of revolutionary romanticism and the heritage of the « agitka » is forced upon narration, whose prescription is now more political than aesthetic. In the second period, from about 1937 to 1960, despite interruptions caused by new forms of exemplification brought on because of the war, the positive hero's sociogram clots, reifies itself, becomes part of the folklore and is an archetype impossible to transform. It can only be questioned and not laboured upon from within. Like a heavenly body, lost in space, it is dead, despite the fact that its memory haunts Soviet society, which cannot let go of

⁴⁵ Ch. Aitmatov, *Une journée plus longue qu'un siècle*, French translation, Paris : Temps actuels, 1982, pp. 141, 142-143.

the nostalgic figures of Pavel Korchagin, *The Young Guard* heroes, Gleb Chumalov, Levinson, Margulies and countless others.

Revenge of metaphor over metonymy, of the polysemic renewal over monology ? Revenge of the carnivalesque and the Bakhtinian grotesque, with its universal dialogism, over the authoritarian word ?⁴⁶ It is still too early to tell. Has the time come at last to quit repeating the figures, to stop harking back the same models in a realist obsession, to leave writing fall prey to its own spells, to let it lose itself in a « nameless Russia », to let this wonderful language play up its division, opacity and polyphony ? To repeat Dobroliubov's famous title, « When Will the Day Come ? » (*Kogda zhe pridët nastoiashchii den' ?*.)

Henry Ebhardt

DOWN THE ROAD OF NIGHT AND GLORY

The Machine and The Rifle

... a relatively short period of economic rehabilitation the ... the course toward ... the Soviet economy on the basis of ... Soviet Russia was to catch ... the most developed industrial nations of the ... possible period of time.

... industrial development found its ... the First Five-Year Plan adopted in 1929. The ... requiring superhuman efforts and ... was both doctrinal and pragmatic. The ... understood too well that an ... in the avant-garde ... a bad political joke. On the other ... ten years after the Revolution the ... the bulk of the population, the Bolsheviks

⁴⁶ For Bakhtin considered as an option to socialist realism, see the interesting article by H. Gunther, « Michail Bachtins konzeption als alternative zum sozialistischen realismus », in *Linguistics and Literary Studies in Eastern Europe*, v. V : *Semiotics and Dialectics*, P.V. Zima, ed., Amsterdam : Johns Benjamins, 1981, pp. 137-177.

INDUSTRIALISM VS. PRIMITIVISM In The Soviet Russian Literature Of The Twenties And The Thirties

Henry Elbaum

1. DOWN THE ROAD OF MIGHT AND GLORY

The Hammer And The Rifle

After a relatively short period of economic rehabilitation the XIV Congress of the Bolshevik Party (1925) set the course toward a total reconstruction of the entire Soviet economy on the basis of the most advanced modern technology. Soviet Russia was to catch up with and surpass the most developed industrial nations of the West in the shortest possible period of time.

This drive for an accelerated industrial development found its fullest expression in the First Five-Year Plan adopted in 1929. The rationale for this enormous task, requiring superhuman efforts and subhuman sacrifices, was both doctrinal and pragmatic. The Soviet political establishment understood too well that an underdeveloped, semi-Asiatic nation marching in the avant-garde of mankind sounded rather like a bad political joke. On the other hand, in a country where even ten years after the Revolution the peasantry still made up the bulk of the population, the Bolsheviks' claim to dictatorship of the proletariat didn't have very much of a social basis and thus was vulnerable to criticism. Therefore, the rapid « proletarianization » of the populace through swift industrialization became an overriding concern of Russian leadership.

Howerer, pragmatic considerations were even stronger and more explicit. In his speech pronounced on February 4, 1931 and quoted at length in V. Kataev's *Time, Forward* and I. Il'in's *The Great Assembly Line*, J. Stalin provided the rationale for raising the rate of industrial development, presenting the history of pre-revolutionary Russia as a long series of military defeats. In a repetitive, anaphoric manner peculiar to his style, Stalin kept pounding the heads of his compatriots with the verb *to beat* in the past form (*bil*), enumerating foreign invaders who took advantage of Russia's backwardness. Blaming it on Russia's previous political system, Stalin admitted that Russia trailed the West by fifty, if not a hundred years and emphasized the necessity to bridge the gap in ten years¹.

Fear of invasion had always been present in Soviet political rhetoric. As early as 1921, in the wake of civil war, Lenin made a very gloomy prediction: « We have to remember that we are always at hairbreadth from any invasion². » In the Twenties the Party press constantly reminded its readers of « capitalist encirclement » and Western countries' « knocking together blocks to attack Soviet Russia ». In 1929 a poster by I. Zernova, portraying a Red Army soldier in combat fatigue, armed with a rifle, and a worker with a miner's pick, carried a caption « Down with imperialist war! ». The implication was clearly that any war initiated by Western states would eventually be aimed against the Soviet Union. The record shows that the author was quite near the truth.

Use of external military threat as a rationale for rapid industrialization can be traced back in fiction as early as 1925 in A. Liashko's *The Blast Furnace*. In the effort to get the local foundry restored, Korotkov, the main character of the novel, persuades his colleague: « Without plants, machines and iron we'll be taken by the throat, and there is more than enough of those who would love to grab us by the throat and get on our back ». In

¹ Stalin, J., *O zadachakh khoziaistvennikov*, *Sochineniia*, Vol. 13, M., 1951, pp. 38-39.

² Lenin, L., *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Izd. 5, M., Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, Vol. 44, 1964, p. 296.

Korotkov's discourse, iron, the traditional symbol of technological progress and machine civilization, stands also for the country's military might, since metallurgy is the back-bone of the defense industry. This fusion of industrial and military semantics, one of the salient features of Soviet discourse, both fictional and non-fictional, can be traced back all the way to the Civil War. A poster made in 1920 by the artist V. Deni featured an athletic looking blacksmith hammering out artillery shells that flew directly from the anvil to a white general's head. The caption read: « Every blow of the hammer is a blow on the enemy ».

Ideological polysemy of iron was dramatized the same year on the poster made by R. Shoen, where armed workers and peasants proclaimed:

We'll work our way everywhere by iron
Let only the hammer and the plow reign in the world.

In Liashko's *The Blast Furnace* external danger is used as an ultimate argument for socialist construction and the sacrifices it calls for. When Korotkov's wife gives him a reprimand for engaging too much in altruistic activities and neglecting his household duties, the hero admonishes his spouse in a stylized, man-on-the-street prose: « Then again, don't forget about capitalists, they're quite near, showing their teeth on us ». Korotkov uses the same knock-down argument, convincing the blacksmith Rodka to stop drinking: « Otherwise the enemy will get us with bare hands ».

The image of Soviet Russia surrounded by wild imperialist beasts, ready to hurl themselves at her throat, becomes a recurrent theme in Soviet ideological production of the twenties and the Thirties. « Industrial » fiction draws heavily on this imagery to promote the idea of socialist construction. In I. Ehrenburg's *The Second Day* (1933) a team of construction workers takes the pledge to exceed the plan's quota in order to « defend the Soviet homeland from the predators of international imperialism ».

This « besieged fortress » mentality and all-pervasive premonition of an imminent attack from the West might explain, at least partly, the abundance of military imagery in literary works pertaining to industrialization. In many industrial novels of the Thirties the construction project is equated with the front, the construction or production process is likened to « the offensive » or « the assault », the workers are treated as « soldiers » and the project supervisor is called « the commander ».

It has been noted that in order to become a major source of metaphors, a social sphere has to be crucial to the nation's life in a given socio-political context³. The extraordinary expansion of military and religious language in medieval Europe is a good case in point⁴.

Far from being a simple verbal embellishment, the military metaphor in the Russian fictional and non-fictional discourse of the Twenties and the Thirties was rather the manifestation of a deep, all-pervasive concern in the face of external danger. Besides, in a culture regarding industrialization as both a natural extension and a sine qua non condition of military effort, any military metaphor used in industrial discourse presupposes an underlying metonymical relation.

The *para bellum* atmosphere in Soviet letters became more conspicuous in the mid-Thirties. At the I Congress of Soviet Writers the playwright V. Vishnevskii called upon his colleagues to « keep the gun in good condition and know well their military registration centre where to report in case of emergency ».⁵

In parts 4 and 5 of F. Gladkov's *Energy* (1937-38) war becomes a high frequency word and the metaphoric sentence « We are at war » almost loses its figurative meaning. Although the last parts of the novel depict the ultimate stage of the Dniepr hydroelectric project (1932), the author projects the anxious atmosphere of the late Thirties onto the events set in the beginning of the decade. The project is a battlefield, almost in the literal sense of the word. The treacherous and cunning enemy infiltrates into the Soviet rearlines his scouts (*lazutchiki*) and engages in an all-out « sabotage offensive » (*diversionnoe nastuplenie*). The arrested engineers are not only « inner enemies », as it was the case in earlier novels, but the ringleaders of Western commandos. German consultants, according to the Party official Vatagin, are spies and organizers of secret fascist gangs.

The anticipation of an impending military threat pervades P. Pavlenko's *In the East* (1936) whose characters build an industrial project in the Amur region and defend their country in a hypothetical confrontation with the Japanese.

³ Shmelev, D., *Sovremennyi russkii iazyk*, M., Leksika, 1977, p. 95

⁴ Sperber, H., *Einführung in die Bedeutungslehre*, Bonn, 1930.

⁵ *Vsesoiuznyi S'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei : stenograficheskii otchet*, M., 1934, p. 235.

On The Steep Slope

In V. Ketlinskaia's *Courage* (1938) the Party official Morozov takes the cue from Stalin, showing the newly recruited builders of Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur the place on the map where the Russian fleet was destroyed by the Japanese in 1905 : « You are going to carry out one of the most important tasks of our defense... The schedule (*tempy*) is the tightest one. We have'nt made it up, it's been dictated to us by the international situation ».

To be sure, the international situation in 1938 was much more alarming for the Soviets than in the early Thirties where the novel is set, and Ketlinskaia projects the paranoid atmosphere of the end of decade onto the events related in the novel, as does Gladkov in the last parts of *Energy*. However, preoccupation with *tempy* (tempos, production rate), another high-frequency word, runs through all of the Five-Year Plan literature. The slogan of the Thirties, inscribed verbatim into Kataev's *Time, Forward* (1932), is : « In the epoch of reconstruction, the tempos determine everything ». Another slogan of the same period : « Five-year plan in four years » appears both in *Time, Forward* and in A. Malyshev's *People from Lost Places* (1938), set in 1929, « the year of the great turning point ».

In his *The Second Day* (1933) the flamboyant Ehrenburg, half poet and half pamphleteer, states in his characteristic contrastive manner : « Revolution had little time and much energy ». In L. Leonov's *Sot'* (1930), the same motif is formalized through an image : « While climbing a steep slope, one should build up maximum speed ».

Expressing their enthusiasm for a high development rate, the authors draw heavily on poetry. Kataev borrows the title for his novel from *The March Of Time* in V. Maiakovskii's *The Bathhouse* (1929-30)⁶. Ehrenburg makes one of *The Second Day's* characters recite Maiakovskii's famous line « *Nash bog-beg* » (Our God is the run), where the effect of speed-worship is produced through paronymic attraction between *bog* (God) and *beg* (the run).

In their history-making hurry the characters of industrial novels, at least in the early Thirties, don't seem to care very much about quality. In *The Second Day* Ehrenburg makes a caustic remark : « Apartment blocks were built hastily and in one year they got covered with senile wrinkles ».

⁶ « Stakhanovskim traditsiam zhit », *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, Oct. 2, 1985, P.1.

Most typically the plot in production novels develops as a conflict between the advocates of a higher production rate and conservatives, hanging onto outdated technical norms. The portrayal of « the high-rater » follows more or less the same pattern throughout all Five-Year Plan literature : it is usually a zealous Party member, selflessly devoted to his duty, and anxious to speed up the coming of socialism.

The same cannot be said about his antagonist whose character varies from one novel to another. The « fellow-traveller » Kataev (*Time, Forward*) gives both the protagonist and the antagonist almost equal odds in the game, thus giving the plot a fair play structure. Both characters are of non-Russian origin : Margulies, the « speedworshipper », is a Jew, whereas his opponent, Nalbandov, is Armenian. They are both Party members with considerable seniority, Nalbandov fitting more the pattern of an old Bolshevik, incarnating the past of the Revolution, rather than its present. Margulies shows more revolutionary ardor and vision, whereas Nalbandov is better educated and travelled. Both are given equal chances to substantiate their opinions : Nalbandov considers, not without reason, that using American-made concrete-mixers beyond their designed capacity would only wear out costly imported equipment, whereas Margulies uses technical literature and American expertise to prove his own point of view. No arrests, of course, are perpetrated in Nalbandov's camp as a result of Margulies's overwhelming victory.

The picture changes drastically in the last three parts of Gladkov's *Energy* (1937-38), where defending old standards and low construction rates means « sliding down to the class enemy's position » and « becoming objectively a wrecker ». As a matter of fact, only wreckers oppose the tight construction schedule, whereas « honest » engineers, after a short period of soul-searching, end up supporting the accelerated tempos. It goes without saying that at the end of the novel all the « wreckers » are exposed and arrested.

Almost at the same period (1938) the young writer Iu. Krymov produced his first novel *Tanker Derbent*, dramatizing the same fast and slow tempo controversy. Chief-engineer of the docks Neuman, the experienced but cautious specialist, rallies around him all of his colleagues to defeat the engineer Basov, who tries to squeeze out of technology more than it yields according to manuals and specifications. Defeated on the land, Basov goes off to the sea to gain a moral victory over his adversaries by turning a slow-moving,

poorly manned tanker into one of the fastest vessels of the Caspian Sea. Although the author's sympathies are obviously with Basov, nowhere in the novel is Neuman labelled a « wrecker » or a « right opportunist » and no arrests are carried out.

The issue of higher performance is also treated differently by different authors. In Ehrenburg's *The Second Day* when the French experts say : « No more than 0,5 tons of refractories per person per day », the shock-workers ignore the directives and lay 1,5 tons. The narrator doesn't elaborate on the subject, but his previous remark about « senile wrinkles » on apartment buildings cast some doubts upon the brickwork's durability.

In Kataev's *Time, Forward* most of the shock-workers defy technical norms out of sheer competitive spirit and firm belief in their unlimited possibilities. After all, the restrictive standards, inhibiting their creative energy, come either from Old Russian engineers or Western manuals, both alien to the cause of socialist construction. The shock-workers win over the sceptics which provides a happy ending to the suspenseful story, but the ideological impact of the novel wears off very soon, after the irresponsible record chasing is officially condemned both in construction practice and in fiction.

In 1936, Gladkov, taking advantage of this changing official attitude, capitalizes on his colleague's misfortune, criticizing Kataev for being « light-headed » and not knowing technology well enough⁷. In *Energy* Gladkov makes his characters increase productivity mainly through better organization, coordination and mastery of new technology, but doesn't totally resist the temptation of staging another American record breaking. In the third part of the novel (1937) his heroine Katia, a 16-year old construction worker, makes an improvement on the American-made crane. As a result, the American record (i.e. the crane's designed capacity) is doubled.

The author can hardly be blamed for such *licentia poetica* : « outstripping » Americans by using their equipment beyond its designed capacity was typical of the Stakhanovite movement of the mid-Thirties. Although breaking American records would often result in breaking American equipment, it produced impressive figures and was widely used as a propaganda tool.

It should be noted that a high construction rate is not an absolute value in *Energy* : the project's superintendant Baleev takes

⁷ Gladkov, F., *Sobranie sochinenii*, M., 1959, Vol. 4, P. 499

the liberty of slowing down the tempo slightly in favor of « the care for people » (*zabota o liudiakh*). However this trade-off doesn't grow into a full-blown conflict : Baleev conducts his humanitarian policy without any resistance from his colleagues or the top management who accept it as a *fait accompli*.

In Krymov's *Tanker Derbent* the engineer Basov achieves his spectacular results through human rather than technical engineering, turning the unruly « rabble » into conscientious Stakhanovites. Although increasing the tempos is the central theme of the novel, the idea of meeting the plan's quota at any cost is called into question. Fearing to fall behind the schedule, the Shipping Office executives fail to take a defective vessel off the line, which results in a fatal disaster. Of course, the tanker in flames in the middle of the storming sea is good material for building a suspenseful plot, allowing positive heroes to show their courage and negative ones their cowardice. But it is clear, on the other hand, that had it not been for the management's obsession with schedule, there wouldn't have been any need for heroism in the first place.

In Ketlinskaia's *Courage* the problem of the construction rate is treated even more dialectically. On the one hand, the necessity to maintain the highest possible rate is stated by the Party boss Morozov right from the outset. On the other hand, the same Morozov opposes the chief-engineer Granatov's effort to assure high construction rates at the cost of human sufferings and sacrifices. Granatov's single-minded infatuation with high tempos is explained at the end of the novel, when he is exposed as a Trotskyite and arrested as an enemy of the people. Thus a perfectly ideologized picture is created : the party (minus Trotskyites and other « double-dealers ») cares for the people, whereas the enemies of people (who from now on don't belong in the Party) are responsible for human sufferings and desolation.

This ideological device of exonerating the Party and putting the blame on bad Communists, who are therefore not Communists at all, became a classical convention both in Party rhetoric and fiction of the Thirties. Ironically, this stratagem allowed some authors to portray very vividly various negative aspects of Soviet reality and still get away with it.

In Book 4 of *Bruski* F. Panferov gives a blood-curdling picture of famine in the Lower Volga Region in 1932-33 : country roads strewn with frozen dead bodies, villages with no people, dogs or chickens left, half-dead survivors hardly walking on swollen legs, bursting with ichor. The person responsible for all this is, as it turns out, the Region's first Party secretary, once Lenin's companion and

one of the leaders of the October uprising, but presently a conspirator against the Party.

In his novel *The Bastshoes* (1929-36) P. Zamoiskii shows in great detail the day-to-day activity of a Party emissary, achieving 100 % collectivization in his district by crude intimidation and violence. After the publication of Stalin's *Dizziness from successes*, the bad Communist is condemned and arrested for abuse of authority.

Ketlinskaia in her *Courage* provides a vivid naturalistic picture of human sufferings : poor housing, bad food supply, inadequate clothing, people going blind from undernourishment, numerous diseases, deaths and desertion of those who cannot take it anymore. This horrifying picture hardly fits the critical cliché prevalent in the West about the Thirties novels being idyllic pastorals, representing reality in bright colours as a « blossoming garden ».⁸

Although it is certainly true about the last chapters of Panferov's *Bruski* and Gladkov's *Energy*, this blanket definition is hardly applicable to the bulk of the thirties novels. As critics themselves admit, Kataev's construction workers are undernourished, poorly housed and badly equipped. In Ehrenburg's *The Second Day* workers live in filthy barracks where « even the rats have moved out ». In the chapters of N. Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered*, devoted to the construction of a narrow-gauge line, Korchagin walks around in icy mud with boots full of holes and eventually gets crippled from overexposure. Such examples can be cited *ad infinitum*.

In most cases the authors don't have an interest in downplaying the hardships born by their characters, for their sufferings only emphasize human endurance and dedication. On the other hand, set against the initial misery, even small improvements in human condition attain epic proportions. Besides, characters' living conditions are treated by most of the authors as a minor problem : seldom are characters better off materially at the end of the novel than they were in the beginning. The ascetic ethos prevails : the land of « milk and honey » is not at hand, it will only come when the country has enough steel mills and power stations.

This economic philosophy explains the conspicuous absence in the Thirties novels of the « sausage-maker » contemptuously portrayed by Iu. Olesha in his *Envy* (1927). None of the industrial novels are devoted to the construction of, say, a slaughter-house or a textile factory. Building socialism is synonymous to building

⁸ Slonim, M., *Soviet Russian Literature, Writers and Problems. 1917-1967.*, Oxford University Press, 1969 ; Clark, K., *The Soviet Novel : History as Ritual*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1981.

heavy industry and not creating the kingdom of universal satiety here and now : guns for today and butter (maybe) for tomorrow.

In earlier industrial novels like Liashko's *The Blast Furnace* and Gladkov's *Cement* the asceticism of the protagonist is set off against the materialism of other characters. In *Blast Furnace* Korotkov's « unconscious » wife, who wants some material comfort « here and now », nags her husband for not taking good care of his family. In *Cement* the ascetic Chumalov is contrasted with the hedonist Badin who indulges in gastronomic and sexual excesses.

In later industrial novels this dichotomy disappears almost completely. The ontological status of man becomes unidimensional : he is not a consumer, nor a faithful lover, nor a paterfamilias. He is most of all and above all (unless he is a « wrecker » or a class enemy) a toiling man, the builder of a new society and the creator of new forms of life.

Homo Faber Sovieticus

The concept of man as it is presented in both fictional and non-fictional discourse of the Thirties shows a striking resemblance to the general view of human beings held during the Renaissance. The Soviet culture of the Thirties is pervaded with unwavering faith in the unlimited possibilities of man. This motif spreads throughout the Soviet discourse all the way from the Smithy poets of the early Twenties to Stalin's famous formula : « There are no such fortresses that we, the Bolsheviks, wouldn't be able to take ».

As during the Renaissance, the Soviet man of the Thirties is exalted in his creative activity. In Renaissance culture the Great Master, a creative genius and demiurge, imitates God in power and glory. Artistic creation, as later on in German Romanticism, was considered the highest form of human activity. Soviet culture of the Twenties and Thirties elevates industrial work to the rank of art and ultimately regards any work as a creative activity. In *And Yet The World Goes Around* (1922), called « the Bible of Constructivism », Ehrenburg erases the boundaries between art and industrial production, which he understands as an aesthetic phenomenon.

Tvorchestvo (creation) and its derivatives become high frequency words, especially in association with work : *tvorcheskii trud* (creative work), *trud-tvorchestvo* (work is creation), etc.

In the mid-Thirties, the *novator* (innovator) becomes a central figure both in the press and in fiction. Very often he or she is a very young, semi-skilled worker who, not content with mere mechanical reproduction of technological processes, tries to improve it to achieve greater results. In B. Polevoi's *The Hot Workshop* (1940) almost all team members are innovators, each of them trying to make his own contribution to accelerate the forging process. A creative attitude towards the task performed stands both as a manifestation of genuine personal involvement and as a unifying factor. Innovation, implementation of an invention, are the highest rewards for the worker and a powerful vehicle for his self-assertion. Innovation turns the hard manual work in a hot shop into creative activity and thus elevates it to a higher status.

In *The Hot Workshop* there is also an interesting parallel between good craftsmanship and artistry. In the beginning the novel's hero Evgenii Sizov is a virtuoso guitar player but a bad worker. By the end of the novel the hero undergoes a transformation, becoming an artist in forging as he was an artist in playing the guitar. He masters his working tools as he masters his musical instrument.

Work in fiction of the Twenties and the Thirties is not merely manufacturing material goods, neither is it just a way for man to earn his livelihood. Work transcends its physical essence and becomes a spiritual value : creative work for the good of community is a vehicle to assert new interpersonal relationships and to accelerate the coming of a new perfect social order. By working at a factory man becomes a demiurge of the new world, by building a plant he builds a new society. Every act of the toiling man acquires its ultimate significance only as a manifestation of new social relations and the realization of the Great Design.

Work as a transcendent category and a spiritual value evokes the concept of work in Renaissance, especially during the Reformation period. In Renaissance culture work made man divine, by creative work man came close to being like God. Martin Luther, for example, considered work a service to God. He rehabilitated and exalted manual work, for, in his opinion, God was present in every human occupation and the lowliest housemaid's work had its religious value. There were no humble tasks that wouldn't reveal man's divine calling.⁹

⁹ Luther, Martin, *Opera Exegetica Latina*, ed. Elsperger, Erlanger, 1831, VII, 208 f., 213 f.

Similarly the Soviet press and literature of the Thirties glorifies simple toiling men: concrete workers, carpenters and crane operators, little men who make great deeds. The importance of their work is not determined by their place on the social or administrative ladder, but rather by their zeal, creative energy and devotion to the socialist cause. Hard work as a means to assert one's human dignity found its full expression in the slogan of the Thirties, reproduced almost entirely in Ketlinskaia's *Courage*: « Work in the USSR is a matter of honour, a matter of glory, a matter of valour and heroism ».

It is noteworthy that in Twenties fiction man's commitment to creative work is presented not so much as an ideal to pursue, but rather as a natural product of industrial civilization. In Gladkov's *Cement* Brynza, a « hereditary » mechanic, has grown up in the factory, his second home, the only universe in which he lives. With the destruction of the factory during the Civil War, his universe collapses and he loses his worker's identity in the process. The only way for him to recover his true social identity is to get the Bolshevik Chumalov to put the factory back on its feet. Brynza has no interest in politics, the three years of Civil War are for him just a senseless interruption in the factory's operation. He does not have very much respect for politicians of all creeds who are, in his opinion, mere « talkers », whereas he belongs to the superior category of « doers ». It is very significant in the ideological framework of the novel that the initiative for the factory's restoration comes from him: the Bolshevik Chumalov only implements the mechanic's will.

Savchuk, another worker *par excellence* in *Cement*, suffers from idleness. The factory is the only place where he can apply his bursting energy and regain his lost identity. Thus, the idea of continuity is emphasized: capitalism has brought up a special breed of people in love with technology and dedicated to factory work, which is their only *raison d'être*. The new is the logical continuation of the old, socialist industrialization reestablishes the prerevolutionary status quo on a new basis. The class who won the revolution can only recover its identity by getting back to the factory, which Smithy poets called « the cradle of the new world ».

The « hereditary » factory worker in Gladkov and Liashko is proud of his trade and despises overtly farming as an inferior mode of economic activity. He treats with contempt those « deproletarianized » workers who got back to their vegetable

gardens or, worst of all, to the countryside. In the hero's opinion they have betrayed their calling and thus have lost their honour and dignity. Goats grazing on the factory's premises are presented as the epitome of desolation. In *Cement* the main hero Chumalov, seeing this ugly picture, calls the factory contemptuously « cattle-yard ». His friend Savchuk labels his fellow workers turned farmers « swine-herds ».

In his novel *Machines and Wolves* B. Pil'niak, otherwise very ambivalent about Russia's modernization, shows the archetypal *masterovoi* (skilled factory worker), left over from the Old Régime. Kuzma Ivanovich Kazaurov, *Kukushka* in workers' jargon, was born and will die in the factory. He knows the Diesel engine better than engineers, he is one of the few who know « the secret » of mechanisms. Kazaurov believes that the Diesel engine has a soul, just like a human being. He treats machines accordingly, giving the locomotives nicknames like *Mitka* or *Fedor*, and calls the Diesel engine very respectfully *Anatolii Sergeevich*, just like Jacques Lantier in Zola's *La Bête humaine* who calls his locomotive *La Lison*.

The factory for Kazaurov is not just a place of work, it is a place of living, as it is for Gladkov's Brynza.

This intimate, highly emotional attitude towards the machine and the factory, considered as a model to be emulated, is widely publicized both in the press and in the fiction of the Thirties. The slogan of the Thirties « The plant is our home, our home is the plant » is incorporated in Polevoi's *The Hot Workshop*. This is also the time when the expression *rodnoi zavod* (home plant) comes into common use. The qualifier *rodnoi*, used traditionally in syntagms like *rodnoi dom* (home), *rodnaia derevnia* (home village), *rodnaia mat'* (someone's own mother), conveys the idea of blood relation and « contaminates » industrial discourse with semantic elements of kinship. This fusion of industrial and family semantics occurs in fiction especially in cases when an orphan comes to the factory and finds there his second family as it happens in A. Avdeenko's *I love* (1933) and in Polevoi's *The Hot Workshop*. In such cases the archetypal older worker or a Party activist takes on the role of father substitute. In late Thirties rhetoric, when the whole country is portrayed as one big family, filial love for the « home factory » and filial love for the homeland become members of the same paradigm.

Love for the factory and the machine as an inherent quality of working man is constantly present in A. Platonov, in spite of his

general ambivalence about the redeeming power of technology as a major factor of social transformation. Many of Platonov's characters seem to have an on-going love affair with their machines, to which they often give human attributes like « faithful » or « intelligent ». Pukhov in *The Secret Man* (1927) and Zakhar Pavlovich in *The Origin Of A Master* (1928) treat machines like human beings. In Platonov's short story *Fro* (1936) the heroine's husband can « feel the tension of electric current as a personal passion ».

The Iron Messiah

Love for the factory and infatuation with technology can be traced all the way back to the early Twenties, when it was one of the favorite themes, especially in proletarian poets of the Smithy literary group. The Smithy poets exalted the machine as the epitome of rational harmony and glorified the factory as a perfect example of human community. One of the major proletarian poets, A. Gastev, extolled the machine, « that Iron Messiah », and hailed « The Iron Blossoms of the Foundry ». Proletarian writers sincerely believed that the working man should become the central figure in all imaginative literature.

The first half of the Twenties was also the time when most of Pierre Hamp's « industrial » novels were translated into Russian, which contributed considerably to the assertion of factory life as a major theme for *belles-lettres*.

Constructivism of the early Twenties played also a decisive role in legitimizing industrial production as a subject matter in arts. In 1922 I. Ehrenburg published his *And Yet The World Goes Around* whose title merely paraphrases Galileo's *eppur si muove*. A new style is born in Art : constructivism, proclaimed Ehrenburg, glorifying the beauty of the machine, exalting work and organization.

However, it was the Smithy group's poetic and journalistic activity that turned out to be crucial to the formation of the Soviet industrial novel as a genre. It is no accident that the first industrial novels were written by Gladkov and Liashko, both active members of the Smithy group. Infatuation with machines and aesthetization of technology, characteristic of the Smithy's poetic output, permeates *Cement* and *The Blast Furnace* as well. Both novels, especially *Cement*, present a dramatic, highly emotional picture of the factory, painted in colourful language, full of metaphors and personifications.

In *Cement*, factory scenes often sound like a litany due to the extensive use of religious metaphors : the workshop is referred to as « a stern temple of machines » and the Diesel engines are even described as altars. Personification of technology is fancifully combined with the use of technical metaphors in relation to human beings : in *Cement* construction workers are represented as « a live human machine ». Thus, the machine, presented metaphorically, becomes itself a source of metaphors.

V. Il'enkov uses the same device of industrial metaphorization in his *The Driving Axle* (1932), likening the moon to « a piece of polished steel ». His descriptions of factory life, impregnated with subtle lyricism, are rich in musical metaphors, colourful epithets and personifications. Verbal metaphors, used extensively, most of the time, render various dynamic qualities : speed, force, flight, suddenness, etc. The author's love for technology manifests itself in his good knowledge of machinery, especially of the lathe, described down to tiniest little details, as though seen by a machinist.

In Gladkov's *Energy* the musician Constantin, the son of the project's supervisor, who traded his piano for the crane, sings praises to technology and hails man's communion with the machine. In his opinion, the machine age is a new era in man's creative activity, and technology is the major source of transformation of human personality.

Building The New Man

The transformation of personality in the process of socialist industrialization is usually expressed in Twenties and Thirties prose through technological metaphors like *peredelka* (remaking), *pereplavka* (remelting) or *perekovka* (reforging), depending very often on the type of mill under construction in a specific novel. The motif of people treated as material to be processed can be found in Iu. Olesha's autobiographical short story *Human Material* (1928) where the narrator exclaims : « Long live reconstruction of human material, all-embracing engineering of the new world ». The author considers himself « the engineer of human material ».

In 1928 the word *rekonstruktsia* is already used as a synonym of Five-Year Plan socialist industrialization and the underlying implication of Olesha's statement is that reconstruction of the economy naturally entails reconstruction of the people and it is the

writer's duty not only to portray this transformation, but also to make it happen. As it was stipulated later in the Charter of the Union of Soviet Writers (1934), the writer is expected to fulfill the task of « ideological transformation of the people and their education in the spirit of socialism ».¹⁰

In Thirties fiction the motif of remaking appears in various works in different forms. M. Shaginian in her *Hydrocentral* merely verbalizes the thesis, stating bluntly in a hackneyed, stereotyped journalese : « A downtrodden peasant and a solitary artisan start feeling like masters and taking to heart the common cause ».

Ehrenburg compares the making of a new man to building a plant through a catchy syntactic parallelism, betraying the author's poetic background :

That is the way one builds a plant
That is the way one builds a man.

Leonov, who does not seem to be genuinely interested in the subject, makes one of his characters drop a casual remark about the construction being « the factory of new people ».

Some other authors, like A. Malyshkin, Iu. Krymov and B. Polevoi, make the transformation of man the central theme of their novels, the basic element of narrative structure, where the plot gradually progresses from the state of « chaos » to the state of « cosmos », from « spontaneity » to « consciousness », from « nature » to « culture ». In other words, the theme is formalized narratively, rather than rhetorically.

Both Malyshkin and Polevoi use the character's love for his craft as raw material, a natural starting point, from which the transformation begins, the foundation upon which the new personality is built. This narrative device gives more credibility to the metamorphosis. The transformation does not come from nowhere like *deus ex machina*, but represents the fulfillment of the hero's hidden potential. The only new quality that has to be given this human material is collectivism, teamwork, dedication to the common cause.

On the other hand, in Iu. Krymov's *Tanker Derbent*, where the engineer Basov turns a bunch of drunkards and lazybones into conscientious workers through emulation, i.e. appealing to their ego, the metamorphosis appears less convincing, not to say miraculous.

¹⁰ *Ustav soiuzu pisatelei SSSR*, M., 1934, p. 5

Just like in Kataev's *Time, Forward*, the author takes the virtues of socialist emulation for granted, portraying the reeducation process as a sporting event. Most of the characters undergoing change are moved primarily by the desire not to fall back, to get ahead of the others. Yet, it is still not clear how this « transvaluation of values » has occurred in people's minds, why all of a sudden working hard has become an absolute human value for the characters involved.

The reason for this oversimplification, not infrequent in Thirties fiction, might be as follows : the rapid industrialization demanded new human qualities which were not easily available, given the superhuman scale of the goals to be achieved in an unprecedentedly short period of time ; therefore, some of the society's preoccupations were projected into the imaginary sphere, where the problems of « human engineering » could be readily and happily solved.

But fiction, regarded as an ultimate arena for a happy resolution of acute social problems, carries out this task only partially, betraying society's inner incertitude and weakness. Although it is true that the engineer Basov turns « the rabble » into good citizens almost overnight, the reader still has a reason to assume that had it not been for Basov's willpower and exceptional organizational skills, the crew of the tanker would have still remained « the rabble » in spite of the eloquent exhortations of the commissar Bredis. Working on the assumption of the generalizing character of fiction, the reader also remains under the impression that quite a few other tankers manned by drunks and lazybones still wait for their Basovs, which are, as we know, not easy to find.

It should also be noted that Krymov's narrative destroys the official legend about Stakhanovism as a spontaneous movement of conscientious workers from the bottom up. It is significant, on the other hand, that in Krymov's novel the principal agent of human transformation is not the Party propagandist, crippled by disease, but someone who represents the highest technological authority on board. Basov achieves this transformation in the process of practical work, transferring to crew members both his intimate knowledge of machines and his dedication to the common cause.

The progression from petty-bourgeois individualism towards proletarian collectivism constitutes the hard core of human transformation in industrial fiction. The passage of a peasant or an artisan, individualist and anarchist by nature, to collectivism and

the discipline of the factory work is not an easy task, but it is the only way for the newcomer to adjust in an industrial environment.

On the socialist construction project or at the factory there is no room for individualism, and those who persist in their old habits either perish, like the intellectual Volodia Safonov in Ehrenburg's *The Second Day*, or become an easy pray for the class enemy, like Egor Reshetov in B. Polevoi's *The Hot Workshop*.

One of the most important manifestations of collectivism in industrial fiction is « the proprietary attitude » (*khoziatskoe otnoshenie*) towards the factory and production : the conscientious worker treats state-owned property as though he was its owner (*khoziain*). In Malyshkin's *People From Lost Places* the hero who comes to the Magnitogorsk construction site first feels alienated from this « foreign land of iron ». In the process of work he gets emotionally attached to the project and eventually sets up a fire team to protect the construction from disaster.

The character's evolution towards « the proprietary attitude » solves on the representational level the perennial problem of the alienation of the wage-worker vis-à-vis the means of production and the results of his work, which is inevitable, no matter who runs the mill, a private company or the State. Soviet political economy dispenses with the problem, assuming that in the socialist State, where labor power is no longer a commodity, alienation disappears automatically. Fiction, on the other hand, shows the formation of the « proprietary attitude » as a long, drawn-out process, thus establishing a fictional model to be emulated in social practice.

« Us » And « Them »

The theme of social change in the process of industrialization is stated in a very peculiar manner in I. Il'in's *The Great Assembly Line* (1934). Unlike many other construction novels of the thirties, Il'in's semi-documentary novel about the Stalingrad tractor plant at the stage of initial operation is heavily populated with American engineers, technicians and skilled workers. Although the author admits the fact that the plant has been designed in the US, he does not tell all the truth : « The Stalingrad Tractor Plant, largest in Europe, was a packaged plant built in the United States, dismantled,

shipped to the USSR and re-erected at Stalingrad under supervision of American engineers ».¹¹

In *The Great Assembly Line* the plant's start-up is conducted by Soviet engineers in close cooperation with the American consultants, which might be based on real facts, since it is known that some of the American-built projects were actually put into operation by Soviets themselves.

Il'in shows frictions between American engineers and the European-educated Old Russian engineers. Young Soviet engineers, trained in the US, admire American technology and organization, whereas Old Russian specialists mistrust Americans and offer their own technical solutions. Here, of course, the confrontation of European and American technological schools is combined with nationalism : being apprenticed by Americans hurts the Russians' national pride.

The conflict between American and Russian engineers reflects, in a peculiar form, the dilemmas present in other industrial novels : organization vs. anarchy, professionalism vs. amateurism, teamwork vs. individualism. Il'in's novel is set in the early thirties, when the Soviet government, anxious to speed up the industrialization of the country, turns to up-to-date American technology and working procedures : assembly-line production, standardization, regular supply in spare parts, etc. Moreover, it is understood that, learning new industrial methods from Americans, the Soviets are expected to achieve greater results, combining, in Stalin's phrase, « American efficiency with Russian revolutionary momentum ». This industrial revolution, as it is shown in the novel, does not go without difficulties : old habits are too tenacious.

The American engineer Stephenson criticizes his Russian colleagues for too much work and too little efficiency, lack of long-term organization and propensity for short-term, short-lived achievements. He points out that heroism and enthusiasm don't make up for a lot of dead time due to inadequate supply (a chronic disease still plaguing Soviet industry). American engineers accuse the Russians of mishandling the costly technology and making false promises.

The plant's Bolshevik official, Gazgan, accepts this devastating criticism : assembly-line production should be based on calculation,

¹¹ Sutton, A., *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development, 1930-1945*, Stanford, Hoover Institute Press, 1971, p. 185.

organization and coordination. He recognizes at the end of the novel that the departing American engineers have left an indelible trace in the minds of their Russian colleagues. They have left behind their efficiency, courtesy, and even the foxtrot.

In N. Pogodin's play *The Tempo* (1930), devoted to the same Stalingrad project at its earlier stage, progressive-minded Soviet engineers work hard to absorb « americanism » and fill it with « communist content ». Their opponents, Old Russian engineers of pro-European orientation, think that Soviet Russia should learn from Germany and England and not from America. One of them named Goncharov is convinced that American building practices are too far away from Russian socio-economic conditions and Russian mentality. For the « pro-American party », adopting West European methods means slowing down the tempo (the title of the play). The conflict between « Europeans » and « Americans » ends up in a crushing victory of the latter : Goncharov is exposed as a « wrecker ».

One of the central figures of the play is Carter, the American construction superintendant, patterned on John Calder, the number one American trouble-shooter of Soviet industry in the Thirties, the Chief Construction Engineer at the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, Technical Director at Magnitogorsk and recipient of the Order of Lenin. At the beginning of the play, Carter has some frictions with Soviet bureaucrats, similar to those of the German engineer Heinrich-Maria Sause in I. Il'f and E. Petrov's *The Little Golden Calf*. In a short conversation with Russian construction workers, Carter tells them to work faster and change their underwear more often. The Russians follow his advice and in a very short time exceed the American construction rate. The American engineer, very impressed, has nothing else to say but : « Such a record is outside the reach of any country with a different political organization ».

Other authors, like Gladkov, Kataev and Ehrenburg, portray American and other Western engineers less sympathetically and generally play down the Western contribution to Soviet industrialization. In Gladkov's *Energy*, the Dniepr dam, built under technical supervision by Siemens, Germany, and H.L. Cooper and Co., Inc., USA, is represented as a basically Soviet project. The German consultants' function on the site is not very clear, they are constantly in the way of energetic and politically-minded Soviet engineers and eventually turn out to be mere spies and wreckers. American engineers and technicians (General Electric), assembling

the power station, are shown as fleshless, mechanical creatures. The author does not conceal the Russians' frustration about Americans having a higher technological culture. In order to compensate for the Russians' humiliation, Gladkov creates a situation typical of Thirties fiction : during the assemblage of transformers the young Russian trainee Vakir (the alleged son of the main hero) exceeds the American assembler's performance. This fictional « compensation mechanism » echoes the XIXth century writer N. Leskov's famous short story *Lefty*, based on a facetious Russian saying : « The English made a flea of steel, but our Tula smiths shod it and sent it back again ». In Leskov's story the ending is not as happy as it is in Gladkov's novel : the English flea shod by Tula craftsmen stopped jumping.

Although the Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Complex was planned and built by McKee Corporation as a replica of the US Steel plant at Gary, Indiana, the role of Americans at Kataev's fictional Magnitogorsk (*Time, Forward*) is even less important.¹² The two American characters shown in the novel are obviously supporting figures whose function is to emphasize Russian renaissance and Western decay.

The engineer Bixby, who has lost all his savings in the Great Depression, dies from a drug overdose. Rai Roop, the pompous and blasé American millionaire, disgusted with mechanical civilization, pronounces flamboyant pastoral homilies, which sound grotesque in the atmosphere of millennial industrial enthusiasm. The paradox turns into devastating satire, when it turns out at the end of the novel that the philosophizing millionaire is one of the main shareholders of the company designing the project. It becomes evident that Rai Roop's neo-Rousseauism is nothing but a fashionable drawing-room pose, similar to the « elegiac vomit of American aesthetes », condemned by Ehrenburg in *And Yet The World Turns Around*.

No Americans are to be seen at all in Ehrenburg's *The Second Day*, a novel about the Kuznetsk Iron and Steel Plant. The casual remark of one character : « It doesn't matter who has designed the plant » does not mean very much to the reader, unless he knows that the Kuznetsk complex had been designed and built by the Frey Engineering Corporation of Chicago¹³. Although Ehrenburg's

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

semi-journalistic, « telegraphic » narration allows the reader to catch an occasional glimpse of a Western engineer, the function of foreigners on the project remains unclear or, at any rate, seems insignificant as compared with the hectic activities of Russian characters.

It should be noted in conclusion that socialist industrialization is presented in most Five-Year Plan novels as a result of the heroic effort of the Soviet people, whereas Western technological involvement is depicted as a marginal, contingent factor that authors would gladly ignore, if it were not so conspicuous.

2. ANXIETY AND DISILLUSION

« A Renegade, A Wrecker And A Fascist »

Rai Roop's pastoralism in Kataev's *Time, Forward* is not the only case when anti-industrialism of a Western brand is juxtaposed with Soviet technological enthusiasm. The Party official Gazgan in Il'in's *The Great Assembly Line* severely criticizes Werner Sombart's *Modern Capitalism* and Stuart Chase's *Men and Machines* as the manifestation of the degeneration and impoverishment of bourgeois social thought¹⁴. Gazgan condemns Sombart's social pessimism and S. Chase's picture of modern man surrounded and enslaved by machines which, according to Chase, constitute a new species of wild and dangerous beasts. The Soviet Party activist gets especially indignant at Chase's primitivist dream about the coming of « horsemen with waving capes » who would save the decaying mechanical civilization from inevitable degeneration. This image coming from an American economist of mildly leftist leanings echoes in a peculiar way the picture of an Attila-like barbarian with flying hair galloping on horseback across the world of recovered primitive bliss in Leonov's *Sot'* (see further).

It is ironic that in Gazgan's passionate anti-primitivist monologue, set approximately in 1930, I. Ehrenburg, going at that time through his anti-technological spell, ends up in the same company of bourgeois pessimists as Sombart and Chase. In 1934 the year of *The Great Assembly Line*'s publication, Ehrenburg, by that time the author of *The Second Day*, one of the most prominent industrial novels, still had to pay for his previous sins.

¹⁴ Sombart, Werner, *Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Kapitalismus*, Bd 1-2, München/Leipzig, 1913.

Chase, Stuart, *Men and Machines*, New-York, McMillan, 1929.

Gazgan is opposed to home-grown neo-Rousseauism just as much as he condemns machinoclastic ideas coming from the « decaying » West. When the Trotskyite Dmitrievskii starts praising the virtues of wooden-cottage Russia unspoiled by industrial civilization, Gazgan calls him « a renegade, a wrecker and a fascist ». It seems paradoxical that the primitivist discourse is put into the mouth of a Trotskyite, given the fact that in the mid-Twenties the Trotskyites had a dubious reputation of being « over industrializers ». However, this inconsistency can be easily explained by the fact that by the late Twenties and early Thirties the term « Trotskyism » had lost its denotative value and had become a swearword used to vilify any political dissent. It is significant, therefore, that in Il'in's novel primitivist discourse is identified with Trotskyism, the worst political heresy, and considered as dangerous and criminal as high treason, sabotage and fascism.

Gazgan's vehement diatribe against anti-industrialism, both imported and « made in Russia », illustrates one salient feature of industrial fiction of the Twenties and the Thirties : industrialist discourse in the Five-Year Plan literature asserts itself in the fierce polemic with its antipode, primitivist discourse. The intensity of this polemic varies from one novel to another, reflecting to a great extent the author's own attitude vis-à-vis industrialization. In this respect the industrial novels can be divided into two categories :

1. Those like Il'in's *The Great Assembly Line*, Kataev's *Time, Forward* and Krymov's *The Tanker Derbent* which advocate industrialization unquestionably. The elements of anti-industrialist discourse incorporated into those novels are used as a mere rhetorical device, a kind of *argumentum a contrario* and thus fulfill the function of anti-discourse, dialectically reinforcing industrialist ideology.

2. Those like Leonov's *Sot'*, Pil'niak's *Volga flows into the Caspian Sea* and Ehrenburg's *The Second Day* where the anti-industrialist discourse reflects the author's own ambivalence about the virtues of industrialization. In such cases the authors' primitivist « syndrome » can be more easily identified within a wider context of their previous works and in connection with the overtly anti-urbanist and anti-modernist stance of neo-peasant poets such as Kliuev, Esenin, Oreshin and Klychkov, not to mention Blok's and Zamiatin's rebellion against rationalism, progress and mechanical civilization.

It goes without saying that in the novels of the first category, the anti-industrialist discourse is expressed through negative characters whose morbid pessimism is juxtaposed with the millennial enthusiasm of positive heroes.

In Krymov's *The Tanker Derbent* the navigator Kasatskii who calls himself ironically « a fragment of the dying class », talks with nostalgic admiration about the good old days when there were neither Diesel engines nor radio communication which have transformed ships into « factories of speed ». The trouble, for Kasatskii, is that modern man, overprotected by technology, does not have the challenge to fight against the elements. It is significant, on the other hand, that the former officer of the Imperial Navy emphasizes the foreign origin of the technological innovations which have taken away romanticism from the sailor's trade.

Kasatskii's passionate neo-Romantic monologue contains some binary oppositions typical of anti-industrialist discourse incorporated into the Soviet fiction of the Twenties and the Thirties :

old	new
native	alien
authentic	artificial
nature	culture
vitality	degeneration

Although the author condemns Kasatskii, portraying him as a desperate alcoholic and despicable coward, on a purely aesthetic level his eloquent and colourful anti-modernist diatribe, reminiscent stylistically of some dramatic soliloquies in Turgenev's novels, stands out rather favorably in the midst of other characters' hackneyed journalese.

Venus de Milo or The Blast Furnace ?

Kasatskii's romantic disillusionment with technological progress seems relatively mild as compared to Volodia Safonov's « machinoclastic » attitude in I. Ehrenburg's *The Second Day*. Volodia, the novel's protagonist, for whom cast iron and love are incompatible, hates everything which is metallic, mechanical, industrial. He doesn't think that blast furnaces are more beautiful or more useful than the Venus de Milo. In Volodia's opinion, it is impossible to build a blast furnace after reading Plotinus. Thus, iron, the negative metaphor of machine civilization, is opposed to love, beauty and spirit. When Volodia tells Irina, his girlfriend,

about his work at a foundry in the Urals, the latter starts associating metal with shells, rails (symbol of separation), and with « cruel and implacable wire » (an euphemism for barbed wire). Iron in Volodia's thinking stands for violence, alienation and imprisonment.

As it will be shown further on, this use of Iron (Cast-Iron, Steel), synonymous of inhuman and destructive machine civilization, persists throughout Twenties and Thirties literature, very frequently in opposition to Wood, the traditional symbol of unspoiled nature, primitive simplicity, and moral purity in the pre-industrial world.

Volodia's hatred for metal is combined with his disbelief in progress : he wishes he had lived a hundred years earlier. A XIXth century man condemned to live in the Five-Year Plan era, Volodia gets increasingly alienated from his technology-conscious friends, until there is nothing left for him but to leave the world in which there is no room for *passéists*.

It would be pointless to search for realistic credibility in this young Russian of the early Thirties, thinking and talking like a Bohemian *habitué* of Parisian sidewalk cafés : Volodia Safonov is not anymore « realistic » than the Great Master in *Julio Hurenito*. A mere mouthpiece for Ehrenburg's own ideas, although his junior by twenty years, Volodia represents the same dilemmas that the author was living through at the time of « socialist industrialization ». By killing his main hero, as critics pointed out, Ehrenburg « said good-bye to his own past » and « repudiated his former philosophical conception »¹⁵.

Indeed, the similarity between Volodia's way of thinking and Ehrenburg's own statements of the late Twenties and early Thirties is striking. Just like his hero, Ehrenburg hates « Ford, Neo-Catholicism, and democracy ». Just like his hero, Ehrenburg of the Twenties is *laudator temporis acti* : in *10 HP, A Chronicle Of Our Time* (1929) the author express bluntly his resentment about the age of speed and wishes he could go back to the XIXth century when people lived more slowly. Later on, in his memoirs *People, Years, Life*, Ehrenburg would reconfirm that it was difficult for him at the time of sweeping technological transformations « to step over

¹⁵ Levin, L., *Na znakomye temy*, L., p. 231 ; Grimberd, I., *Uvazhenie k geroiu*, *Zvezda*, N° 6, 1939, p. 225.

from the XIXth century into the dark entrance-way of another epoch ».¹⁶

People who knew Ehrenburg well enough didn't take the militant constructivism of *And Yet The World Goes Around* at its face value. In Victor Shklovskii's opinion, Ehrenburg was still caught between the traditional European humanism and machine civilization, and his machine-worshipping was just as dubious as his temporary infatuation with Catholicism. Saul didn't turn into Paul, he merely became « Savl Pavlovich » (not even Pavel Savlovich !)¹⁷.

Shklovskii's insightful remark turned out to be prophetic : Ehrenburg's love affair with the machine was as short-lived as his flirt with Catholicism. By the end of the decade the vociferous constructivist had become a die-hard Luddite. In 1928, in his *White Coal Or The Tears Of Werther*, Ehrenburg wrote about technology burying human life and man's despair in the midst of antennas and wax automatons. He envisioned a horrifying picture of the Second Deluge : the invasion of Earth by raging machines.

In 1929, in his *10 HP, A Chronicle Of Our Time*, Ehrenburg embarked upon a crusade against the automobile and car-making industry. Portraying the automobile as a Devil incarnate, he depicted a Citroen plant as a screeching, rattling and roaring inferno, where 25 thousand agonizing convicts, chained to the assembly line, were gradually slaughtered by the merciless machine.

Soviet critics were not impressed by this apocalyptic picture of the industrialized West : in their eyes Ehrenburg still remained a bourgeois writer afflicted with a typically Western *malaise* in the face of unbridled technological progress. When his *The Visa Of Time*, including some of his *White Coal* essays, came out in 1931, an article entitled *The False Visa* and signed by A. Selivanovskii appeared in *The Literary Gazette*, where Ehrenburg was declared ill with pessimism and « social cataract ». Selivanovskii suggested that Ehrenburg should stop lamenting over the loss of humanity in the machine age and go to the new automobile plant in Nizhnyi

¹⁶ Ehrenburg, I., *Liudi, gody, zhizn'*, M., « Sovetskii pisatel' », 1961, kn. II, p. 420.

¹⁷ Shklovskii, V., *Zoo ili pis'ma ne o liubvi*, in Shklovskii, V., *Zhili-byli*, M., « Sovetskii Pisatel' », 1966, p. 243.

Novgorod to make his own contribution to socialist industrialization¹⁸.

As if in response to the critic's suggestion, Ehrenburg left for a while his favorite hang-outs on Montparnasse and made an extended trip to the Kuznetsk Iron and Steel project, already celebrated by V. Maiakovskii in his *Story of Kuznetskstroï and its builders* (1929). However, as *The Second Day* shows, Ehrenburg's second road to Damascus didn't result in a complete conversion : hailing the virtues of the Five-Year Plan turned out to be an uneasy task for the Russian-born Montparnasse Bohemian who only a few years before cursed the machine as a major source of human misery. « Savl Pavlovich » found himself in the uncomfortable position of someone who had to preach a creed to which he hadn't been fully converted himself. The result of this paradox was a novel half-way between pamphleteering and fiction (« a pamphlet with a plot » in Shklovskii's phrase) where the author made his point in the discursive mode, only to condemn it narratively by « killing » the hero.

The Iron Devil

The image of Iron representing in Volodia Safonov's discourse a hostile, evil force, recurs regularly in Malyshkin's *People from Lost Places*. It first occurs in the speech of the black-marketeer Agrafena Ivanovna : « They're building their iron racket (zheleznyi sodom) ! Who needs it ? ».

The carpenter Ivan Zhurkin who came to Magnitogorsk from a small town, feels ill at ease in this strange land of Iron, full of rattle and clanging. The hereditary woodworker from the land of wooden huts distrusts and fears Iron. He tries to dissuade his young compatriote Tishka from taking a truck-driving course : « You're too weak for that. The automobile, it's an iron thing, it's too heavy. Our kind, we're too simple for iron. You'd better stick to wood ».

Zhurkin resents the trade union activist Podoprighora who sings panegyrics to Iron : it seems to Zhurkin that Podoprighora himself is covered with iron crust. This image of Iron Man reminds one of the figure of Uvadeev, the Party official in Leonov's *Sot* : « made of red cast-iron » according to the engineer Potemkin who hints at Uvadeev's insensitivity and narrow-mindedness. The image of the

¹⁸ Selivanovskii, A., *Fal'shivaia Visa, Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 30, aug. 1931.

cast-iron man reappears in allegoric form in Malyshkin's novel when Zhurkin's cousin Petr, a former shopkeeper turned black-marketeer, looks at the concrete dam under construction, frightened by « the heights of stormy cast iron colour and cast iron hardness ». The piers of the dam seem to him « the legs of a monstrous and inanimate cast iron man, making everybody who looks at him tremble ».

This anthropomorphic figure of authoritarian industrialism crushing ruthlessly the last remnants of petty-bourgeois entrepreneurship evokes indirectly the satanic image of Iron which, in the neo-peasant literature of the Twenties, functioned as the symbol of inhuman urbanism threatening the idyllic countryside, especially in the works of S. Esenin, N. Kliuev, S. Klychkov and P. Oreshin, labeled « kulak writers » by the Soviet critics of sociological brand.

For Klychkov, the earth of the City is rammed by « the pig-iron hoof of Satan ». As if in opposition to Gastev's Iron Messiah, Klychkov speaks about the Iron Devil or the Iron Demon (zheleznyi bes), which stands for modernism, technology, industrialism.

Oreshin, who identifies Iron with industrial slavery, would like to rest from « the rattle of iron chains » of the City. He scorns technology, « the blind and deathly Steel crawling like an octopus around the world ».

In Kliuev's poems the earth suffers under « the iron heel of the headless rulers » (i.e. machines). He associates industrialization with destruction and death, fearing that the iron machinery will eventually kill « the Russia of wooden huts » (izbianaia Rus') and « the raven will settle on the skull of Steel ». In his long poem *The Village* (1927) Kliuev doesn't conceal his hostility towards the tractor, « the iron horse » who came to destroy his beloved « wheat paradise » (pshenichniy rai). He condemns « the iron Gastev » and appeals to the proletarian poet Kirillov to forsake factory poetry and look for inspiration on the bosom of Mother Earth, for « it is not the songmaker's business to exalt cranes and to feed ravens by singing praises to the moaning of the hammer ».

Esenin's long poem *Inonia* (1918) presents a highly idealized, idyllic picture of rustic life, unspoiled by the corrupting influence of industrial civilization. In subsequent years this bucolic image recedes, as the poet sees the gradual subjugation of the countryside by the City whose « stone arms strangle the village ». In 1920, when Lenin dreams about 100.000 tractors, Esenin is horrified at the sight

of a train, this « iron guest » whose « steel fever shakes the belly of wooden huts ». Portraying a red-maned foal trying to catch up with the speeding train, the poet exclaims in bitterness :

Doesn't he understand that the live horses
Have been defeated by the Steel cavalry

It should be noted that during the last years of his life this deathly Stone and Steel imagery loses its negative value, as the poet desperately attempts to get reconciled with the industrialization of his beloved « home-spun » Russia and starts seeing the future might of his homeland « through Stone and Steel ». However, most of his last poems sound rather like an elegiac lament for a vanishing way of life dear to his heart.

The image of Iron, symbolizing industrial slavery, persists in Pil'niak who states in *The Naked Year* (1922) : « *The Bolsheviks want to bind the earth in Steel* ». This metaphor is very close semantically to Oreshin's « rattling iron chains » and « steel octopus crawling around the world ». In *Machines and Wolves* Pil'niak overtly resents « the Machine Truth » that the Bolsheviks are trying to establish on Earth, in order to build a world « as stern as the Diesel engine ».

But the idea of turning the primitive peasant Russia into a huge factory has as little appeal to Pil'niak as the factory itself which is nothing but « smoke, soot, screech, clang and howling of Iron », « smokestacks, smoky sky, sooty buildings, the earth covered with iron saw-dust and oil ». Life has left this Iron Kingdom in which « machines have substituted fire and oil for blood ».

Iron and Stone vs. Wood

The Steel and Stone imagery representing the invasion of Mother Nature by modern technology is conspicuously present in Leonov's *Sot'*, where this symbolism stands in opposition to Wood, the traditional image of pre-civilized purity and innocence. The choice of a paper-mill as an industrial unit to be erected is not accidental : it is a place where the machines, « steel monsters with cast-iron necks », imported from Germany and the US, process wood into paper (progress, civilization). This destruction of the millennial Russian taiga by foreign technology and urban civilization is opposed even by some of those who have come to build the factory. Faddei Akishin, a talented carpenter from the Vladimir region, « permeated with the smell of wooden chips », thinks that

Soul and Heart can only live in Wood. Stone, coming from the City, can have no Soul. With the City invading the countryside, Soul leaves the world forever and Reason takes its place.

This archetypal carpenter, poeticizing Wood as opposed to the inanimate Stone of modern civilization, can be traced back to Emelian Pchkhov, « a locksmith and a man » in Leonov's *The Thief* (1927). Pchkhov, a locksmith by necessity but a woodworker in his leisure time, admires the beauty of Wood, concealed behind shavings, whose « rustle muffles the roar of the storming world around him ». In Pchkhov's discourse, Wood stands for beauty, peace, security. Pchkhov rejects his friend Vekshin's slogan « Up and forward » : those who keep up with progress, « flying like a grenade », « are building a cage for themselves ».

It is obvious that Leonov, a passionate woodworker himself, sympathizes with his character who, as critics have pointed out, expresses the author's own ideas about progress and civilization. Many motifs associated with this character have passed on to *Sot'* : Pchkhov's quietism re-emerges in quotations from Xenophanes about God's immobility, pronounced by Vissarion Bulanin. Pchkhov, a former monk, still lives in a peaceful isolation from the outside world, and the monastic tranquility of his dwelling is picked up in *Sot'*, where the monastery, estheticized by the author, is juxtaposed with the hustle and bustle of the paper mill project.

The New Attila

Leonov's anti-modernist bias manifests itself not only in the savory and picturesque description of the monastery and the village Makarikha, lost in millennial forests, but also in Vissarion Bulanin's ten-page speech, the longest monologue pronounced by any character in the novel. According to this former White Guard officer in monk's disguise, Soul has been driven out of life by science and technology. The only way to recover the lost Soul is to break away from modern civilization and get back to the primeval simplicity of pastoral culture. He dreams about the new Attila, a wild horseman with flying hair who would purify the earth by fire and sword and give back to decaying mankind the Soul it has lost.

The image of the new Attila, saving the decadent European civilization from total degeneration, can be traced back to V. Briusov's poem *The Coming Huns* (1905), where the author places

his hope in barbarian hordes who would vivify Russia's « decrepit body with a wave of flaming blood ».

The same belief in the salutary mission of barbarian masses recurs in A. Blok's *The Collapse of Humanism* (1919). Following O. Spengler's dichotomy of culture and civilization, where modern civilization is presented as culture in the state of degeneration, Blok regards barbarian masses as « unconscious repositories of culture »¹⁹.

The romantic image of the rough barbarian horseman reappears in E. Zamiatin's play *Attila* (1927), banned right before its production and reworked by the author into the (unfinished) novel *The Scourge Of God* (1938). Both in the play and in the novel, the Huns' vitality and youthful vigour are set off against the decadence of the old and weak Roman empire.

Generally speaking, Vissarion Bulanin's anti-modernist monologue, integrated very loosely into the novel's narrative structure, recapitulates all the phylogeny of the *fin-de-siècle* primitivist discourse. It includes Rudolf Clausius's crystallization and entropy, reinterpreted metaphorically by Spengler, Berdiaev and Zamiatin,²⁰ Dostoevskii's anti-scientism and anti-rationalism, Tolstoi's « technophobia » and Spengler's dichotomy of culture and civilization.

On a purely representational level, Bulanin's primitivist speech seems to express the ideas of a liberal intellectual of pre-revolutionary vintage, disappointed by the Revolution which asserts rationalism, materialism and industrialization under a socialist disguise. Besides, in the narrative economy of the novel, the former White Army officer's virulent anti-industrialism gives him an additional motivation to fight socialist construction and thus counter-balances the Bolshevik Uvadeev's industrialist enthusiasm.

On the discursive level, though, this highly erudite treatise, written in a colourful rhythmic prose, turns out to be deeply rooted

¹⁹ Blok, A., Krushenie gumanizma, *Sobranie sochinenii* v 8 tomakh, t. 6, M.-L., 1962, p. 99, first published in *Znamia*, 1921, NoNo 7-8.

²⁰ Spengler, O., *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, B.1, München, 1918, B. 2, München, 1922.

Zamiatin, E., *O literature, revoliutsii i entropii*, M., « Krug », 1924.

Berdiaev, N., *Predsmertnye mysly Fausta*, in *Osvald Shpengler i Zakat Evropy*, M., « Bereg », 1922.

in Leonov's own *Weltanschauung* or, at least, reflects some of the ideas that he could not or would not express through « objective » authorial speech. For example, Bulanin's statement about « the naked man », emancipated from all conventions of modern civilization, is a direct self-quotation from *The Thief* where it is pronounced by Firsov, the fictitious author whose philosophy, as many critics have pointed out, reflects Leonov's own convictions.

Generally, it should be noted that Leonov cares very little about Bulanin's realistic credibility : it is very hard to imagine in the real world a half-educated White Army officer quoting *in extenso* Parmenides, Xenophanes, Clausius and Spengler in an « ornamental » prose that would put Remizov and Belyi to shame. Bulanin's speech is a collage, made of allusions, references and hidden quotations from various fields of knowledge, with practically no claim to mimetic representation. Hence, it would be yielding to naive realism to see here just an ideological « sortie » (vylazka) of an intelligent and shrewd « class enemy », as did some Soviet critics.

Bulanin as a character and a speaker is a mere rhetorical device, a vehicle for the author to make his own statement, as Don Quixote is for Cervantes who makes his hero pronounce extravagant speeches at the most inappropriate moments, only to express the author's own views on politics, military art and literature ²¹.

At first glance, Bulanin might be perceived as a negative character : after all, he opposes the construction, valued positively within official axiology. However, right from the outset the author gives Bulanin more odds than he gives his « positive » opponents : the former White Army officer is more articulate and better educated, than the iron-clad, tongue-tied Uvadeev. The first contact between the two puts Bulanin immediately above the Party official : the latter is left out of the philosophical discussion that the engineer Favorov conducts with the young « monk » quoting at will Parmenides and Xenophanes.

Similarly, the young Bolshevik Suzanna, who listens passively to Bulanin's ten-Page monologue, hardly understands ten per cent of what he says and replies in trivial, colourless clichés, trying to squeeze Bulanin's statements into the rigid mold of anti-revolutionary *corpus delicti*.

²¹ Shklovkii, V. *Kak sdelan Don-Kikhot - Rechi Don-Kikhota*, in Shklovkii, V., *Rasvertyvanie siuzheta*, Izdanie « OPOIAZ », 1921.

Portraying Bulanin sympathetically and giving him a vast opportunity to make his point, Leonov understands, however, that in the Five-Year Plan era « decadent pessimism » is in a no-win situation : he « kills » his hero as does Ehrenburg in *The Second Day*.

The Satan Of Reason

If Ehrenburg and Leonov solve the conflict between traditionalism and modernism by killing their heroes, and thus tacitly accept the victory of machine civilization, Andrei Platonov typically « kills » scientific and technological projects to show the futility of the attempt to transform the world along rational lines through science and technology.

The hero of his first short story *Markun* (1921), a self-styled engineer, tries to build a perpetual motion machine in order to liberate mankind from the drudgery of physical labor and thus transform the universe. Ironically, Markun's love for mankind doesn't prevent him from brutalizing his younger brother, a motif recurring regularly in Platonov's later works. The attempt to make the world a better place to live fails : Markun's project ends up a total fiasco.

In another short story, called ironically *The Home of Electricity*, written in 1926 but published only in 1939, Platonov describes a village power-station made of a motorcycle engine, captured from the British during the Civil War and working on moonshine alcohol (*samogon*). At the end of the story the station stops working : the distillery blows up, nearly killing the brewer.

In Platonov's other short stories and novelettes of the Twenties, scientific and technological experiments, usually conducted on a world scale, actually kill people, sometimes in astronomical quantities, regardless of the experiment's success or failure. In the Sci-Fi short story *The Off-Spring Of The Sun*, first published under the title *The Satan Of Thought* (1922), whole countries of Europe get swept away by the hurricane of new energy as a result of the first experiment on reconstructing the globe by ultralight. This great toll in human lives doesn't seem to be a problem to the engineer Vogulov, the author of the project, who had to « create within himself the Satan of Reason » and « kill his own warm-blooded heart » in order to « tame Matter with Iron ».

It should be noted that this tragic divorce between Reason and Heart as a major source of human sufferings persists throughout Platonov's works of the Twenties, such as *Iamskaia settlement* (1926) and *Epifan Locks* (1927), finding its resolution only on a verbal level through oxymoronic phrases like « intelligent heart » (*umnoe serdtse*) and « heart guess » (*serdechnaia dogadka*).

In *The Off-Spring Of The Sun* Reason prevails : Vogulov's utopian dream comes true, but the technological paradise, created by the Satan of Reason, in which people have become working animals and robots, turns out to be as heartless as its creator himself and looks rather like a nightmarish caricature of modern industrial civilization.

« Technological progress kills » seems to be the central statement of Platonov's other Sci-Fi short story *The Moon Bomb* (1926), in which the German engineer Kreuzkopf invents a powerful spacecraft. While working on the project, Kreuzkopf loses his wife, kills a child in a car accident, causes the death of 40 workers and turns into a lonely, bitter misanthrope. Disgusted with mankind, the inventor flies off to the Moon on board of his spacecraft and never returns to Earth. Human happiness and technology are incompatible, love for the machine is contrary to love for people.

The same motif recurs in *The Origin Of The Master* (1928) where Zakhar Ivanovich, the main hero, who « used to live in the warm fog of his love for machines », starts questioning the machine's value, after meeting a tormented child. Very soon Zakhar Ivanovich forgets about his passion for the machine and gives his heart entirely to his foster son.

The impossibility to achieve human happiness through science and technology is the keynote of Platonov's Sci-Fi novelette *The Ether Highway*, written in 1927 and published posthumously in 1968. In this phantasmagoric story, crafted as an actualized and extended metaphor, Kirpichnikov, a scientific genius, tries to capture the energy of ether to breed Iron like swine and thus make satiety and happiness reign in the world. Before he achieves his goal, Kirpichnikov gets killed, along with thousands of other people, in a shipwreck caused by an unscrupulous inventor who can destroy things by mere concentration of thought and eventually gets killed by his own negative energy. Although Kirpichnikov's son brings his father's project to its completion, the result of this scientific breakthrough is not universal happiness, but a disgusting iron monster produced in the process.

In Platonov's *Epifan Locks* (1927), historical allegory is used to express the same central idea incorporated in his Sci-Fi stories : the transformation of the world through technological improvements only causes human misery and is doomed to failure in the long run.

The British engineer Bertrand Perry, a man with an « arithmetical mind », hired by Peter The Great for the construction of a canal between the Oka and the Don, turns out to be powerless in the face of Russia's medieval inertia, anarchy and corruption. Military draft and harsh disciplinary measures, decreed by the Emperor, prove useless : the project, designed with no regard to local conditions, ends up a complete fiasco, after taking a heavy toll in human lives. The last victim of the doomed project, Perry dies at the hands of a sadistic executioner, although the historical John Perry was allowed to return to his native England, where he published a book, highly praising the Russian Czar²². The author can hardly be blamed for this distortion of historical truth : The horrible death of the British engineer obeys the artistic logic of the story whose plot progresses gradually towards this tragic denouement.

This novelette, published at the time when the construction of the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, the Turkestan-Siberian railroad and the Dniepr Hydro-Electric Plant was under way, raises in allegorical form the nagging topical questions : Does the end justify the means ? Is the enormous price the Russian people pay for the forcible industrialization worth paying ? Is the end attainable, and if it is, will it make Russia a better place to live and will it make the Russians better human beings ?

Judging from Platonov's short novel *The Foundation Pit*, and his novelette *The Juvenile Sea*, written in 1934 but published only this year in the June issue of *Znamia* and his play *The Barrel Organ*, written in the early Thirties but never published in the USSR the answer is « no ». Platonov ridicules the notion that in the country which, as Kol'ka Rzhanov in Ehrenburg's *The Second Day* puts it, pays for industrialization with starvation, technology can improve the people's living conditions. The machine cannot feed people, implies Platonov in his play *The Barrel Organ*, where the cooperative's chairman Shchoev proudly displays « the food of the future » : burdocks, nettles, bird droppings and locusts, served by wooden machines with levers and conveyor belts.

²² Perry, John, *The State of Russia Under The Present Czar*, London, 1716, reprinted by Da Capo Press, N.Y., 1967.

Pessimism about the future industrial paradise pervades *The Foundation Pit* whose protagonists, building the Bright Edifice of the Future, sink deeper and deeper into the ground, until the foundation pit turns into a common grave for children, unemployed workers and runaway farmers.

The semi-fantastic and highly ironic short novel *The Juvenile Sea*, depicting a run-down State animal farm, lost in the Russian steppe, seems to be the only work of Platonov which features a successful technological experiment. Indeed, due to the pioneering « voltaic arc drilling », the half-crazy demagogues and visionaries in charge of the farm manage to extract underground water, needed for irrigation. However, the very chimerism of this technological « break-through » only emphasizes the absolute inefficiency of the dilapidated farm and the abject poverty of its workers.

At the end of the novel the reader is left with the impression that the miraculous production of juvenile water is not anymore helpful for the farmers than the Electric Sun in Platonov's *In Store*, *The Chronicle of Poor People* (1931). In the region where milk has become a luxury item, the grotesque broken-down reflector installed for lighting up the collective farm symbolizes the absurdity of wasteful technical innovations in a country going on the starvation diet.

It should be noted that this abundance of idiotic technological projects like the perpetual motion machine, the *samogon*-driven powerplant or an « Electric Sun » made by crazy self-styled engineers, is not accidental in Platonov. It reflects the writer's skepticism about the Bolshevik government's ability to turn the peasant country into an advanced industrial nation, and even about the wisdom of a costly and wasteful industrial revolution, condemning people to suffering.

Platonov's opposition to industrialization is of a different kind than that of the rural romantic Kliuev or the Parisian boulevardier Ehrenburg. Like his Zakhar Ivanovich from *The Origin of The Master*, the technical school graduate Platonov had to forsake his love for the machine in favor of his love for people. The writer uses his intimate knowledge of science and technology to show that scientific rationalism and technological progress *per se* might be futile, and even harmful, if applied with no regard to basic human needs.

CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this study to show that industrialist discourse in the Soviet Russian fiction of the Twenties and the Thirties asserts itself in an ongoing dialogue with traditionalist, primitivist discourse, responds to it, and anticipates its arguments. As it happens in Kataev's *Time, Forward* and Il'in's *The Great Assembly Line*, the primitivist opponent is always conspicuously or invisibly present in the fictional works of industrialist persuasion.

On the other hand, authors with strong anti-rational and anti-industrial feelings, like Pil'niak and Platonov, incorporate into their works elements of industrialist discourse, using them as anti-discourse.

Generally, in the Soviet literature of the Twenties and the Thirties, both discourses supplement each other and relate to each other according to what G. Kandler calls « *das Prinzip der Wechselbestimmtheit* » (the principle of mutual determination)²³. In other words, the industrialist discourse can be fully understood only in its opposition to the primitivist discourse in the general framework of the total discursive universe.

Analyzed in this perspective, many individual elements of both discourses stand to each other in what can be called « antonymic correlation », sometimes within the works of the same author.

The neo-peasants' Iron Devil constitutes a discursive antonym of Gastev's Iron Messiah and reflects the discursive polysemy of Iron, operating in opposing axiological fields.

Similarly, Pil'niak's rattling and howling inferno stands in opposition to « the stern temple of machines » in Gladkov's *Cement*. On the other hand, the factory's soot and clang in *Machines and Wolves* represent the absolute opposite of « sweet » acoustic and visual images used in the portrayal of the factory in Il'enkov's *The Driving Axle*.

Through the character of Volodia Safonov, who values Venus de Milo far above a blast furnace, Ehrenburg in effect condemns his earlier self, the writer of 1922 who sang praises to the beauty of the machine in *And Yet The World Goes Around*. Volodia

²³ Kandler, G., *Die Lücke im sprachlichen Weltbild*, in *Sprache - Schlüssel zur Welt*, Festschrift für L. Weisgerber, Düsseldorf, 1959, p. 258-259.

Safonov's statement, « love and cast-iron are incompatible », acquires its fuller meaning in opposition to the passionate love for machines, peculiar to some of Gladkov, Pil'niak and Platonov's characters.

Leonov's « iron monsters », Stuart Chase's « wild beasts », in *The Great Assembly Line*, and Oreshin's « steel octopus » are antithetical to humanized machines in some of Pil'niak and Platonov's works, thus forming a binary opposition : animality (bestiality) vs. humanity.

While Il'enkov uses his intimate knowledge of technology to create an inspired panegyric to the machine, Platonov does the same to convey his fear of technological progress and its social consequences.

Kataev, Krymov and Malyshkin portray Soviet industrial civilization as a new type of humanism, an effort to improve *homo sapiens* through science and technology and achieve men's communion and brotherhood in the world of machines, while Ehrenburg in *The Second Day* and Pil'niak in *Machines and Wolves* present industrialization as a source of dehumanization and alienation.

Kataev's and Malyshkin's portrayal of factory work as a liberating factor, making man the master of his land and the demiurge of the new world, contrasts with the picture of industrial slavery in Ehrenburg, Oreshin, and Pil'niak.

While the anti-industrial discourse incorporated into some works presents technological revolution as the result of the corrupting influence of the decadent West, pro-industrialist speakers see a positive element in the assimilation of Western technological expertise, as is the case with Il'in and Pogodin. Some writers, on the other hand, portray Soviet industrialization as a self-generated process, another manifestation of Russian creative genius, enriched by Marxism and leading the Nation towards light and prosperity. In the latter case, Soviet élan is set off against Western decadence, as happens in Kataev's *Time, Forward !*

In some « points of contact », statements coming from opposing discourses converge, only to diverge subsequently, as they do in the writings of Platonov and Ketlinskaia. Platonov deplors the sufferings and deprivations coming from technological progress, without seeing its rewards, whereas Ketlinskaia highlights the achievements for which the heavy price has been paid, showing that

there is a way to reduce suffering, if the human being, after all « the measure of all measures », is not left out of the picture.

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SOVIET « LITERARY POLICY » ON THE EVE OF THE « GREAT TURNING POINT » : TERMS AND STAKES (Results of a Study of 403 Articles on Art Published by *Pravda* in 1929)

Bernard Lafite

Nowhere but in the Soviet Union and never but in its post-revolutionary years had literature and the arts appeared as both ground and stake, apparently, of conflicts to which the 1930s would provide a temporary and tragic epilogue, the traces of which are still felt today.

No year better than 1929, « year of the great turning point » as Stalin himself would put it, would illustrate the sense of a rift, of a crucial conflict in the course of events that would shape the history of this land.

The establishment of these facts led to the creation of a project¹ whose objectives were on the one hand to compile all texts published in 1929 by *Pravda* that had put forth, whether implicitly or explicitly, the notion of artistic expression², and on the other hand to analyze from the angle of its internal logic the « discourse on art », whose elements would have been thus

Translated by Dominique Michaud.

¹ On the initiative of Professor Irène Sokologorsky of the University of Paris - VIII.

² B. Lafite, *Le Discours sur la littérature et les arts dans la Pravda de 1929* (Contribution à l'étude des rapports entre la politique et les arts dans la période du grand tournant), Ph. D. Thesis, University of Paris - VIII, June 1983, Vol. 1, Parts 1 & 2.

gathered³, a shattered mosaic whose support - the pages and columns of *Pravda* - should nevertheless ensure formal cohesion.

Just how had art, singularly literature, been dealt with in 1929 in the « Central Organ of the Central Committee and of the Moscow Committee » of the Party, who then assumed full power? To what extent could discourse analysis contribute to better outline the relations between politics and the arts, and their stakes, in the period of the « great turning point »? These were the questions that needed answers. The following is a summary account of elements of answers provided to these questions.

Distinct From All, the Literary Field

At the onset several material clues in *Pravda* (number and volume of articles, distribution of said articles in time, type of intervention, etc.) designated literature, amongst all other forms of artistic expression, as a particular and privileged domain (to the extent that 165 of the 403 articles compiled - more than 2 out of 5 - related to the literary community or to literature itself; only a few of these articles - 18 out of 165 - were book reviews while, for example, half of the 82 articles devoted to the theater were reviews).

A first revelation to which an analysis of the compiled texts, corroborated by one of the vocabulary, would give at once some weight by establishing that on a backdrop of terminological dullness, not devoid as such of a certain pertinence (the authors appearing only to hesitate in the qualification of the phenomena of a new art said in turn to be « Soviet », « socialist », « revolutionary », « proletarian », etc.), literature and the realm of artistic fields other than literary (theater, cinema, music, plastic arts, architecture, etc.) together had been envisioned in terms that expressed the mobilization for one and the others of two basically different methods of approach.

Indeed, while here and there in the fields of painting, music, theater and cinema, critics were lambasting the production and behavior of artists much too openly attached to forms of thought or artistic practices rooted in pre-revolutionary « bourgeois » society, the focus in literature was sharply in contrast: the problem, pertaining to that particular form of artistic expression, was not so much to know whether the writers had or had not followed in the footsteps of the October Revolution (those who had not, the

³ B. Lafite, *op.cit.*, Vol. 2.

« emigrés from within », were in fact treated as near strangers to the national community) but rather to consider the forms that could or should take the participation of the literary community to the *second revolution* on the eve of which the Soviet Union was claimed to be (said revolution of the passage to « authentically socialist » forms of industrial and agricultural production that would, thanks to a firm industrialization and agricultural work collectivization policy, constitute the cradle for this « new man » whose emergence would also be induced by the cultural revolution).

In other words artistic activity other than literary was thought of, aesthetically as well as politically, in terms of conflict between the OLD (pre-revolutionary) and the NEW (post-revolutionary), while literary expression and literary life were thought of in terms of conflict between the PRESENT (that of the established political, ideological and social reality of 1929) and the immediate FUTURE (namely, in this year that proclaimed itself of *rupture god velikogo pereloma* : year of the great turning point - the prospect of imminent passage from one state of itself to another by Soviet society).

THE WRITERS HAVE THEIR BACKS TO THE WALL

Day to day in the columns of *Pravda*, long specific articles, short notes, bibliographical references, critical summaries, excerpts from leaders' speeches, including those of the most powerful, all these would succeed one another to announce times were changing and that no one in the Soviet Union's vast territory - especially not the writers - could ignore this decisive historical march. Under the crossfire of interventions, more pressing and more incisive as months went by, the writers found themselves with their backs to a wall which was outlined to them in its nature and dimension with always greater precision: they were faced with a « literary policy » the Party strived to define in this new era whose advent it proclaimed in the year 1929⁴; a policy to which *Pravda*, whose function it was, essentially devoted its attention, without nevertheless neglecting to evoke or discuss certain theoretical principles understood to have inspired this policy.

⁴ Said period being of « reconstruction » (« By objectives of the period of reconstruction, we mean the total sum of tasks need be assumed at this present stage of the revolutionary process, among which those, immeasurable by far, of the cultural revolution, which is nothing less than the socialist reconstruction of human material »). M. Gel'fand, « Literaturnye Zametki », in *Pravda*, 19 May 1929, p. 5, cols. 1-3.

THE SHADOWY REACH OF A THEORETICAL DEBATE : THE RESPONSABILITY OF THE WRITER

Two critics in particular, Ia. Sekerskaia and S. Shchukin, were to be mobilized among others to open heavy fire : Sekerskaia against the theories of « fact literature (literatura fakta) », obstinately propagandized by members of LEF (Left Front of the Arts)⁵ ; Shchukin against V.F. Pereverzev and his critical method⁶. In our opinion, this double crossfire aimed at one target appeared to contradictorily affirm the *status*, obviously debated, of the literary object and, consequently, that of those who conceptualized it.

Denouncing the supporters of « fact literature » to whom « the one and only acceptable form of proletarian literature can only be that of a literature 'that sets facts' » (Sekerskaia was referring to a LEF formula), denouncing thus the dismissal by these theoreticians of any « literature of fiction (literatura vymysla) » in favour of a literature exclusively built « on facts », « on the concrete », Sekerskaia proclaimed high and low the « rights » of what she called a « revolutionary literature of fiction (revoliutsionnaia belletristika) », whose natural tool would be « imagination » and the content of « live and creative literary images ».

Sekerskaia further wrote : « Denying the necessity in literature of a revolutionary ideology and of a creative imagination ... the members of LEF have come to herald the newspaper as the superior and sole acceptable form of proletarian literary creation. This is more than a mistake, it's an absolute political crime. Our Party, however conscious it can be of the great role of the press, will never surrender to the class enemy the non journalistic literary work that is read by thousands of men and encompasses a field in which we have just begun to gnaw at the supremacy of bourgeois writers. » This is a clear statement from an author who explicitly adopted the Party position on the unquestionable *specificity of the literary work*, fruit of the *creative imagination*. Sekerskaia set the theoretical ins and the political outs by declaring « non dialectical », « reactionary and noxious » the theories of those she criticized and by recalling « the very foundation of dialectical materialism » according to

⁵ Iad. Sekerskaia, « Literatura Fakta (Pervyi Sbornik Materialov LEF) », Moscow : Federatsiia, 1929, in *Pravda*, 27 September 1929, p. 4, cols. 6-8.

⁶ S. Shchukin, « Marksizm-Leninizm ili Pereverzev ? », in *Pravda*, 18 December 1929, p. 4, cols. 1-8.

which, she wrote, « the problem is not so much to establish and to explain the facts as to transform them (including by means of literature). »

The other powerful moment in the defence and illustration of the revolutionary practice of literary fiction would come with the publication some time afterwards of a long article by the theoretician and critic S. Shchukin entitled « Marxism-Leninism or Rather Pereverzev ? ». Its aim was also the affirmation of a certain status of the literary object, but through criticism of views greatly opposed to those Sekerskaia had attacked. Pereverzev was not accused of being hostile to literature of fiction (to the recourse to « creative imagination ») but more of revealing himself the guilty advocate of a conception of literary art according to which « at the basis of literary works » stands « not an idea » but « the very reality of existence », « the artist » asserting himself (Shchukin was quoting Pereverzev) as the creator of « live individuals », of « characters » but not of a « system of ideas ». In other words, Pereverzev was considered hostile to the traditional marxist notion of relationship between the artist, his work and the world : the image of reality in a work is a specific expression of the artist's *vision of the world*, not necessarily of the world *as it is* (Shchukin was referring here to Plekhanov's definition of art as « thought in images (myslenie v obrazakh) »).

To this grievance on content (the artist seemed to produce « thought » rather than « life ») would succeed a denunciation, much like Sekerskaia's of LEF, of the political consequences of such a theoretical straying : « Pereverzev supports a view of art that would not express the artist's ideology, that would be inconsequent with the artist's vision of the world, that would be independent of political life, that would neither demonstrate nor argue, and therefore could not be an instrument in the transformation of society. » As we suggested, this accusation also contributed to define indirectly what we have called the ideological and political *status* of the writer and the product of his activity.

If we were to follow *Pravda's* critics, it was neither as registrar of reality, whose task would be to servilely « fix » deified « facts » - Sekerskaia's accusation - nor as all-powerful demigod, creator of « live » characters blessed with « universal objective worth » (Pereverzev's words) that the writer should be defined, but rather through his practice of an activity consisting in the expression, in the form of images, fruit of the creative imagination, of a vision

of the world destined to suit, to oppose, to confirm, to stimulate, to enrich or to tear down the reader's vision of the same world. Artistic activity, whose specificity had been clearly stated, was visibly defined in terms of *ideological* activity (« In the realm of ideologies (and art, wrote Shchukin, constitutes one of these ideologies ... »). Indeed, artistic activity had been defined as an exercise in representation itself, related to the artist's system of representation and bound to intervene in the constitution of a collective system of representation of reality, said system being an integral part of reality itself. This led to a definition of the artist (i.e. the writer) as an *ideologist* of a special nature, whose political responsibility thus was directly summoned.

Hence - and such was the gist of the *Pravda* articles on this subject - a thorough examination of writing conditions by writers faced with the principle of their ideological, therefore political, responsibility in those days of the « great turning point » towards Socialism.

THE PARTY'S « LITERARY POLICY »

A thorough examination whose first goal was the outline and analysis of the « forces at hand » on what was called the « literary front » : namely, the appraisal of the state of readiness or unreadiness of the individuals and groups that made up the literary scene to cross or help cross the social, ideological and cultural line which, in the context of « cultural revolution », the phrase « great turning point » intended to draw.

The Analysis of the Forces at Hand

At the onset, such an appraisal was reliant on the identification of the protagonists of a literary scene that was seen as being fundamentally divided into three groups : the « proletarians », those writers closest to the Revolution, still a minority in 1929, but whose ranks were growing larger as their output gained more respect and a bigger audience; on the other side, the proponents of « bourgeois » literature, inspired by their hostility to the very principle of a socialist revolution; finally, the « fellow-travellers » (poputchiki) who, without firmly supporting either ideologically or politically the prospects of socialism, had nevertheless acknowledged the October Revolution and then followed in the footsteps of the « proletariat ».

Although this analysis was somewhat dated (having inspired the 1925 resolution on the problems of literature), *Pravda* took it up anew in 1929, clearly *setting* the terms in what it referred to as the new context. For example, in an article which appeared on January 29, 1929⁷, A. Khalatov, president of the State Publishing House, wrote that « in accordance with the global political and economic outlook ... a sweeping change in the literary scene » was in effect. « The middle groups (leftist fellow-travellers and others) have seen their importance dwindle, the ranks of the proletarians swell and the right-wing groups gain a certain momentum. In other words, we are witnessing the completion of a differentiation process consisting in the reinforcement of the extremes to the detriment of the center ».

At the onset of this year where history would progress by leaps and bounds, this dynamic position would constitute the still innocent seed of an evolution in thinking. While it did not alter the framework of thinking, it did slowly lead to a radical modification of the terms of the analysis. The notion of « sweeping change » at work in the literary scene harboured in fact the germ of this modification. A first effect of this could be observed in the portrayal given of the « camp » of writers and critics partial to the Revolution and the development of a « proletarian » literature close to the aspirations of the people.

Come February and crescendoing in the following months, two discourses, both related yet successive, were held on these writers and critics. The first discourse asserted, essentially in the first four to six months, that a new menace loomed over a horizon already darkened by the « right-wing » (« bourgeois ») menace that consisted of the growing number of individuals and trends hostile to the Revolution. This new menace of « right-wingness » translated itself in the form of writers and critics *until then full members of the revolutionary camp* (Party militants or militants of literary organizations that embraced the Revolution), yet who failed to open fire, as they were urged to, on those of their peers thought to be « slipping to the right » and even went so far as to show a dangerously « conciliatory (primirencheskie) » attitude towards them. This discourse was first unobtrusively followed, then (from September on) strikingly completed by a second one characterized

⁷ Art. Khalatov, « Ocherednye Voprosy Khudozhestvennoi Literaturny », in *Pravda*, 29 January 1929, p. 3, cols. 1-8.

by the very severe criticism made of other writers and critics, « proletarians » one and all, many of them members of the Party. They were accused on the one hand of demonstrating a *sectarianism* and a *cliquishness* deemed dangerous ; on the other hand, of yielding to the temptation of substituting themselves to the Party as advisors and leaders in the literary community.

Such an analysis clearly outlined the principle of fighting « on two fronts » inside the very camp of the Revolution, to which the Party (without neglecting the « main front » : that of the fight against the avowed enemy of Socialism, the « bourgeois » or quasi « bourgeois » writer) would call restlessly upon the writers and critics partial to its « general line » (mainly that of « immediate offensive » on all fronts towards making a qualitative step « unto the road to Socialism »). Such an analysis also led in 1929 to the formulation of a « literary policy » that entwined the estimate made of the « forces » at hand with the exposition of the ways to their *necessary* evolution and the organizational means that could contribute to this evolution.

The « Organizational » Aspect of the Party's Literary Policy

When possible⁸, the reorganization of the literary community was steadfastly and vigorously called for by supporters, within the Party, of the « general line » that would for many years to come guide the politics of the ruling Party. To us, the principle and the finality of that reorganization appeared very revealing as to the goals pursued, insofar as the roles were clearly cast and the spirit of the undertaking could be said to be defined almost without ambiguity.

There was a clear casting indeed of the roles. The principle was enshrined in the call made to all *Communists* involved in the literary scene, particularly « proletarians », to leave behind the ghetto of literary organizations in which they were accused of confining themselves (and from which, case in point the « proletarians », they were accused of exerting some sort of terrorism), rejoin the literary community in its *professed* comparative diversity, and act out their roles as Communists (i.e. as members of the Party, not of the literary organization to which they claimed allegiance).

While they were not asked to disavow their aesthetic preferences or any theoretical precept advocated by the literary organization

⁸ From August onwards, when victory on the « right-wing » opposition led by Bukharin was proclaimed.

to which they belonged, the « proletarians » had to consider the fact that the only authority liable to decide on the destiny of the Soviet literary community (thus to fulfil a function of « leadership » (*rukovodstvo*)) was the Party itself. All members of the literary community were then faced in no uncertain terms with the very principle of « direction » which the Party intended to exercise on their activities.

A direct and unavoidable consequence of this pretension was that Party militants - as they were strongly invited to - had to take it upon themselves to militate in the *federative* structures which were set up to rally those who were believed at the time to make up the actual Soviet literary community. FOSP - the United Federation of Writers' Unions - was such a structure, set up three years earlier but not having prospered much until then (the critic Ol'khovyi⁹ wrote to this effect : « FOSP must be the main link between proletarian writers, peasant writers and fellow-travellers ... the success of (its) activity will solely depend on the ability of member organizations to see in FOSP an entity, not simply a sum of elements ... the principal means at the Party's disposal to influence the majority of writers, promote the fraternal collaboration of proletarian and peasant writers with fellow-travellers, and convince the fellow-travellers to adopt the ideological tenets of Communism »).

The call was made to all Communists but was directed most particularly at members of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), « proletarian literature's largest and most important organization ... that rightfully plays the role of forerunner on the literary front (and) that, in spite of evident flaws and errors made, best understands the objectives of the Party where literature is concerned, and appears most able to defend the Party stances on the literary front »¹⁰.

Which stances ? Certainly that, as we have just seen, of the belief that the literary community had to come under the *Party* itself, not under some organization professing allegiance to the Party, favouring thus the promotion of these federative structures deemed more suitable (and also that of their mainspring, namely RAPP). But suitable to what purposes ? Therein lay the real debate.

⁹ B. Ol'khovyi, « Za Chetkuiu Partiinuiu Liniu v Rukovodstve Proletarskoi Literaturai (K Itogam II Plenuma RAPP) », in *Pravda*, 20 October 1929, p. 2, cols. 7-8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Defining the Status of « Fellow-Traveller » : The Touchstone of the Debate

Well beyond these organizational measures, which were but a means (yet well outlined the goal pursued), it was the very definition of the place and the role of the writer (and in a broader sense that of the intellectual, indeed the citizen) in the new society and their relation to political authority that the Party hoped to achieve with its « literary policy » : the focus of this policy, around which all tensions were centered and through which differences were best expressed, being the definition of the status of those writers representative of the literary community, yet wavering in their commitment, those writers known as the « fellow-travellers ».

As many authors would point out throughout the year, the 1925 resolution had made the conduct to be taken with these writers an essential part of these measures. Wrote Khalatov on January 29¹¹ : « With regard to the « fellow-travellers », the position prevailing remains that outlined by the XIIIth Congress, namely that it is 'necessary to keep lending our unquestioned support to the more able of those known as the fellow-travellers, who have grown up and been trained in the spirit of fraternal collaboration with the Communists. We must outline a coherent and offensive Party criticism which, while revealing and supporting gifted Soviet writers, would point out possible errors in their works resulting from insufficient understanding of what makes the Soviet system unique; a criticism which would enable these writers to overcome their bourgeois prejudices' ».

This matter of principle would be reformulated several times over the following months (especially against those members of proletarian organizations who requested the adoption of expeditious measures in their favour. The critic V. Kirshon¹² wrote on the subject : « Nothing is more noxious at this present time of strong differentiation between fellow-travellers than to brand bourgeois any non-proletarian literature »). Yet essentially, this matter of principle was undermined from within by the radical redefinition of the content of its terms.

For if time and again and to whoever might contest it, those who were instructed to give voice in *Pravda* to the positions of the

¹¹ Art. Khalatov, op. cit.

¹² V. Kirshon, « Vnimanie Literaturnomu Frontu », in *Pravda*, 27 October 1929, p. 2, cols. 1-8.

Party majority reiterated the *right of being* of « fellow-travellers » (in other words : proclaimed the legitimacy of a certain *ideological diversity* in the literary community), the very notion of « fellow-traveller » was subjected month after month to rough treatment.

First used to refer to men who (according to a short article by Kerzhentsev published February 22¹³) « heed the edification of Socialism each in his own way (even if at times in a confused manner) and sincerely wish to participate in the creative work of the proletariat » (which entailed the « fellow-traveller » was if not an actor, at least a quasi architect of the Revolution, but which also excluded the expectation, as Kerzhentsev pointed out, that he « show without further ado a firm Communist ideology »), the notion of « fellow-traveller » would soon be « swept away » by the current to another shore and those it represented were enjoined to acknowledge it. On May 19, the critic Gel'fand touched upon the need « to outline the problem of classifying more precisely the factions of « fellow-travellers » to better correspond to the actual stage of evolution » and further wrote¹⁴ : « As a rule, those fellow-travellers who have been unable to repudiate a bourgeois-democratic appraisal of the October Revolution, or who are at a standstill on the question of the recovery period, in which question they see but a barren process of accumulation of material riches, those fellow-travellers stop or have already stopped being « fellow-travellers » and each in his own way and at his own pace leaves the proletariat to join the other side. Nowadays, the only writers worthy of the title « fellow-traveller » of the proletariat are those whose works testify, through objective signs, to the effect that their authors are hence closer to an aesthetic apprehension of the objectives of the reconstruction stage of the Revolution and are thus able to give substance to these objectives by means of their art ».

This analysis was taken up anew often enough, but most particularly in the case of the turmoil caused by the decision of the writers Pil'niak and Zamiatin, early « fellow-travellers », to publish abroad works refused in the USSR for political reasons. The stakes at hand were being more closely defined.

Stating that it was « obvious » that the « Pil'niak incident » did not contradict in the least but on the contrary « established »

¹³ P. Kerzhentsev, « Ob Odnoi Putanitse (K Discussii ob Iskusstve) », in *Pravda*, 22 February 1929, p. 4, cols. 1-2.

¹⁴ M. Gel'fand, op. cit.

the need « to create an atmosphere of fraternal collaboration between true literary fellow-travellers of the proletariat », and that « the present stage of vast deployment of the socialist offensive against capitalism (formulated) in newer terms the old questions », the critic Bepalov wrote further to this effect in September : « A fellow-traveller of the proletariat is not someone who, in the throes of the period of reconstruction, limits himself to « accepting » the Revolution; he is a writer able to envision the final goal of the Revolution, Socialism, and one who participates through his work in the edification of Socialism ». The gist of his assertion, in spite of a caution about style (« the fellow-traveller writer follows a winding road, he sometimes hesitates, he does not clearly and completely make his the ideas of the proletariat yet he marches on in step, helping the proletariat by means of his poetic work »), appeared plainly later on when Bepalov wrote that « more than ever, it is the duty (of Communist critics) to help writers close to the proletariat complete in the least painful manner *their crossover to proletarian ideology*»¹⁵. As we can see, this mounted to more than favoring steps be taken; this promoted adherence to the *vision of such world*, distinct from that which one by definition was supposed to differentiate himself from, to the object of the quest undertaken.

Soon afterwards, the analysis was reformulated in terms just as explicit by another critic, Ol'khovyi : « Thus, under the conditions of this struggle for the hegemony of proletarian literature and against the growing bourgeois trends in literature, the essential task of RAPP consists in knowing how to properly deploy its forces on the literary front, evenly distribute the strength of its attacks, lure the hesitant elements, take clear notice of the dividing line between fellow-traveller literature and neo-bourgeois literature, and help fellow-travellers to dissociate themselves entirely from the neo-bourgeois writers and move closer still to *adhering to the Communist vision of the world* »¹⁶. On October 27, 1929, the writer and critic V. Kirshon took a new step forward : first, by writing that proletarian writers had to « contribute with all their might towards directing the fellow-travellers *onto the course of Communist*

¹⁵ I. Bepalov, « Literatura i Politika », in *Pravda*, 18 September 1929, p. 4, cols. 4-5.

¹⁶ B. Ol'khovyi, op. cit. My italics (on the substitution of the adjective « Communist » for the adjective « proletarian », which Gel'fand had used, see below).

ideology »¹⁷ ; then by proclaiming the « fundamental difference that exists between early fellow-travellers and fellow-travellers of the period of reconstruction, to whom the very title of « fellow-traveller » may not even fit anymore and may need to be reconsidered ». Kirshon went on : « Indeed, from now on, let us think of the fellow-travellers rather as allies (soiuzniki) who do not feel they have their own path, or Revolution its own; allies who do not feel they are momentarily one with the Revolution; actually, they know but one path and that is the path of Socialism, and even though there's nothing to indicate whether they will all see the journey to its end, they do not wish to take another path ».

It is most probable that such a brotherly treatment of these « fellows », who were seen as being close in spirit to the extent of being other selves, could have only worried its intended beneficiaries. Indeed, how not worry when, should they come upon an article like that we cited earlier by Bepalov, they were invited to recognize that « falling behind in providing the needs of their times amounts to outright rebellion against them » (that chilling comment confirmed - maybe not without some knowledge on the part of its author, who in 1937 would fall victim to the wave of repression which would claim many Communists - the urgency of falling into step of what was proclaimed the march of the times).

This approach adopted by the literary community (launching the offensive against the « bourgeois menace », defending the « right » flank against those who were tempted to tone down this menace and the « left » flank against those who by their very sectarianism endangered the prospects of a « dynamic » union with the fellow-travellers) was but a near-refracted projection of the global analysis of the policy of supporters of the « general Party line » (which stood against urban and rural « capitalist elements » and for a merger with the « middle masses », which thus necessitated the removal within the Party of such obstacles as the « right-wing » conciliatory discourse and the resurging « left-wing » Trotskyist discourse).

This similarity of proceedings, however, seemed to us more than the mechanical application to a related field (the literary field) of the logic at work in a global analysis of social formation, insofar as the literary community, a hypersensitive area more than a peripheral location, appeared as a revelator of the state of the struggles and of their many stakes.

¹⁷ My italics. The same comment applies as in 16.

THE FINALITIES OF « PARTY LITERARY POLICY » : FIRST OUTLINES OF A DESIGN

The stakes were first tactical : they consisted in the development of arms that would level, so to speak, the field; they were also strategic : they consisted thus in the symbolic formulation of nebulous prospects to which it may have been neither possible nor desirable to give a clearer definition.

Levelling the Field

The *enemies* on the « literary front » (« bourgeois » or « neo-bourgeois » writers hostile to the Revolution and its prospects) were set off quite clearly, as were the *opponents* (« right-wingers », favourable to a certain form of « class peace » in the literary community and « left-wingers », hostile to any form of « alliance » with the « middle classes », the « fellow-travellers » as it were) : we soon discovered however the apparent clarity of this picture concealed large, significantly outlined, shadowy areas.

For instance : the will, through a massive and extensive use of the phrase « right-wing », to brand as *opponents* to the majority line (indeed to Socialism itself) Communists who were only worried by calls to « steadfastly lead the fight » against « capitalist elements » whose definition was growing larger still¹⁸.

For instance, at the other side of the political and literary spectrum : the will, through massive and extensive use also of the phrase « left-wing », to brand as potential opponents men (« proletarian » writers and critics in this case) whose militant passion had been greatly appreciated but whose ambitions were becoming visibly embarrassing.

These procedures were meant to make the « general Party line » and the men who inspired or unfailingly supported it the sole reference possible : the immediate goal, now ascertainable, being a tighter concentration of power, which in effect several articles in the last few months demanded.

¹⁸ Gor'kii, who at the time of the Pil'niak incident had called for calm in his « O Trate Energii », also experienced this process, seeing himself criticized in no uncertain terms (« The Soviet community has shown the writer (B. Pil'niak) great refrain, but it cannot allow (him) to abuse this refrain. It is concerned with saving the energy of individuals, but it cannot stop being concerned with saving the energy of the masses ») and seeing his name, until then often cited in *Pravda*, systematically removed from the daily in the following weeks.

Indeed, when during the first four to six months of the year, the « conciliatory » attitude of the « right-wingers » of the Party had been identified as the primary obstacle to the plan of attack, the « proletarians » (and what were their discourses) had been abundantly used as tools of denunciation of this conciliatory attitude (for example, in an article we have already referred to, M. Gel'fand - a member of RAPP - eloquently gave voice to this position by severely denouncing « a group of critics claiming, yes claiming, to be « Marxists » (Gorbov, Polonskii, Tal'nikov, Lezhnev) » he accused of undertaking « a total revision of the bases of Marxist literary science and proletarian literary policy » ; Gel'fand wrote on : « The most visible and least secretive representative of this group is the Communist critic D. Gorbov, a direct descendant of A.K. Voronskii. An idealistic vision, a partiality to aestheticism, a toning down of the class struggle in literature, a retreat beaten under bourgeois and petit-bourgeois pressure, a refusal to see the progress and success of proletarian literature, Soviet literature described as a « unique movement » : these are the most vivid features, as to literature, of the political and theoretical physiognomy of this *gorbovism*, which in itself is a striking example of the corrupting influence of bourgeois ideology on certain middle strata of the Party. For *gorbovism* does not only consist of a refusal to fight against the bourgeois menace in literature; when the opportunity arises, it also supplies the bourgeoisie with timely slogans. This is why crushing *gorbovism* becomes the main objective in the general context of a proletarian offensive on the literary front »).

This was an outright condemnation of a critic (D. Gorbov), member of the Party, by another critic (M. Gel'fand), also a member of the Party (yet also a member of RAPP, while Gorbov was a member of Pereval), in an article published by the organ of the political organization to which they both belonged. Most surprising though was the use of the phrase « *proletarian* literary policy (my italics) », inasmuch as the epithet *proletarian* was being substituted to what only a few weeks before (when the offensive was but engaged) and a few weeks later (when the « right-wingers » were politically crushed) had been or would be exclusively referred to as of the *Party* (literaturnaia politika partii : « Party literary policy »).

Amongst others found in our texts, this material clue attested to the amazingly accelerated evolution of the struggles (of history) in the year 1929. Indeed, this evolution would lead from a state of

tenseness within the Party, openly declared yet unclearly outlined (at the beginning of the year), to a state ten months later of « maximal cohesion » within the ranks of the Party. This factually indisputable cohesion had been achieved in a quasi military fashion by a « majority » that had given battle at a timely moment (between the months of February and July) by using its most radical element (in the literary community : the « proletarians ») to break the resistance of its most restive, least resolute element (the « conciliators » or « opportunists », as they were still being called), that is until it suddenly brought to reason some « proletarians » who had been somewhat intoxicated by the mobilization of their forces and ideas. Indeed, these lost, intoxicated souls had to be firmly reminded of the *prerogatives* (namely that of the Party to solely exercise its function of *leadership*, as we have already seen) and of the dialectic (by an invitation to give up their notion that the « proletarian » stage in the evolution of Soviet society towards Communism could actually be the final step in this evolution).

These calls to order were heard all the better because their tone became even more incisive : Averbakh, who had been intoxicated momentarily by the exhilaration of the struggle, and thus clearly intended to show the strongest sense of discipline, wrote on the subject : « Our Party is one of Bolsheviks who, even in their very own midst, put up a resolute fight against the petit-bourgeois tergiversations which afflict them, whatever form they may take, be it right or « left » wing ... Writers who wish to be called Soviet must fully understand that *the nihilistic carelessness and the anarchic, individualistic insurrection are no less foreign to the Revolution than is the pure and simple counter-revolution* »¹⁹. The impact of these remarks (stated, most importantly, in the columns of the organ of the Party) generated (or accompanied) during the last few weeks of the year, a massive output of self-criticism and the rally of militants of all tendencies, beliefs and sensitivities to the « general line » of the Party (one list revealed up to 72 names of former Trotskyists announcing their adhesion to the « sole line of the Central Committee », while Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskii, leaders of the « right-wing » opposition, themselves signed articles granting their « unequivocal » approval to this same line).

¹⁹ L. Averbakh, « O Tselostnykh Masshtabakh i Chastnykh Makarakh », in *Pravda*, 3 December 1929, p. 4, cols. 1-8.

This movement, well orchestrated in the literary community by interventions such as Averbakh's, was further precipitated by the publication on December 4 of an official text entitled « For the Reinforcement of the Communist Forces of Proletarian Literature »²⁰. It called in a calm yet pressing tone for the « maximal cohesion of all Communist forces at work in the field of literature », because it deemed « intolerable » the « fights » which were the staple of the literary scene : « Theoretical debates are of course unavoidable, and it is quite clear that we can and we must also discuss the question of a concrete literary policy; but we must also learn to refrain ourselves in the heat of polemic, and not put the interests of the group to which we claim allegiance ... over those of the Party, which imperiously require the reinforcement of Communist forces on the basis of Marxism-Leninism ».

Levelling the field (it was the reference « Soviet » writer which, as we have seen, was at stake in Averbakh's article) in order to trace the outline of a literary community, united in its diversity, which fell under the « leadership » of a Party, united in its undividedness, which would on the one hand guarantee the temporary diversity of the community (within « reasonable » limits), and on the other hand work towards its long-term ideological unification : such were the tactical and semi-strategic stakes of a « literary policy » whose object went well beyond the sole management of the literary community or of the writing activity. As we can now see, the stakes were considerably larger and more fundamental.

THE LONG-TERM STAKES

If the aim of the struggles was the creation of political conditions which would ensure the success of the « great turning point » in all realms, the new prospects revealed by this success constituted the essential part of the policy undertaken.

The articles we gathered seemed to us to already contain the nebulous yet quite readable trace of these prospects : that, for example, of a Soviet society momentarily plural but nevertheless rid of its elements hostile to « Socialism », in which the social strata not yet won over by the ultimate revolutionary goal would be « fraternally » oriented towards it by revolutionary forces themselves united by the common reference to the « bolshevik »

²⁰ « Za Konsolidatsiiu Kommunisticheskikh Sil Proletarskoi Literatury », in *Pravda*, 4 December 1929, p. 3, cols. 1-4.

principle of steadfast respect for Party authority and for discipline (whose echo would be heard often enough during the last few weeks of the year, especially against the demand for the « right to criticize » made by groups of militants - in the literary community : many « proletarians » - whose radicalism, as we earlier suggested, had done wonders against the « right-wingers », but who, following their mobilization by the Party leadership, had wanted to play a more active role in the development of Party policy).

The goal pursued was that the entire Soviet community, thus concentrically united around the Party (*united in its temporary diversity*, as we have already said about the literary community), walks with the same step, at the expense of an intense, disciplined and laborious effort, towards the safe future of material and cultural prosperity its leaders intended to ensure.

The prospects were those - more delicate to outline yet all the same quite clear - of the development of a system of ideological values meant both to produce and represent the desired unity of this Soviet community committed to the effort of edification; a system - such was the tentative conclusion to which we arrived - that would associate to a dogmatic reference to the principles of Marxism-Leninism (of « Bolshevism » : « Petit-bourgeois tendencies transsude in the work of some proletarian writers. Peasants, representatives of backward working-class groups and outdated elements give certain tendencies to their works which are strange to Bolshevism. The fight to win over the proletarian writers to a Marxist vision of the world, the ideological clarity of their work, the Bolshevik awareness of the tasks at hand, Bolshevization : these are the general tasks proletarian literature must assume »²¹) the celebration of humanistic principles such as faith in culture, progress, work as liberation; a system of values itself ensconced in the celebration of a *Stalinist myth* (of which we witnessed the birth on December 21 in an issue of *Pravda* exclusively devoted, for the first time in the history of the USSR, to Stalin's birthday) and in a *repressive process* of which our articles spectrally outlined the principle (often with some knowledge on the author's part, who someday would fall victim himself of it).

This system of values proceeded, in the case of the arts and most particularly of literature, by reference to a classic heritage where formal knowledge need be cultivated and themes made

²¹ V. Kirshon, or cit.

fruitful : such was another tentative conclusion - which will require further analysis - we made from appraisal of the fact that one of the last, important articles on literature published by *Pravda* in the year 1929, an article in which was first developed the theme of a necessary return to « bolshevik » principles in the organization of the Party, was penned by a man, V. Kirshon, who as a playwright had heralded such a return in aesthetics²² ; from our appraisal also of the fact that Gor'kii, whose name had systematically vanished from the columns of *Pravda* since September, made a dramatic comeback on December 25, 1929 through the publication of the text of a resolution of the Central Committee devoted essentially to the defense of the « great revolutionary writer, comrade Maxim Gor'kii » against his « leftwing » detractors (the Siberian Association of Proletarian Writers).

This formula was significant, insofar as Gor'kii was seen as a « great » writer (*velikii pisatel'*) : the sole instance in our corpus of that adjective qualifying a live individual; and insofar also as Gor'kii was seen as a great « revolutionary » writer (not « proletarian » as had sometimes been the case, against Gor'kii's wishes) : the solemnity of the tone and of the process (no other resolution on the matter of art was adopted by the Central Committee in 1929) thus made Gor'kii, this great personage, well-known for his fondness for classical aesthetic values, culture and creative, rewarding work, the figurehead on the bow of the new Soviet ship about to be launched.

Could this mean the Central Committee had, at the end of the year 1929 and at the expense of implacable fights during the last twelve months, laid down its arms at the feet of the great popular writer who, by his very behavior, during this same year, had clearly been irritated by the internal strife plaguing the revolutionary camp, and had disapproved of the dogmatism and sectarianism encouraged here and there at the top ? Of course not. Our hypothesis is that the new Party leadership, homogeneous from then on, had fully exploited the timely coincidence, at the very least superficial, between some of its themes and those which made up Gor'kian thought, and used the great figure of the writer to symbolically open one of the paths its discourse would take in years to come; just as, on a larger scale, it had to say much more in its « discourse »

²² S. O., « Voprosy Teatra na I-m Plenum VOAPP », in *Pravda*, 5 February 1929, p. 5. col. 7.

on literature and literary activity than warranted the attention called for by this artistic activity and this community.

Could this mean that the « discourse on literature and the arts », to which *Pravda* granted much space and which we gathered and studied, was but the refracted expression, on a peripheral subject, of an ideological and political discourse which would have been its true substratum and would have been held elsewhere, without necessitating it « also » discuss literature and the arts ?

Could this mean, in other words, that the process leading to the wondrous discovery of sedimentary traces in a discourse, whose source we would have artificially refrained ourselves from exploring, was or had been but manifest in its absurdity ?

No, for this would be denying precisely that which is essential : namely, the radical *specificity* of Soviet discourse on art, *literary art* most notably, which more than the particular expression of an ideological and political discourse (which was not refrained elsewhere !), may have constituted a verbal output more subtle, more ramified, more complex than that any actor of the Revolution could produce.

By speaking of literature and literary activity, of their present state and their prospects of evolution, of their relation to various present and future Party authorities, it was in fact, to the last striking detail, the relation between revolutionary power and civil society which was at the heart of the discussion, as if the literary community had been the microcosm of this civil society and literature itself the most precise expression of the innermost measures taken by society with respect to the new authority and towards its own destiny.

How then, if not through such an intuition of the exceptional worth of a literary expression most capable of ascertaining that least perceptible truth of things, must we explain the punctilious, almost fanatical care Soviet leaders gave to literary activity and its products ? They knew, even without knowing it, that literature asked better than they ever could have the questions of the destiny of peoples they represented - questions often unformulated, swept along the current of words in works, and to which Soviet leaders, in this blazingly historic year 1929, devoted much of their time and energy to ascertain the place and function they wished to assign writers in the newer State as they conceived it.

The study of literature, and of the discourse on literature in the Soviet Union, is not the pursuit of a shadowy prey that would be the attempts to ideologically and politically express reality; it is

rather the endeavor to grasp *wherein lies* the implicitness of an effort of representation, less paralyzed and unsuccessful than anywhere else.

But it is also the knowledge that, in this land (the Soviet Union) where more than anywhere else the almightiness of a possible « scientific » expression of social reality was claimed, it was believed that in the literary field, a domain of apparent confusion, and on a symbolic mode (the most concrete in the order of representation) were fought and would be fought, win or lose, some « battles » of the utmost importance.

Patrick Schot

ON OFFICIALESE : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Patrick Seriot

It would appear there is something in the USSR and other socialist countries akin to a *language* (langue)*. Distinctive, it is also unparalleled : it is the language of power. And this language, if we are to believe numerous Soviet and foreign studies, can be recognized and identified as language.

This language, known as « officialese » or « Sovietese », would have several features : magic, mystery, inconcinnity or maximal opacity. We believe such features of problematic consistency reveal a basic postulate : there is a « Soviet language », it is an *object* of study, it must be described or destroyed, fought or purified, but of this there is no doubt : it exists and it is a language.

Such is the pregnant idea of language that we first wish to examine. What exactly is meant by « Sovietese » being a language ? What vision of language and its workings is summoned by this assertion ? Which concept of subject-speaker or linguistic community is at work ?

And yet what if the crop of studies on Sovietese, the apparent object, were but the construction by contrast of *another language*, another object, this one latent, never formulated as such, but whose analysis would prove far more fruitful ?

Translated by Dominique Michaud

*To differentiate between the two concepts of « langue » and « langage », we translated « langue » into « language » and « langage » to « Language ».

Such is the object, hollow, *negative* (in the photographic, not axiological sense), that we wish to unveil from the descriptions of the *positive* object, « Sovietese ».

I - THE LANGUAGE OF THOSE IN THE KNOW

A - The Master-Machiavelli

Most critics of « Sovietese » speak of a terrifying personage, of a linguistic monster, of a superhuman spectre whose intentions are then very much human : the absolute Master of language, master of words, he who arbitrarily *determines* their meaning :

« Insofar as the Verb - as well as the entire system of communication for that matter - is in the hands of the Guide, of the highest authority, words and signs will have no other meaning than that which is officially assigned them. » (Heller-85, p. 289)

The Master, i.e. the political authority, also creates new words : he is an *inventor of language*. For A. & T. Fesenko¹, who as early as 1955 used the phrase « Soviet language » :

« They (the Bolsheviks) have usurped and monopolized the right to create phraseological clichés. » (Fesenko, p. 208)

The making itself of the language has a history :

« The first characteristic of the Soviet language is its planned creation (the foundations were laid before even the Revolution). » (Heller-85, p. 276)

The lability of the meaning of words is deliberately used by the Master-Machiavelli with intent to *manipulate*. This is the general theme of various studies on political propaganda² made by Polish dissidents³.

But Sovietese, that language where words have lost their « inherent meaning » (Heller-79, p. 1), appears also to be a linguistic system that any man, even if being manipulated, could choose or not to follow with full knowledge of the facts :

« The State determines the meaning of words, it sanctions their use and it creates a magical circle one must break into if one is to understand and be understood within the Soviet system. » (Heller-85, p. 275)

¹ Soviet linguists who emigrated to the United States after the Second World War.

² Called in Polish « nowo-mowa » after Orwell's « newspeak ».

³ Cf. Karpinski-84, *Jezyk propagandy-79*.

The True and the False

In an imperceptible shift, we go from the instability of meaning in a language « created » and « monopolized » by the State (Heller-85, p. 293; Fesenko, p. 208) to a false meaning : falsehood. Words are then merely improper, ill-chosen :

« Self-admiration and self-laudation are a screen that conceals the sad existence of Soviet republics attired with the flattest, most bombastic attributes : flowery Ukraine, sunlit Georgia... » (Fesenko, p. 30)

Such problematics of falsehood also imply a speaker's freedom to consciously tell the truth or tell a lie, imply in other words a *choice* as to the adequacy of the saying to the said. Through language, the Master-Machiavelli would have the freedom to either draw a map which would not represent the territory (*falsehood*) or draw several maps for the same territory (*dual Language*).

Words and Things

But because of its incomprehensible or false nature, the map sometimes *takes so much space* as to *take the place* of the territory : for its detractors, Sovietese is a system where *only words can be seen*, words behind which reality fades away and stops being perceptible :

« Bolshevism is a true orgy of words which makes its way everywhere, into the very last village. » (Walter Schubart, *Evropa i dusha vostoka*, quoted in Fesenko, p. 45, with no reference as to the date of publication)

« (In propaganda) words are a goal in itself. » (Karpinski, p. 42)

We thus go from referential instability to sheer referential opacity :

« Made up of clichés, phraseology closes our eyes to the true nature of things and their relations, it substitutes their nomenclature for the real things; furthermore, this nomenclature is inaccurate. » (Vinokur in *Lef*, no. 1 (1924), p. 115; quoted in Heller-85, p. 281)

The theme of *opacity* is constant in the metaphors of the obstacle to transparency or of the loss of a *direct link* between words and things. Thus, Soviet writer Korneï Chukovskii, who denounced at length the language of bureaucracy which he called *kantseliarit*⁴, claims that *kantseliarit* is a « smoke screen, quite

⁴ Modelled on the names of illnesses such as *difterit* and *meningit*.

suitable for concealing truth » (Chukovskii, p. 134), a language in which words have lost « any link with reality » (*ibid.*, p. 135), « an impenetrable, blind wall » (*ibid.*, p. 135). For his part, Karpinski reports that in 1950s' Poland, the language of political power was considered as « a message sent to the Chinese through a closed dormerwindow » (Karpinski, p. 1).

What is in fact a message in which only words are seen if not poetry? Negative poetry though, ensconced in a conception where the poetical function of Language (as defined by Jakobson-60) is believed measurable, being inversely proportional to the amount of information conveyed by the message :

« Sovietese is an ornate discourse in which steadfast rhetorical or poetical prescriptions have an absolute primacy on information. This only shows that raw information is beyond its scope. » (Martinez, p. 509)

« Propaganda is a particular kind of poetry, especially when it has nothing to do with reality. » (Karpinski, p. 4)

Poetry here would be but a perverse diversion from the referential function of Language.

The Real and the Surreal

In arguments offered by the detractors of Sovietese, « reality » and the « real » are both the starting point and the ultimate term of the quest for true speech.

« Marx's phrase : 'One's being determines one's conscience' clearly applies to the Soviet domain if we accept that the being - the reality in which we live - is created by language. This reality is illusory. Yet there is, parallel to it, a true reality : bread, love, birth, death. The Soviet language creates and extolls an illusory reality; the living language gives authentic reality the opportunity to exist. To a great extent, the forming of Soviet man is but the fray between two languages. » (Heller-85, p. 303)

The Master-Machiavelli would thus have succeeded not only in creating a language but also in creating a new kind of reality, a « pseudo-reality » (Karpinski, p. 70) :

« In Communist countries principally, propaganda strives to create a special kind of reality, an autonomous reality, much like a map of the land of fairy tales, without any relation to reality as we otherwise know it. » (Karpinski, p. 64)

This other reality was named « surreality » by A. Besançon. For him, « officialese », which he opposes to « human language »,

is an hallucination, a mirage in which words have the *power to create* a surreality whose existence is only verbal. The Soviet political system would thus be a « logocracy » (Besançon, p. 210).

The surreality created by Sovietese is then similar to a « magical circle » (Heller-85, p. 306) within which « man (is) constantly hypnotized by these immutable magical formulas » (*ibid.*, p. 289) :

« As great as Stalin's power is, as great then is the realm of slogans, magical decisions which determine the course taken by the Party. ... The word of the guide takes on a universal and absolute nature. Much like a shaman's incantation, it determines the fate of man and State and proclaims the shape, good or bad, of things to come. » (*ibid.*, p. 283)

The power of the Master-Machiavelli on this kind of totalitarian language that stifles free thought does not seem absolute

B - The Master-Hermeneut (Getting the Better of the Master)

Political power would thus be the Master of words it uses to manipulate the conscience of people. Yet it appears there are in the midst of these people especially conscious individuals who *know* how to turn false words round to reveal their hidden meaning which, in turn, they express in true words. These are the Master-Hermeneuts.

In 1980-81 for example, academic symposiums were held in Poland on the « language » of political power⁵. These work sessions had a prophylactic and educational goal : to learn and to teach how to defend oneself against propaganda. In the same spirit, M. Heller's reflection on language is in keeping with the political struggle as he writes :

« The Soviet system is a dictatorship of language; in order to fight it, we must first destroy the language of dictatorship. » (Heller-79, p. 1)

Bilingualism and Dual Competence

The opposition between « officialese » and « living language » sometimes appears as a dual competence (in the strict sense of the word), a mastered and conscious diglossia within a radical distinction of the two languages. Indeed, for M. Heller the « Soviet language » is a genuine *language* and the Soviets would thus be

⁵ Cf. *Manipulacja-81, Nowo-mowa-81.*

bilingual, *electing* to use according to context (at home/at an official meeting) one or the other of the two « languages » at their disposal.

However, looking for linguistic criteria of recognition of these languages is to no avail. This in fact is essentially a matter of differing interpretations on the meaning of words.

For example, A. & T. Fesenko explicitly adopt Orwellian problematics :

« Never has the semantics of words and phrases been so different for popular masses and for those who hold power than in the Soviet era. Terms and expressions such as 'socialism', 'vigilance', 'enemy of the people', 'voluntary contribution', 'mass enthusiasm' are diametrical opposites in an official interpretation and in an authentically popular interpretation. » (Fesenko, p. 206)

On this account, the work of C. Jönsson (1985) is a notable exception. Jönsson develops a strange theory according to which « the contrast between the official political language and the private language » (p. 9) is foreseen in the Russian language itself. There would thus be two words for « truth » : *pravda* in the official language (this truth being relative, « variable » and « normative ») and *istina* in the private language (this truth being « objective », « absolute » and « scientific »), as there would also be two words for « lie » : the official *vran'ë* and the private *lozh'*.

Yet, whether words differ or whether these same words have different meanings, the Master-Hermeneut *knows* both « languages ». It is then quite normal he should know how to *translate* from one into the other, performing this task with the ease of a confirmed translator. We thus have numerous examples of translations.

For A. Besançon (1980, p. 201), « kolkhoz » must be translated in « human language » by « a servile plantation owned by a bureaucracy and supervised by a system of repression ». For M. Heller (1985, p. 274), « the phrase 'freedom of speech' means 'the necessity of condemning the innocent' ». In the same spirit, A. & T. Fesenko speak of a « dual semantics in the lexicon ». Thus

« 'enemy of the people' is perceived by the masses as 'enemy of the regime', wanting but the good of the people; 'the work enthusiasm of the masses' conceals the frantic exploitation of man by State which in turn forces Soviet citizens to labour beyond themselves in the cold, hungry and in fear of repression; 'Soviet vigilance' is synonymous with a frightening terror which

condemned countless innocent victims to die in the NKVD-MVD prisons. » (p. 206)

They conclude :

« Revealing the authentic meaning of such phrases is a counter-poison developed by the people against being stupefied by false clichés. » (p. 206)

But here the Master-Hermeneut is unlike any other translator for he does not translate two equal languages; he sets right a false link between words and reality : *he translates from the false into the true*. The hermeneut, it must be noted, is either a conscious scholar working for the people or the « people » themselves.

Reading Between the Lines

There is yet another way of practicing hermeneutics and that is to read between the lines. In such case, we would have an ideal indirect schema of communication : a speaker S sends a coded message to an addressee A but a parasitic receiver R intercepts and deciphers this message that was not sent to him but which was *clear* before being coded. The notion here of mastery of language is carried out to its climax : meaning is equally mastered by Machiavelli who ciphers the message and by the hermeneut who deciphers it.

Thus, in A. Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward*, Rusanov, the local Party authority, *interprets* the hidden signs accessible only to the initiated. There is at first the intent to communicate, which leads Jönsson (who studies this example) to consider Kremlinology as a « semiotic » activity : the analysis of a system of signs. For Jönsson, the USSR is characterized by an « esoteric communication » (p. 12) and it has a secret political life :

« the leadership has a certain need to communicate with lower-level executives. They in turn need information on the balance of power at the top ... Thus, 'transmitters' and 'receivers' make equal use of an esoteric communication whose deeper meaning is only understood by a small circle of receivers. » (p. 13)

All these assertions, however, give but few formal criteria by which Sovietese can be defined as a language.

II - THE LANGUAGE OF THOSE NOT IN THE KNOW

Another approach, which appears to us complementary to the preceding, has Sovietese spoken only by ignoramuses, those who do not know how to speak other than how they already speak. Any

notion of conscious diglossia is then forsaken; sociopolitical groups are recognized by their language or the use they make of their language. We can thus single out a number of stylistic studies on the specific features of Sovietese. Paradoxically, by the great care they give to the texts, to the writing and to the facts of language, these studies, supported by several concrete examples, often reveal more than those studies on the opposition between « language of the true/language of the false ».

Yet this problematic of non-mastery is also highly contradictory.

A - *Ignoramus Popularis*

According to A. & T. Fesenko, the « correct usage » (*kul'tura rechi*) of Russian, of the « language of classics », was endangered at the onset of the 1917 Revolution by the systematic introduction of slang, regionalisms and trivial phrases, said operation being supported by Marxist theory which advocated « turning the Russian language upside down »⁶, that is putting on the foreground the sociolect of dominated classes.

The Bolsheviks, solely concerned with practical tasks such as the political and technical education of youth, entirely neglected the purity of Russian (p. 35) until noticing around 1945 that the « new language » thus born did not suit their designs to manipulate the people (p. 16).

B - *The Ignoramus Bureaucrat*

The Bolsheviks also appear to be responsible for further contaminating Russian with their highbrow language : intellectuals, having lived abroad, brought back a taste for international words and political neologisms, which are so many incomprehensible barbarisms to the « people » (Fesenko, pp. 22, 25).

In the USSR, several writers, literary critics and linguists have spoken against a Russian language invaded by bureaucratic phrases ; such phrases according to K. Chukovskii « clutter a sentence with empty words and divert one's attention » (Chukovskii, p. 132).

It is important to stress that of all stylistic characterizations of the language of power or of the language of Soviet bureaucracy,

⁶ N. Ia. Marr, *Izbrannye raboty*, Leningrad, 1933, Vol. 2, p. 24; quoted in Fesenko, p. 60.

those remarks on vocabulary (neologisms and barbarisms) are the most frequent. Syntactic facts which would be exclusive to Sovietese are rarely put forward⁷. A. & T. Fesenko consider the syntactic changes in Russian during the Soviet period are « insignificant ». They apply a purely *stylistic* analysis to syntax : for them, the « bureaucratization » of the language translates itself into a « cumbersome and complicated syntax » (p. 187). They give as an example of clumsy stylistics the abundance of « desemantized verb + nominalization » structures replacing full verbs (ex. : *vesti bor'bu* instead of *borot'sia* - « to lead the/a fight » instead of « to fight ») (p. 187). As for Chukovskii, he deplores the abundance of nominalizations in nominal groups as well as the strings of cascading genitives, such as this example (excerpted from a Soviet commentary on Nekrasov) :

« *Tvorcheskaia obrabotka obraza dvorovogo idet po linii usileniia pokaza tragizma ego sud'by.* » (Chukovskii, p. 142)

(« The creative elaboration of the character of the servant follows the line of reinforcement of the demonstration of the tragic nature of his fate. »)

A last feature of superficial syntax frequently mentioned is the repetition of ready-made formulas :

« Like a house constructed of prefabricated panels, the language forms itself from Stalin slogans and quotations. » (Heller-85, p. 284)

Maria Fabris, who has studied several critical analyses of *officialese*, writes that these repetitions permit the assembling of « prefabricated » elements, which is « far easier than to produce new ones » and spares bureaucrats the trouble of showing initiative (Fabris, p. 145).

These preceding remarks on « syntax » present considerable interest, but the stake exceeds mere psychological notes on the intellectual laziness of mediocre people or on the imitation of pompous formulas by unimaginative bureaucrats. The means to analyze the repetition of « prefabricated » pieces must be searched elsewhere - we will come back to the subject.

⁷ On the other hand, as we may recall, Marr believed the relation between language and society first expressed itself through syntax and its historical transformations. Unlike Marr, Stalin (*Pravda*, 20 June 1950) stated it was « not to be desired that fundamental changes occur in language ».

C - The Remedies

On May 25, 1946, *Pravda* published the first in a long series of articles on the following theme : we must fight against incorrect (bezgramotnye) words of popular or foreign origin. Thus was heralded the recovery of language purity by the political authorities.

A few years later, K. Chukovskii started a series of articles in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* : it is the intellectual's duty to denounce the sclerosis of language and its impoverishment through clichés.

« We must stop speaking out of inertia, and convince ourselves of the real meaning of words. » (Chukovskii, p. 134)

This is a moral fight for him, takes which but on the same accents as the more political fight for the purification of language led by Gor'kii in the 1930s (cf. *O literature*, Moscow, 1935) or by the linguist Filin and the Normativists in the 1960s and 1970s.

To speak in a true language and to speak in a pure language are one and the same thing, justified by the notion that words have a true meaning which a perverse use of language would have erased, and that it is imperative in a moral or political fight to recover that meaning.

III - THE WOUND OF NON-TRANSPARENCY

A - A Hall of Mirrors

It would be tempting at times to join in the fight of true against false, so greatly convinced are the authors, if however it did not turn out that this fight for words is similar to that of the Soviet political leaders. Strangely, the detractors and « authors » of Sovietese hold the same discourse on language and truth.

In 1924, the best-known representatives of Russian formalism studied *the language of Lenin* in No. 1 of the journal *Lef*. Opportunism or scientific interest ? They were unanimous in stressing that Lenin attacked the « verbose Language », the « bureaucratic verbiage » of the Tsarist administration (Eikhenbaum, p. 9) and the « formulas which make one shudder, seeing thus tarnished our dear Russian language » (Lenin-58, Vol. 5, pp. 235-236; quoted in Eikhenbaum, p. 9), but also the « distinctive verbiage of bourgeois intellectuals » (*ibid.*, p. 10) and the « torrents of words » of his social-revolutionary adversaries (Lenin-58, « The Harm of Phrase-Mongering », Vol. 29, pp. 565-566; quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 9-10). According to Eikhenbaum,

Lenin « cares not for bookish Language but rather for simple, spoken language » (*ibid.*, p. 9). He stands against « verbosity », the « great words » (p. 11); he « worries about the transformation, into trite terms of standard usage, of words which are dear to him and in his eyes wealthy with deeper meaning » (p. 10). To this Language invaded by empty words Lenin opposed, wrote Eikhenbaum, a « practical-type of Language » (p. 11) using « words from spoken language and everyday phrases » (p. 11). For Lenin, the Cadets, the SR and the Mensheviks were the « party of words » while the Bolsheviks were the « party of actions » (Lenin-58, Vol. 10, pp. 222-223; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 15). According to Tomashevskii, Lenin opposed *life* to *verbiage* (Lenin-58, Vol. 24, p. 35; quoted in Tomashevskii, p. 17).

Likewise, Chukovskii recalled in 1963 that « Lenin accused his opponents of hiding behind their bureaucratic style the counter-revolutionary essence of their ideals » (Chukovskii, p. 137).

What distinguishes Lenin's attitude towards language from what we have previously studied in the first two chapters ? One lone detail : the name of the adversary. From Lenin to Heller, the same notions of « language » and « life » are at work. This total reversibility of arguments does not appear in the least obvious to those who use them and even criticize their opponents *for what they themselves demand* in the name of the proper adequacy of their own language to reality :

« Lenin demands the right to give words back their true meaning yet denies his adversaries that of using revolutionary terms without proper sanction. » (Heller-85, p. 278)

Why then are the features of the « language of power » so fiercely denounced by the representatives of that very same power ? Why does L.I. Brezhnev write :

« All ideological education work must be carried out in a lively and interesting fashion, without phrasal clichés and without a standardized apparatus of ready-made formulas. A Soviet citizen is an educated and cultured man. Thus, when we speak to him in a bureaucratic language void of content, when we think we can get away with phrases made up of generalities rather than with phrases concretely related to life, to real facts, that is when he simply turns off his television set or radio or folds his paper. » (Brezhnev-81, p. 75) ?

Why do we find in Gor'kii this demand for *clear and simple* language :

« Lexical impropriety is always associated with ideological incompetence ... None of our critics has shown writers that the language in which they write is either difficult to understand or absolutely impossible to translate into foreign languages. Lest we forget, the proletariat of the Union of Soviets has conquered and claims its right to bolshevize the world ... It is essential we lead a merciless fight to purify literature of verbal rubbish, a fight for the purity and clarity of our language » (Gor'kii-35, pp. 136-137; quoted in Fesenko, p. 202) ?

Why finally is one's argumentation denigrated by the other in the very name of the former's arguments :

« 'Lenin's adversary' is 'the word endowed with a precise meaning, born with the passing of History' » (Heller-85, p. 277) ?

B - *The Perfect Language Already Exists*

This dialogue of the deaf is but apparent, the fight is the same. Oppositions must be outlined anew, not in terms of political camps but in terms of notions of language and discourse. The unthinkable epistémé presiding over the elaboration of the anti-official discourse as well as over that of the Soviet purist discourse reveals a common fantasm, a common utopia resulting from the same wound : *there are words between man and things*.

Transparent Language and Opaque Language

In the Occidental metaphysics of the sign, *significance* is thought in terms of *representation* : a name is given to a thing through substitution of the improper for the proper. Meaning is assimilated to truth which is the *correspondence* of words to reality. This explains why some words are *adequate* and others are not (cf. « translations ») :

« (In the USSR) the problem of the relation between language and reality is quite unusual in terms of linguistic evolution in that it is one of dual semantics translated in official and unofficial semantics. This means that for a common spoken or written form there is either an intentionally false image or an authentic perception of Soviet reality. » (Fesenko, p. 207)

Guided by ethics, common sense or political conviction, the hermeneut pursues the false and the ambiguous to search for the true and the univocal he will later reveal in his ideal « clear

language » (which ideal language is highly reminiscent of the univocal meta-Language of the neopositivist enterprise).

This for example is what is found in Jönsson's article : the hermeneutical stand on reading between the lines is based on a definition of the sign as « something which stands in place of something which is absent » (Eco-75, p. 12; quoted by Jönsson, p. 2) or in other words, a vision of the sign as *parasite* : at the end of the hermeneutic process the sign must die, disappear so the meaning may be revealed in its original fullness. In order to justify that « semiotic » approach to « esoteric communication » in the USSR, Jönsson relies, in our opinion, on an erroneous interpretation of the Saussurian definition of language as a system of signs. While stating that « he (Saussure) has shown that the relation between signifier and signified is totally arbitrary » (p. 2), Jönsson passes in silence over the fundamental distinction between *signified* and *referent*, that which permits such a straight reading of the real behind the « signs ».

If language is but representation, it is understandable that any linguistic activity should instantly be depreciated when experienced as a system in which words describe words and not the things to which they refer. The discovery of the autonomous dimension of the signifier, whether in psychoanalysis or in modern literary writing, is not recognized by everyone and causes turmoil in the face of a proper order : that of *language*.

Be they dissidents from within or without, Kremlinologists or linguists employed by the Soviet State, all share a dream of a language that would not be a language but a faithful reflection, a transparent medium, a light shadow whose materiality would fade before the blinding light of a reality that is *seen* before being *said*. The ideal language would then be something that is not of the order of language but of the *substitute*, a map that would be but a pure and simple repetition of a territory, a second territory, identical to the first and substituted for it. The perfect language is one that is not seen : if officialese (the language of others) is only made up of words, true language *makes us forget its words* which are nothing more than the discreet and loyal representatives of things.

In this quest for an ancient philosophical and religious fantasm, that of the lost joy of direct communication (the Language of angels; cf. de Certeau-85) and of the im-mediate understanding of reality, surfaces an old suffering, that of division, and an old regret, that of unity. In fact, what is this dream of the Adamic language,

that which called things by « their » names, but an inconceived return to the problematics of the XVIth (when words were considered to be « signatures of things » : cf. C.G. Dubois-70), XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries when a perfect language would have enabled one to properly « calculate » (cf. Leibniz) the real to be said ?

But there is no need here to invent an artificial language or to reconstitute a pre-Babelian language : the detractors of *officialese* or Sovietese are unfailingly optimistic; the perfect language, that which tells the truth, already exists for them : it is called the « living language » (Fesenko, Heller), the « human language » (Besançon), the « private language » (Jönsson), the (true) « Russian language » (Heller), the « pure language » (Gor'kii), the « simple language » (Lenin) or the « language related to life » (Brezhnev). This perfect and natural language is simply the negative of Sovietese, the artificial language.

The Being

In such a vision of a language whose first function is to represent what is, the relation between Language and reality seems to reveal an *implicit realist postulate* to those who by measuring the degree of adequacy of « *officialese* » to reality only reproduce the effect of immediate evidence of their own perception of reality. In the ideology of transparent representation *facts speak for themselves*, the real is intelligible prior to any linguistic *practice*, and truth, the natural datum and primary object, is apprehended *outside* any Language.

Any and all reflection on the style and the sign in « *officialese* » prevents us from approaching the problem of the means to verify the adequacy of the sign to the referent. This amounts to putting ontology into language and refusing to acknowledge that « there is no meta-Language », no space exterior to Language from which to measure this adequacy, no « natural » space where the real would give itself to knowledge without the mediation, the filter or the screen of Language.

Language is a Nomenclature

If the function of nomination is even more important than that of communication, it thus follows that language amounts to a body

(more or less wealthy, more or less beautiful) of words : it is a lexical stock (or a stock of assertions about the real, which is the same thing).

This explains why A. & T. Fesenko insist on *lists* of neologisms and barbarisms and A. Besançon on the translations of words; *nouns* are always called into question, almost never those forms peculiar to a given language. This explains the very rareness of syntactic notations. In this latter case, a phenomenon such as nominalization, for example, is described as a matter of vocabulary and style. Syntax then is only seen as the superficial arrangement of words between themselves.

Nature and Culture

The language of the Master-Machiavelli seems to aim towards a goal, that of :

« destroying any means of thinking logically. » (Heller-85, p. 282)

Here, G. Orwell is an inexhaustible source of inspiration : like 1984's newspeak, *officialese* would appear to control thought (Heller-83) and the absence of a word in a language would appear to *prevent* thought from using the corresponding concept. This is an ultraculturalist notion, a kind of grossly distorted Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, almost making the passage from one linguistic system to another. The contradiction is thus total between this ultraculturalist notion and the universalist and ontological notion of language as a reflection of the real that asserts the translatability of the false into the true, of the inadequate into the adequate, of the cultural into the natural.

The Innocent People

Indeed, there seems to be a *natural* space from which the adequacy of words to things can be measured. This space is « the people ». True language would thus be spoken by an innocent people, sort of a good savage, or Man before the Fall, using (transparent) language only in its referential function and communicating without ambiguity to name « bread, love, birth, death », those eternal themes whose designation by language is supposed to be above the contingent existence.

This « language of the people » would be the perfect language for it has been shaped by the ages and by experience and

it stands against the artificial vocabulary of *officialese*, imposed from above :

« Unlike the people, who has along the centuries chiselled words and expressions encompassing all the variety of human life, the Bolsheviks have created hundreds and thousands of political phrases with no spirit. » (Fesenko, p. 208)

However, it must be noted that if the « people » is the criterion of truth, it is far from being that of beauty, for all popular, trivial or slang expressions are carefully excluded from the ideal, « pure » language. What appears then is a totally abstract and idealized image of the people. This image becomes negative as soon as « popular » features come into focus. In the purist discourse, the « language of the people », bearing poetry and spontaneity, is only acknowledged after having been reworked by the « great writers » (cf. Seriot-82, p. 70).

In fact, we observe in all these texts a constant hesitation between the socialist notion of « people » (as opposed to the bourgeoisie) and the romantic notion of « people » (as opposed to other peoples or cosmopolitan and uprooted elements).

Furthermore, the supposed attitude of the « people » towards language is surprisingly variable. Thus, within pages, A. & T. Fesenko state that the language of power is

« a verbal drug which, true enough, is often unmasked by the people » (p. 30)

(this refers to the « reversion » or « diversion » of the words of power, whence the notion of a people-master), yet at the same time state that

« The sometimes uneducated Soviet citizen, who does not always understand the authentic meaning of the traditional words of his mother tongue, nevertheless had to handle a great many incomprehensible words pertaining to a political terminology which was not created out of the needs of his personal « self » but out of State forms prepared beforehand by the Bolshevik clique. » (p. 27)

(whence the notion of an ignorant people).

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION : THE SUBJECT AND THE DISCOURSE

Having revealed the existence of a mythical notion of language, we shall now give other bearings to the epistemological framework

within which we can theorize the relation between Language and power in Soviet-type societies.

That both adversaries use the same argumentation brings to the fore a classic phenomenon not in the least mysterious or magical : the subject-speaker is not aware of the word-reference production process he uses. As F. Flahaut (1978, p. 73) notes :

« What the « naïve » subject identifies with reality is not language, but his discourse ('his' discourse meaning that which he makes his own). Each time this resolve as reality is carried out in the name of the Universal and of Truth, the discourse is incompatible with another which has admittedly or not, the same claims. »

By defining their object as an inadequacy of words to facts, the critics of *officialese* think they occupy a place that enables them to distinguish the real from the unreal, and measure the degree of inadequacy of words to reality. This place is the illusory space of an exteriority from which a subject could examine reality and the words used for saying it without having to theorize his own relation to it ; such relation is presented as immediate, absolutized and unquestionable. This ideology of transparency involves effects of recognition : a subject for whom « kolkhoz » is an opaque sign recognizes the truth when he sees « servile plantation » and thus recognizes himself as a potential subject of the discourse he acknowledges as true (adequate). For him, this discourse is so « natural » that the words he uses become *invisible to him*. At work in an ideology of Machiavellianism or transparency is the same implicit conception of the *subject-speaker* as source, origin of his discourse, hereby placing himself outside of language to play on the meaning of words or verify their adequacy to reality. Yet the effects of recognition of truth *blind* him to exterior determinations of what he is saying. Believing himself the master of his discourse, he is in fact subjected to it. What every one believes to be the true language is simply his own discourse; the opaque language, or « *officialese* », is the discourse of others.

The works of M. Pêcheux have shown that linguistic productions are subject to two types of constraints, distinct yet interwoven : those pertaining to language and those pertaining to discourse. Statements are subject to rules of selection, combination and embedding, to specific *constraints* which are not solely within the scope of pure individual creativity. If the « language » of the Other is perceived as inadmissible, opaque, ugly or monstrous, it is because this perception, made in the name of common sense, true

meaning or universality of truth, is oblivious to its historical and ideological determinations.

That is why « servile plantation » is neither truer nor falsier than « kolkhoz ». The expression *takes its meaning* by functioning within a « discursive formation » that determines « what can and must be said » (Pêcheux-75, p. 144). The scope of the expressible is narrow : we cannot say everything just as we can never say just anything.

Indeed, speech never appears on a « neutral » background. Solitary, without memory, the Adamic language is the most tenacious myth in linguistics. In fact, whether written or spoken, a text never has an absolute initial. It always « speaks » before and elsewhere. The « speech » of the subject is heterogeneous, an answer, echo, reference or rejection of the discourse of others.

Soviet political discourse does not escape this situation. It is not a closed space, the pure crystal of an absolute folly or of a perfect lie, the schizophrenic product of a Master of words. Like any discourse, it has no proper exterior, no strict boundaries. The Other still reappears on the implicit level, even if evacuated from the explicit level. The presence of the Other's discourse in Soviet political discourse can be detected in material *traces* that are realized in language and more precisely in syntax. These traces are visible, for instance, in the syntactic phenomenon of embedding. They can be substantival clauses, gerunds, nominalizations, any form where a predicative clause is moved away from the main clause in which it was inserted. (This phenomenon does not occur in the simple and canonical declarative sentence of the Aristotelian concept of language as representation of the world.) This gap allows us to *reify* anterior and exterior predicative relations, and make them into objects which we can observe without having to process the relation between subject and predicate. The responsibility, the source of this predicative relation are erased. The abundance of nominalizations, duly noted by Chukovskii and many others, shows us that a voice without name resounds within Soviet political discourse. In this discourse without subject, a flimsy caricature perhaps of the « process without subject » (cf. Althusser), the voice without name echoes other voices, in an anonymous answer to an invisible Other, unspeakable yet always present.

Let us for example take the following statement :

« Razrabotka programmy svidetel'stvuet ne tol'ko ob istoricheskikh pobedakh v oblasti khoziaïstvennogo i kul'»

turnogo stroitel'stva, no i pokazyvaet bol'shuiu i raznostoronnniu rabotu partii. » (Khrushchëv-61, p. 126)

(« The elaboration of the (Party's) program testifies not only to historical victories in the field of economic and cultural edification, but also shows the great and diversified work of the Party. »)

In this statement with neither subject nor cause, the enunciator is but a witness : he « sees » objects, processes of which he is not the Agent; his saying fades behind his seeing. Yet the nominalizations that follow the two verbs can only be conceived as the refutation of an anterior adversative statement of which only a half-erased *trace* remains.

There is thus nothing to say on the subject of untruth, inadequacy, frenzy or word-play except that meta-Language does not exist. Rather we should take notice of the real of language, the forms proper to syntax, the forms of subjectivity that are inscribed or hidden in it. For this discursive functioning bases itself upon the limits of the possible and the impossible in a given language : we have shown elsewhere (cf. Seriot-85) that this eclipse of the subject of enunciation and the gap in levels of assertions could not take the same linguistic forms in Czech, for example, or Chinese for that matter, in which there are no nominalizations. The heavy and confused *style* of Sovietese is but the result of this eclipse of the subject of enunciation in embedded forms. A literal translation into French or English would be ungrammatical to a point. On the other hand, should we insist on respecting the grammaticalness of the target language in translating, by replacing for example a nominalization by a coordinate or subordinate clause, we transfer the distribution of implicit and explicit elements and run the risk of reintroducing the element of responsibility, thus making a *political mistake*.

We shall say in conclusion that *officialese* is not magical, because it is not a *language*. It is a discourse which is characterized by an extreme tension between its avowed homogeneity and monolithism and its fundamental heterogeneity. This heterogeneity, which can be pinpointed in underlying phenomena of syntax, indicates the constant presence of anterior adverse discourses.

There is no need to drive back into the discourse of the Other, into « *officialese* » the fantasm of the dishonest mastery of language in the name of the honest mastery of such language. Any ideology aims to conceal its relation to the real by pretending it is universal,

natural and ahistorical. Furthest from the anathemas on lies and manipulation, we believe it more useful to study the *functioning* of a discourse in a given society by recognizing the contingent and ideologically determined character of word-reference.

But if Soviet political discourse shows such a strong inclination towards the eclipse of the subject of enunciation, towards the subjection of the subject-speaker to the universal subject, we can rightly ask ourselves the reasons for such a subjection in a political practice which claims to fall within Marxism-Leninism.

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ABSTRACTS

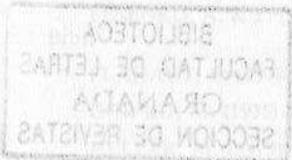
Maryse SOUCHARD, « Towards a Semiotics of the Ideological Novel ». Starting with the description of the ideological novel made by both Philippe Hamon and Susan Suleiman, the author submits a specific model for the study of Soviet socialist novels. This model, based on French semiotics, emphasizes the narrative structure of these novels and is but a first step in a continuing research on Soviet literature.

Régine ROBIN, « The Figures of Socialist Realism : The Fictional Constraints of the Positive Hero ». This article is the translation of an excerpt from the author's forthcoming book, *Le Réalisme socialiste : une esthétique impossible*. The author first discusses the work of Katherina Clark and the concept of redundancy in the text as proposed by Susan Suleiman. The author then uses the model elaborated in the preceding article by Maryse Souchart on Soviet socialist realist novels of the 1930s and tries to excerpt from these that notion of the positive hero.

Henry ELBAUM, « Industrialism vs Primitivism in the Soviet Russian Literature of the Twenties and the Thirties ». Industrialist discourse in the Soviet Russian fiction of the 1920s and the 1930s asserts itself in an ongoing dialogue with primitivist, traditionalist discourse. As the study shows, in the fictional works of industrialist persuasion, the primitivist opponent is always conspicuously or invisibly present, whereas authors with strong anti-rational and anti-industrialist feelings incorporate into their works some elements of industrialist discourse, so that both discourses stand to each other in what can be called « antonymic correlation ».

Bernard LAFITE, « Soviet 'Literary Policy' on the Eve of the 'Great Turning Point' : Terms and Stakes ». The author reviews a number of articles on art published by *Pravda* in 1929 and provides a good observation post for studying the recurrences and stirrings of socialist realism. The author underlines the internal logic of the discourse on art, trying to ascertain how this discourse is constructed within the texts. On the theoretical level, this article strives to show discourse analysis could contribute to better outline the relation between politics and the arts in 1929.

Patrick SERIOT, « On *Officialese* : A Critical Analysis ». The author touches upon the problem of defining *officialese*, that language most particular to the USSR and other socialist countries. Can *officialese* be considered a language per se ? The author answers by clearly inscribing himself within a linguistic problematic and basing his analysis on the many theories and debates *officialese* has fed over the years, studying most specifically the concepts of transparency and opacity in language.



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