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Spirit of the Totem

Religion and Myth in Soviet Fiction 1964–1988

IRENA MARYNIAK

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IN MEMORY OF
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CONTENTS

PREFACE

This Preface is also a health warning. It explains the purpose of this study partly to account for areas not covered in it.

In exploring the significance of religious ideas and images in Soviet fiction published in the years following the fall of Khrushchev and before *glasnost'* came fully into its own, I do not claim to offer a definitive interpretation of the texts. My purpose has not been literary 'theology'. Nor, for that matter, has it been analysis in the sense that modern literary theory tends to understand it. I have not sought to dismantle the structure of narratives, or to expose the pattern of constant relationships within them. Instead, I have tried to retrieve what may be an important, if at times hidden, level of meaning in each work, inviting the reader to consider its implications in the context of a coherent piece of literature. Some account has been taken of the 'intertextual' aspect of the works covered, their discourse with other writings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, this has been introduced only where it serves to exemplify religious perspectives in the novels or stories discussed.

In order to highlight what may be the most salient dilemma of philosophical and religious thought in Soviet prose of the late 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, the study has been framed in a long-standing anthropological controversy over the nature and origins of religion. The two schools of thought in question (represented by Edward B. Tylor and Émile Durkheim) differ over whether religion should be understood as a psychological or a sociological phenomenon. The divergence arises on the basis of studies carried out on 'primitive' religious cultures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today, as religion continues to be entangled with problems of ethnicity and political allegiance, the questions posed by the Tylor-Durkheim debate retain a striking pertinence.

After the 1917 Revolution atheism was promulgated as official Soviet doctrine. Thereafter, until the arrival of *glasnost'* in the late 1980s, authors seeking to touch upon religious issues had only their intuitions, oral tradition, and scant available reading to fall back on. Religious teaching was illegal and writers were obliged to start from scratch. Consequently, their experience of the religious impulse at times displayed a more spontaneous or 'primitive' quality than in societies where religious institutions had remained unthreatened by ideology and the state. A comparison between the independent religious vision of Soviet writers and that reflected in undeveloped religious

cults may also help to reveal tensions generically inherent in many, if not all, religious traditions. Not least, it was a vision which served as a model for subsequent political reorientation and new discourse under *perestroika*.

In transliteration, I have followed conventions set by the Library of Congress with one small modification: the Russian letters –э, –е and –ё are all expressed by the English –e. I have retained the standard English spelling of names of Russian writers and academics who live and publish in the West (e.g. Brodsky, Pospielovsky, Yanov).

Sections of Chapters 3, 9, and 10 have been included in the following articles:

Irena Maryniak, 'Truthseekers, Godbuilders or Culture Vultures? Some Supplementary Remarks on Religious Perspectives in Modern Soviet Literature', *Religion in Communist Lands*, 16 (1988), 227–36.

Irena Maryniak, 'Valentin Rasputin, die neue Rechte und das Religiöse', *Osteuropa*, No. 3 (1990), pp. 210–18.

Irena Maryniak, 'The New God-builders', in *Ideology in Russian Literature*, ed. by Richard Freeborn and Jane Grayson (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 188–204.

I am particularly grateful to Jane Grayson and Geoffrey Hosking of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London, for their generous suggestions and comments while the book was being researched. My thanks also go to Martin Dewhirst, Arnold McMillin, and Judith Vidal-Hall for their invaluable remarks, and to Michael Branch for bibliographical suggestions which decisively affected the shape of this study. The staff of *Index on Censorship* and Keston College offered patient support. A term at St Antony's College, Oxford, ensured that the first draft was indeed written. My parents, Wanda and Andrzej Jeziorski, were consistently encouraging. Marek Maryniak displayed characteristic tolerance and understanding, and did everything to ensure that the work was completed.

PART I

RELIGION, MYTH, AND THE SOVIET NOVEL

CHAPTER 1

THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE AND THE NARRATED TALE

The spectacle of religious practice past and present is a puzzle and a humiliation for human intelligence, Henri Bergson remarked in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1935):

> Experience may indeed say 'that is false', and reasoning 'that is absurd'. Humanity only clings all the more to the absurdity and that error [. . .].
>
> We find in the past, we could find to-day, human societies with neither science nor art nor philosophy. But there has never been a society without religion.[1]

As nominally religious groups continue to fuel terrorism and genocide in the post-Cold War world, Bergson's comment has a disturbing and salutary ring. In conditions of social and economic hardship, religious affiliation seems inextricably linked to discrimination, intimidation and war. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, religion in Eastern and Southern Europe, and Central Asia, has come to be indistinguishably identified with ethnic and national loyalties. Yet for all the historical evidence indicating the perilous effect religions can have in the social and political arena, their influence is scarcely diminished.

Sporadically ruthless attempts within the Soviet ideocracy to stifle religious sentiment and superimpose ideological structures on religious ones showed that in ostensibly atheist social environments religious faith continues to flourish underground.[2] 'Democratization', when it came, brought with it a revival of old religious monopolies, a market for eccentrics and fringe religious cults, and the threat of conflict as religions became embroiled in the process of national, political, and social self-definition.[3] The revival of religious fundamentalism, racism, and virulent nationalism which has followed the dissolution of the Soviet Empire is symptomatic of the loss of ideology and identity, and reflects a hazy nostalgia for the intellectual, emotional, and social framework which the communist system once offered. Religious and tribal loyalties offer distinctions in an intellectual and political environment where familiar outlines have faded into chaos. They give an illusion of community where community has been fractured.

In more stable, developed and 'open' societies, with an established tradition of free expression and democratic politics, the need for security and self-definition is not as urgent. The impulse to crystallize the group under a banner

of religion, race, or national identity is less strong. In the West, modernity and individualism have undermined the moral influence of religious teaching and the strength of religious monopolies. In the eyes of many, they have discredited the principle of religious allegiance altogether. But even here it remains broadly true that religious institutions have maintained their role as inductors into the community.[4]

Bergson formulated his explanation for the prevalence of the religious phenomenon by proposing that religion, being co-extensive with our species, must be inherent in our structure.[5] The urge to create religious forms, he said, reflects an instinct, a vital impulse which, combined with intelligence, ensures man's survival and his evolutionary development. It does so by activating in man a defence mechanism which protects him from his own innate intelligence: from those egotistical initiatives which could endanger the social structure.[6] It also shades him from the intellectual awareness of the inevitability of death, and from a consciousness of the presence of forces outside his intelligence which could hinder the achievement of ends he sets himself.[7] This instinctual defensive reaction helps to preserve social unity, protects man from discouragement or fear, and is related to the faculty of imagination. In critical conditions, the imagination opposes to intelligence the symbolic images or representations which lie at the root of superstition and religion.[8] These are produced by the act of 'myth-making' or 'fiction', Bergson writes.[9] Religion, superstition, myths, and stories are aspects of an unconscious, defensive psychological reflex to those cognitive powers which give man the ability to realize the hopelessness of his estate.

Bergson's interpretation of the psychological mechanics of spiritual and literary creativity points to the connection which many cultural anthropologists have made between the religious impulse and myth, or the narrated tale. Each is an imaginatively ordered expression of the human condition: the formulation in language of a complex of ideas which carries a meaning relating to the cosmic structure and man's position within it. And each is of necessity translated into the cultural and moral language of the society in which it is rooted.

When considered in terms of Iurii Lotman's semiotic definition of language as any ordered communication system which employs signs, religion, and narrative fall into a single category.[10] Both are 'secondary modelling systems' or more sophisticated communication structures superimposed upon the simple, purely linguistic level of expression.[11] They share a common foundation (natural language), the same purpose (communication) and a like function as carriers of meaning within a system which expresses relationships existing between the natural or physical environment, and the psychic or spiritual sphere.

The semiotic understanding of religion and narrative as similar means of expression lends support to the view of writers who have seen in 'mythical'

narrative a direct expression of the religious sense — even if in common usage the term 'myth' implies no more than a traditional story.[12] Consider, for example, Ernst Cassirer's remark:

> In the development of human culture we cannot fix a point where myth ends or religion begins. In the whole course of its history religion remains indissolubly connected and penetrated with mythical elements. On the other hand myth, even in its crudest and most rudimentary forms, contains some motives that in a sense anticipate the higher and later religious ideals. Myth is from its very beginning potential religion.[13]

Religion and mythical (or traditional) fictional narratives have in common a linguistic base and their role as modelling systems for information about linkages between man and his world. If both are born of imagination, they also demand an imaginative response. As textual structures they call for a creative reply within the framework of the language system used. But because they pertain to imagination, not experience, they can transcend the limitations of knowledge, conditioning, and temporality. For why else should the Biblical, Koranic, or ancient Vedic scriptures of India enjoy such continuing appeal in the last decade of the twentieth century?

Claude Lévi-Strauss's resistance to the idea that myths are informed by the collective spirit of the society which breeds them, and his insistence on their autonomous nature, hints at further reasons why mythical narratives might stand the test of time.[14] Myths teach us about the inner workings of the societies from which they originate, but they are not bound by them, Lévi-Strauss argues. Some stories recur irrespective of time and place. They give access to a fundamental level of the mind, its 'operational modes'.[15] The mythical narrative has a structural underpinning which reflects the inner workings of the mind, and of the body and the natural world. That is what makes it last.[16]

The position Lévi-Strauss takes also suggests that traditional mythical systems are more authentic and expressive of the structures intrinsic to the mind than any lately rationalized ideological structures superimposed upon them. This is particularly relevant to the rediscovery of mythological systems in the writing which emerged from the Soviet Union in the twenty years before *perestroika*. The myths which latter-day Soviet fiction revived perhaps reflected fundamental forms of thought surfacing from under the brittle layer of the Leninist political vision.

In an article on Carl Gustav Jung's views on the creative imagination, Sergei Averintsev argues that there exists an objective mythological structure which a piece of literature may, or may not, possess.[17] The quality of myth is to be found in primary patterns of ideas which lie at the base of the most complex artistic structures: universal models which can be detected in the visual or narrative formulations of the creative mind.[18]

Jung, of course, proposed some of the most far-reaching psychological explanations of the existence of such models embracing myth, religion, dream, fantasy and art. He considered the existence of unconnected, but recurring, motifs and patterns in the myths and religious beliefs of peoples throughout the globe, as well as in dreams and fantasies of people in the modern world unfamiliar with mythology. He explained these recurrences in terms of a group or 'collective' unconscious, existing beyond the bounds of the individual psyche. From this level, he argued, issue 'archetypal' structures which *a priori* determine the shape of human ideas.[19] Reaching the more surface level of the conscious mind, the archetype is shaped into an image. And when formulated externally, it has the power fully to absorb the attention. The gift of the artist and of the seer is a special sensitivity to the archetype and to its most suitable expression.[20]

If art and literature are externalizations of the archetypes, so is myth: the story or image which possesses a 'typical', timeless formula and touches on the simplest, most deeply felt qualities of existence. Thomas Mann held, for example, that what marks out the myth from a lesser narrative is a primary formula present in life as in art, creating a connection between life and art: between what is and the creative expression of what is.[21] If that is so, then the link which myth offers by presenting universally familiar experiences in a way which gives them, and life itself, a satisfying pattern, suggests why it has been so closely associated with religious structures.

Myth has been said to be an expression of man's cosmic orientation,[22] to 'express in action and drama what metaphysics and theology define dialectically',[23] 'to narrate a sacred history',[24] and to establish norms for living.[25] But, in the end, the archetypal narrative must be defined by its function: to be the cosmological, historical, and moral bridge between a temporal order and an eternal order, a role it shares with religion.

While presenting a textual model by which life may be understood, the mythological narrative makes demands. On the one hand it sets something apart as sacred: the text itself, something or someone within it, or an idea. It creates a polarity between that which is set apart as absolute, inviolable, and that which is profane. On the other hand it calls for an unconditional suspension of disbelief, a revision of one's sense of life's linkages and, finally, action: the endeavour to bring the sacred quality into the profane world. As Mircea Eliade has suggested, myth may be a gesture towards the realization of the eternal order within the temporal. It is an 'exemplar history', he writes, which 'must [. . .] be seen in relation to primitive man's tendency to effect a concrete realization of an ideal archetype, to live eternity "experientially" here and now'.[26] Eliade notes, too, that the urge to imitate a mythical archetype — to have the profane world realize a transcendent reality — which he sees as characteristic of traditional societies, may have parallels in some social and

religious trends of the twentieth century: messianic movements, for instance.[27] In our own time, Lévi-Strauss said, myths are reborn 'as ideologies or "political myths"'.[28]

There is a striking similarity, as Katerina Clark has observed, between the mythological perception of the world outlined by Eliade and that mirrored in the official rhetoric of the Soviet Union under Stalin. Eliade depicts a dual sense of reality characteristic of primitive cultures, with traditional man looking on the one hand to a mythic Great Time and, on the other, recognizing the present as a form of profane time. The physical world gains its true quality to the degree that it establishes communion with the higher reality.[29] There appears to be a neo-Platonic ethos in things: the sacred lives in myth, the profane must find its way to becoming a part of the myth. A similar scheme prevails in socialist realist literature. The Soviet novel, Clark has shown, is characterized by an inherent paradox of form, a 'modal schizophrenia'. It seeks to juxtapose 'what is' and 'what ought to be', to combine two diametrically opposed systems of evaluating the world: the imperfect, incomplete reality of the here and now, and a perfect, harmoniously structured reality which is immanent, attainable but not yet arrived.[30]

The traditional Soviet novel sought to be a mythological genre. It was to be the textual foundation for a new 'religious' culture in the making, providing an accessible form for the promotion of Bolshevism as the 'new orthodoxy'.[31] In addition, as Clark writes, it set out to bridge the gap between an imperfect world order and a perfect one, according to a loosely specified model.[32] In its heyday, the Soviet novel's dual role was to provide a parable for the working out of Marxist-Leninist ideology in history, and to be a myth for maintaining the social and political status quo.[33]

Mythology, according to the religious anthropologist Joseph Campbell, may be identified by its four specific functions. One is to present a cosmology, an image of the universe.[34] Another is to validate an established order.[35] A third role is 'the centering and harmonization of the individual', traditionally through the submission of the self to a higher authority.[36] But the primary function of 'a living mythology', Campbell writes, the 'properly religious function', is 'to waken and maintain in the individual an experience of the awe, humility, and respect, in recognition of that ultimate mystery, transcending names and forms, "from which", as we read in the Upanishads, "words turn back"'.[37]

The socialist realist novel proper fulfilled all the roles Campbell prescribes for myth, with the exception of the last. It lacked, not an absolute (for its narrative illustrated the all-encompassing Marxist-Leninist ideological structure), but the recognition of any point of reference beyond expression of definition. Marxism-Leninism offered a doctrine which was social, historicist and teleological.[38] It purported to reveal the design of life, and offered a final

answer to the purpose of human existence. This absolutist quality gave it some characteristics of a religious orientation and, as Dimitry Pospielovsky has suggested, may have encouraged their development.[39]

Seventy years on from the October Revolution, however, experience seemed to show that religion and Marxist-Leninist ideology were psychologically incompatible. Both had claimed to be the basic structures on which society is built. Both had sought to shape and constrain cultural life. Both proffered an absolute order to the world.[40] According to the former Soviet dissident writer Aleksandr Zinov'ev, writing in 1981, the claim to supreme authority over individual existence, which religion and ideology both made, cloaked very different modes of understanding and behaviour. Religious belief penetrates the personality and is reflected in moral action, Zinov'ev declared. Ideology is but a superficial garb donned for practical expediency:

> Like religion, Communist ideology aspires to the role of spiritual pastor. But it is [...] different from religion in principle. The psychological foundation of religion is faith, that of ideology is its formal acceptance [...]. The phenomenon of faith is a primary psychic state in the individual which presupposes no logical proofs or empirical verifications of the things in which the individual believes, and which does not presuppose external compulsion. It is an inner predisposition to 'recognise' something as really existing, true and necessary. [...] Faith is a capacity of man which permits a religious development of the psyche and religious forms of behaviour. [...] Ideology is something accepted by the mind and through conscious or unconscious calculation of the consequences of one's behaviour and of how to acquire the best things in life. [...] Religion penetrates people's souls and is manifest in their behaviour. Ideology is a purely external element in people's behaviour and not behaviour itself. Their behaviour is determined by other forces, by the laws of communality. Ideology gives them direction and justification, but does not enter people's souls. There is no inner demand for ideology.[41]

As a rationalized construct superimposed on the psychology and on its creative nature expressed in archetypes, ideology was bound to conflict with art. For if art — particularly literature — is a system of communicative expression, or a language rooted in the unconscious, then its relationship with any ideological superstructure will confine and ultimately muzzle its voice.

While not being authentically 'mythological', socialist realist narrative also lacked the qualities of a 'literary' text. In promoting an established doctrine it could not — if one follows Lotman's definition of art — be a 'generator of languages', a complex of superimposed linguistic models in dialogue with one another.[42] The novel, Salman Rushdie argued in his Herbert Read Memorial Lecture (1990), 'has always been about the way in which different languages, values and narratives quarrel, and about the shifting relations between them'.[43]

During the critical and exploratory period in the development of Soviet literature between the removal of Khrushchev in 1964 and the 1988 celebrations of the Millennium of Christianity in Rus', however, the range of ideas and

languages in fiction proliferated remarkably. There was an increased tendency among writers in the 1960s and 1970s to identify their characters by verbal idiosyncrasies reflecting their personality and background. The critic Galina Belaia has noted that the narrative voice shifted away from the omniscient storyteller to independent personalities speaking from within the narrative structure.[44] Narrative statement, or diegesis, was slipping into dramatic imitation — mimesis. In Bakhtinian terminology, 'monologic' prose was becoming 'dialogic', perhaps even 'polyphonic'.[45]

In addition, Soviet prose of the Brezhnev years saw the return of a secondary language long enmeshed into the structure of pre-Revolutionary Russian literature: that of religion. It appeared in references to local religious cults and in suggestions of a personalized spiritual dimension present and active in human life. It was also, more obviously, evident in allusions to the traditions of the Great Religions.

The introduction of religious models in a subtextual discourse with atheist ideology helped Soviet literature to free itself from the unitary language imposed on it by the socialist realist canon.[46] Within the framework of the plot it became possible to conduct a form of discourse where voices from the past, writers, philosophers, and the bearers of religious and cultural tradition, might challenge the unassailable Marxist-Leninist model.

The ideological myth was modified; new sources of authority were recovered from the cultural tradition of the past. The Brezhnev years saw the beginnings of re-evaluation and transition in literature ('reaccentuation' is Bakhtin's term) in which figures and images personifying spiritual and religious tradition took on a heroic aspect where they had since the 1920s represented the retrograde, the villainous, the exploiters.[47] This paved the way for the political and cultural 'thaw' of the late 1980s, for *glasnost'* and for Soviet editions of literary works by the first writers to break ranks with socialist realism who were widely read only in the West (Solzhenitsyn, Pasternak, and Siniavsky are the most frequently cited examples). However, the new, discursive quality in Soviet prose of the 1970s and 1980s also brought with it at times a restatement of ideological values couched in a different language. With new models to hand, a collectivist ideology could be expressed as adequately in religious terms as in secular ones.

Ensuing chapters will highlight the presence of religious motifs in a selection of literary texts published in the twenty years which preceded the political reforms brought by *glasnost'* and *perestroika*; they will explore layers of meaning which familiarity with the narrative formulations of various religious traditions can reveal. This is arguably where the substance of the texts lies and where it would have been sought by the Soviet readership, trained over the years to read in sub-textual mode, to look to the implied and the omitted for clues to authorial intention.[48] Further, it will be proposed here that the use of

religious models by Soviet writers can be usefully related to a continuing anthropological controversy on the nature of religious phenomena.

The dispute is based around the writings of two anthropologists: Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917) and Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). In 1871, Tylor published a two-volume study on tribal culture and religion, *Primitive Culture*, which effectively launched the concept of culture in anthropological studies.[49] This mooted that all religions developed from man's psychological tendency to believe in souls or spirits. Four decades later, his idea was opposed by a sociological theory put forward in Durkheim's *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1912). Durkheim argued that religion was an expression of the collective's consciousness of itself, rooted in the urge to comply with and strengthen the bonds of the group: 'A society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the Divine in minds, merely by the power it has over them; for to its members it is what a god is to its worshippers.'[50] The remainder of this study will illustrate how religious models used by Soviet writers can be seen to fit into the framework of this still unresolved debate.

The disagreement among anthropologists hinges on the question of how (as Bergson put it) 'beliefs and practices which are anything but reasonable could have been, and still are, accepted by reasonable beings'.[51] While examining religion in its simplest forms, free of the trappings of intellectual or economic development, the Tylor–Durkheim controversy offers two apparently incompatible ways of understanding the religious impulse and religious culture: one psychological — pertaining to the individual; the other sociological — relating to the group. When considered in conjunction with the complexities of literary expression, the dispute also confirms that manifestations of the religious impulse cannot be satisfactorily relegated to any single definition, psychological or sociological. A psychological manifestation may become a sociological one and vice versa. The urge to a belief in spiritual beings may override social pressures; the inverse may also occur.

Today, the debate has a dated ring, particularly given the new interpretations and re-definitions in anthropology subsequently provided by Claude Lévi-Strauss, his followers, and opponents. But the religious models used by Soviet writers fall within its framework. The predominant concerns of the pre-*perestroika* years related to tensions between the individual and the collective, to pluralism and monism, the spiritual and the material, the subjective and objective, the 'otherworldly' and the heroic.[52] Socialist realism had inherited the Marxist principle of dialectical struggle, and the writers of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s still lived in a dichotomous world.[53] Because of a tendency to think in the strict paradigms taught by socialist realism, they applied pre-existing conceptual tools to give expression to the divergences of

thought they perceived. With the juxtaposition of religious models and Marxist-Leninist ideology, an individualist-collectivist, pluralist-monist or 'animist-totemist' tension emerges prominently in the writing of these years.

That Tylor and Durkheim should provide an intellectual basis for this tension is probably not coincidental. The political philosopher Georgii Plekhanov, widely published and studied in the Soviet Union on Lenin's personal insistence, made a point of defining religion in Tylor's terms.[54] His view of the origins of religion coincides with Tylor's to a considerable degree, although he does make the proviso that animist beliefs proceed from primitive man's initially monistic picture of the world.[55] Plekhanov's distinction between the 'mythological' aspect of religion — the notion of souls or spirits — and its 'sentimental' or 'active' aspects would, moreover, have provided Soviet writers with a sound source of reference in the event of adverse public criticism. Animism is not yet religion, Plekhanov writes: 'Myth is one thing, religion is another. [...] Religion arises from the combination of animist ideas with certain religious acts'.[56] These acts, he argued, were determined by technical development and economic and social relationships.[57] In the twenty years before *perestroika*, myth-making was considered a legitimate literary device in the Soviet Union. Its more subtle levels and potentially subversive qualities were generally ignored in public discussion.

Edward Tylor's theory depicted the progressive development of religion from a postulated lowest form which he called 'animism', the belief in souls or spirits. He noted parallels between unconnected religious cults, and argued that these reflected an inherent similarity in the reasoning of all human beings, irrespective of their habitat or race. The laws of reason, applied to particular phenomena similar throughout the world (such as the rising and setting of the sun), would lead all people to similar conclusions:[58] 'All human beings are in body and mind so much of one pattern that each can judge others by reference to his own understanding, intention, and will, and by the consciousness conveyed by language.'[59]

Tylor's evolutionary understanding of the 'primitive' mind was that it was undeveloped but rational — a view well in harmony with prevailing ideas held by his contemporaries and reflecting an assumption that what is prior in time is necessarily less complex and sophisticated than what comes later.[60] Religion, he argued, was rooted in the urge to reason out the nature of the world, and particularly to explain such phenomena as death, disease, trances, dreams, and visions. Man's reflections on these had led him to create a distinction between the mortal body and the soul which, man assumed, lived on after death and haunted survivors in memories and visions. Tylor went on to say that primitive man had a natural tendency to imagine the world in his own image. Since animals, plants, and objects moved about, behaved, helped or hindered him, man would naturally assume that they, too, were endowed with souls or

inhabited by independent spirits. A belief in spiritual beings constituted Tylor's minimum definition of religion. These, he argued, eventually developed into gods, beings superior to man and in control of his destiny.[61]

Tylor took his argument further still and considered the developmental association between the notion of the soul and the philosophy of ideas. In his conclusion to the first edition of *Primitive Culture* he writes:

> A special point brought forward in this work [. . .] [is] that one of the greatest of metaphysical doctrines is a transfer to the field of philosophy from the field of religion, made when philosophers familiar with the conception of object-phantoms used this to provide a doctrine of thought, thus giving rise to the theory of ideas.[62]

By way of example, Tylor cites a theory of thought of the Greek philosopher Democritus, who explained perception by the notion that things were constantly throwing off images of themselves. The images assimilated the surrounding air, entered a recipient soul and were then perceived. This, Tylor writes, is 'really the savage doctrine of object-souls, turned to a new purpose as a method of explaining the phenomena of thought'.[63]

In this way the notion of the soul, modified to form a philosophical theory of perception, developed into a doctrine of ideas. The Roman philosopher-poet, Lucretius, Tylor points out, also formulates a theory of film-like images of things to account both for the apparitions which come to men in dreams and the images which impress their minds in thinking. Even modern thought remains affected by the notion of an idea being a real image:

> Ideas, fined down to the abstract forms or species of material objects, and applied to other than visible qualities, have at last come merely to denote subjects of thought. Yet to this day the old theory has not utterly died out, and the retention of the significant term 'idea' (ἰδέα, 'visible form') is accompanied by a similar retention of original meaning.[64]

It is not the purpose of this study to judge the validity of Tylor's view of societies and cultures in terms which suggest that they can be classified in a sequence of evolutionary order. Lévi-Strauss has argued forcibly against this view and shown that it is scientifically untenable.[65] But Tylor does identify aspects of religious experience, outside the frameworks set by the Great Religions, which are reflected in the work of Soviet writers who explored this field without 'traditional' theological foundations.

It is with particular reference to Tylor's theory that I have chosen to discuss three writers whose vision suggests the existence of spiritual beings in creatures, places, and objects, or in ethical formulations and intellectual representations. In Valentin Rasputin's *Proshchanie s Materoi* ('Farewell to Matera', 1976), for example, the island of Matera hosts its own creature-spirit.[66] Chabua Amiredzhibi's insights into truth and falsehood, good and evil, are personified in the figures of Data Tutashkhia and his 'double', Mushni Zarandia (*Data*

Tutashkhia, 1976–77).[67] Daniil Granin's eponymous painting (*Kartina*, 1980) possesses a soul which decisively affects human lives, and is itself an image of the spirit of beauty.[68]

The animist elements in selected works by these three writers are examined in Part II. They may be seen as reflections of a spontaneously formulated religious impulse or, perhaps, rather as subsidiary models which help to grasp a preceding experience. The religious anthropologist Rudolf Otto once wrote:

> Representations of spirits and similar conceptions [. . .] are attempts in some way or other [. . .] to guess the riddle it propounds, and their effect is at the same time always to weaken and deaden the experience itself. They are the source from which springs, not religion, but the rationalization of religion, which often ends by constructing such a massive structure of theory and such a plausible fabric of interpretation, that the 'mystery' is frankly excluded.[69]

Tylor saw 'primitive' man as an aspiring philosopher, a noble savage given to the creation of intellectual formulations. However, a number of his younger contemporaries refuted or amended this view in ways which emphasized the more pragmatic and ritualistic aspects of religious belief and behaviour. James G. Frazer (1854–1941), for instance, argued that man was concerned less with reasoning than with practicalities. Religious forms had evolved from magical ones in man's search for rules by which to turn natural phenomena to his own advantage, he wrote.[70] Religion, however, introduced a conscious, personal agent into the pattern of immutable laws assumed by magic. It was 'a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life'.[71]

Other anthropologists built on this idea. R. R. Marett (1866–1943) also advocated a pre-animist stage in religious development which could not be separated from magic. Undeveloped peoples have a sense that there exists a mysterious, invisible but active power, *mana*, which belongs to certain persons and objects. It is this, Marett felt, that constitutes the earliest manifestation of a religious cult: of the separation of the sacred (that which possesses *mana*) from the profane (which does not).[72] In psychological terms, Marett also argued, magical acts are a form of emotional catharsis and help to neutralize internal tensions. Magic, he wrote, is 'a substitute activity in situations in which practical means to attain an end are lacking'.[73] Religion in its earliest stages of development is the ritualized release of pent-up feeling.

Frazer and Marett shared the idea that primitive man had a sense of nature's laws and sought to establish a satisfactory or improved relationship with them through collectively recognized ritual performances. These symbolically acted out the desired state of affairs and helped to release emotional stress. In Part III, works by Chingiz Aitmatov, Sergei Zalygin and Vladimir Tendriakov are considered with reference to this idea through shamanistic techniques, and the cosmic order that shamanism postulates. This may illustrate the tension

between psychological and sociological interpretations of the religious phenomenon. Is religion the reaction of the solitary thinking being to the unknown and the incomprehensible? Does it stem from an urge to propitiate the powers inherent in the natural world? Is it a way of releasing pent-up emotion through the medium of commonly acknowledged symbols, a formalized collective expression of the trauma of the human condition? Does it, in fact, pertain predominantly to the experience of the individual personality or to society?

The approach Émile Durkheim adopted to the problem of religion combined scientific observation with sociological theory. While drawing on material gathered from the observation of Australian Aborigines and North American Indians, he developed a comprehensive thesis on the dynamic of collective behaviour. His purpose, he wrote in the introduction to *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, was above all 'to explain present reality', and also to expose what he believed to be the universal truth behind all religious models.[74] Primitive religious culture served well as an object for examination since in it the group was more uniform, individuality less developed, and fundamental states of the religious mentality easier to identify.[75]

Durkheim held, like Marett, that primitive peoples perceived a force immanent in the world diffused in an innumerable multitude of things (*mana*), and conceived of it in the form of a sacred animal or plant which was their totemic god. The single factor common to all religious beliefs, Durkheim wrote, was their classification of things real and ideal into two distinctive and radically contrasted categories:[76] 'The sacred and the profane have always and everywhere been imagined by the human mind as separate genera, two worlds which have nothing in common.'[77] Any passage made by a selected initiate from the profane world into the sacred involves nothing less than total metamorphosis, 'a transformation *totius substantiae*'.[78]

Sacred things were identified by being protected and isolated by interdictions expressed in ritual rules of conduct prescribing behaviour towards them. A religion, Durkheim wrote:

> *is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them.* The second element which thus finds a place in our definition is no less essential than the first; for in showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from the idea of a church, it foreshadows the fact that religion must be a pre-eminently collective thing.[79]

The very idea of the sacred, Durkheim maintained, was of social origin and could be explained only in sociological terms. Its influence on individual, original minds was only by way of secondary effect. The forms taken by the notion of the sacrosanct could only be understood in relation to the public institutions of which they are the extension.[80] The sacred was on the one hand a

mental conception locating and objectifying the complex of external and intangible social forces which form man, help him, protect him and threaten him.[81] On the other, its underlying purpose was to unify societies and stemmed from the urge towards the cohesion and preservation of the group. The most primitive form of religion, totemism — or the practice of associating social groups with natural species — was a direct expression of this.[82] Totemic symbols embody in the first instance the mysterious impersonal power which pervades things in nature, and in the second instance the clans which venerate them.[83] Durkheim writes:

> The totem is above all a symbol, a material expression of some other thing [. . .].
> On the one hand, it is the external and tangible form of what we call the totemic principle or god. On the other hand, it is also the symbol of that particular society which we call the clan. It is the flag. It is the sign by which each clan distinguishes itself from the other clans, the visible mark of its personality. [. . .] If, then, it is at once the symbol of god and of society, is this not because god and society are one and the same thing? [. . .] The god of the clan, the totemic principle, cannot therefore be anything other than the clan itself hypostasized and represented to the imagination in the form of the tangible species of vegetable or animal which serves as the totem.[84]

If God and society are the same thing, then every group will create gods tailored to its own needs, reflecting its own internal dynamic. In that, modern society differs little from its primitive counterpart:

> As much today as in the past, we see society ceaselessly creating sacred things out of nothing. [. . .]
> As well as men, society sanctifies [. . .] ideas. The moment a belief is unanimously shared by a group of people, it is forbidden [. . .] to deny or dispute it. The prohibition of criticism is a prohibition like any other and proves that we are face to face with a sacred thing.[85]

Durkheim was regarded as an influential figure by Russian cultural anthropologists, and some of his work was translated in the first two decades of the century.[86] Later, his 'contradictory' attitude to Marxism was criticized by Soviet scholars; but his views on religion as a socially determined phenomenon corresponding to a social need and with a role to maintain group cohesion were duly noted.[87] They corresponded well to the strain of positivist, Western thought which had infiltrated Russia in the late nineteenth century and subsequently helped to form the foundations of Soviet ideology.

Durkheim's views on the projection of collective consciousness into the sphere of religion and ideas have particular bearing on writers whose work shows evidence of strong nationalist sympathies or state concerns. They are also relevant to writers whose work suggests that they view the idea of a deity as a useful or necessary social tool. Part IV of this analysis explores ways in which Durkheim's thesis can be related to the thinking of Russian nationalist writers

such as Iurii Bondarev, Sergei Alekseev, and Petr Proskurin, and to neo-religious, 'God-building' ideas expressed in some late writing by Aitmatov and Tendriakov.

'Man's concept of the Absolute can never be completely uprooted: it can only be debased', Eliade remarks in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*:

> Primitive spirituality lives on in its own way not in action, not as a thing man can effectively accomplish, but as a *nostalgia* which creates things that become values in themselves; art, the sciences, social theory, and all the other things to which men will give the whole of themselves.[88]

The forthcoming chapters will trace the shape of this nostalgia in the last decades of a becalmed ideological culture which, for half a century, had seen religious modes of thought as targets for elimination.

NOTES

1. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 83.
2. The history of Soviet atheism, Dimitry Pospielovsky writes, is the story 'of the grand ambition of Marxist-Leninist ideology to reshape existing forms of social consciousness, to reorganise and redirect people's beliefs. In addition, it is the story of the actual failure of the Communist Party to eradicate the faith in God and organised religions in the USSR'. Dimitry V. Pospielovsky, *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Antireligious Policies*. Volume 1 of *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory and Practice, and the Believer*, 3 vols (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 7.
3. Anne McElvoy, 'Parliament and priests unite to keep cults out of Russia', *The Times*, 21 July 1993; Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR, Before and After the Great Transformation* (New York: East European Monographs, 1992), p. 388; Vladimir Zotz, 'Personal Spiritual Orientations: Atheism and Religiousness in the Soviet Union', *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 12, no. 3, June 1992, pp. 12, 13, 16.
4. Jonathan Sacks, 'The Demoralisation of Discourse: 1990 Reith Lectures 2', *Listener*, 22 November 1990, pp. 9–11.
5. Bergson, *Morality and Religion* (1956), p. 176, quoted in E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 116.
6. Religion, Bergson writes, is 'a defensive reaction of Nature against the dissolvent power of intelligence'. Bergson, *Morality and Religion* (1935), p. 101. For a brief summary of Bergson's argument see E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, pp. 115–17.
7. Bergson, *Morality and Religion*, pp. 109, 117.
8. Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, p. 116.
9. Bergson, *Morality and Religion*, p. 88.
10. Lotman describes language as 'every system whose end is to establish communication between two or more individuals'. He also writes: 'We can apply the term "language" not only to Russian, French, Hindi and the like; not only to the artificially created systems of the different sciences, systems used to describe particular groups of phenomena (we call these the 'artificial languages' or metalanguages of the given sciences); but also to customs, rituals, commerce, and religious concepts.' Jurij Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, trans. by Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977), pp. 6, 7.
11. Ibid., p. 9.
12. G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1970), p. 28.
13. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 87, quoted in Kirk, *Myth*, p. 30.
14. Ivan Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Lévi-Strauss and Malinowski* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 158–59.
15. Ibid., p. 132.

16. Unlike Eliade or Jung. Lévi-Strauss holds that myths have nothing instructive to say about the order of the world, the nature of reality or the destiny of mankind. They do not satisfy a metaphysical thirst or express a religious nostalgia for a primordial condition. Ibid., p. 157.
17. Sergei Averintsev, *Religiia i literatura* (Ann Arbor: Ermitazh, 1981), p. 94.
18. Ibid., p. 95.
19. Ibid., pp. 102–05.
20. Ibid., pp. 101–02.
21. Mann writes: 'In the typical there is much of the mythical [. . .] in the sense that the typical — like every myth — is a primal image, a primal form of life [. . .], a formula established in times of old, in which life rests as it gains consciousness of itself.' T. Mann, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 9 (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1960), p. 175, quoted in Averintsev, *Religiia*, p. 111.
22. Charles H. Long, cited in Joseph M. Kitagawa, 'Primitive, Classical and Modern Religions: A Perspective on Understanding the History of Religions', in Joseph M. Kitagawa, Mircea Eliade and Charles H. Long, eds, *The History of Religions* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 46.
23. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. trans. by Rosemary Sheed (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. 418.
24. Eliade, quoted in Kitagawa, 'Primitive, Classical and Modern Religions', p. 45.
25. Ibid., p. 46
26. Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, p. 431.
27. Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. by William R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1959), pp. ix, 5, 9, 38–39, 106, 149; Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 40.
28. Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth*, p. 132.
29. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, pp. 39–40.
30. Ibid., pp. 37–38.
31. Robert C. Tucker, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987), p. 33.
32. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, pp. xii and 3–4.
33. Ibid., p. 10.
34. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), p. 611.
35. Ibid., p. 621.
36. Ibid., p. 623.
37. Ibid., p. 609.
38. Karl Popper defines 'historicism' as 'an approach to the social sciences which assumes that *historical prediction* is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the "rhythms" or the "patterns", the "laws" or the "trends" that underlie the evolution of history.' Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 3.
39. Pospielovsky comments that 'movements evolving from people brought up on Marxism but rejecting Marxist socio-political and relativistic moral solutions would combine a study of history [. . .] with an almost unconscious religious tendency.' Dimitry Pospielovsky, 'A Comparative Enquiry into Neo-Slavophilism and its Antecedents in the Russian History of Ideas', *Soviet Studies*, 31 (1979), 321.
40. Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth*, p. 132.
41. Alexander Zinoviev, *The Reality of Communism*, trans. by Charles Janson (London: Gollancz, 1984), pp. 222–23.
42. Lotman, *Structure of Artistic Text*, p. 4.
43. Salman Rushdie, 'Is Nothing Sacred? The Herbert Read Memorial Lecture', *Granta*, 6 February 1990, p. 7.
44. G. Belaia, *Literatura v zerkale kritiki* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1986), p. 34.
45. For a close analysis of the meaning of 'polyphony' in Bakhtin's vocabulary, see Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 231–68.
46. In his essay on socialist realism, Abram Terts (Andrei Siniavskii) quotes the following remark on 'unanimity' among Soviet Russians made by V. Ilen'kov, a winner of the Stalin Prize for the novel *Bol'shaia doroga* (*The Great Highway*, 1949): 'Russia took its own road — that of unanimity. [. . .] For thousands of years men suffered from differences of opinion. But now we, Soviet men and women, for the first time agree with each other, talk one language that we all understand, and think identically about the main things in life. It is this unanimity that makes us strong and superior to all other people in the world, who are internally torn and

socially isolated through the differences of opinion.' Abram Tertz, *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism*, trans. by Max Hayward (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), pp. 175–76.

47. Marko Pavlyshyn, 'Preface' and Katerina Clark, 'Rethinking the Past and the Current Thaw', in Marko Pavlyshyn, ed., *Glasnost' in Context: On the Recurrence of Liberalizations in Central and East European Literatures and Cultures* (New York, Oxford and Munich: Berg, 1990), pp. iv, 1, 2, 5, 8.
48. Geoffrey A. Hosking, 'Introduction' in Julian Graffy and Geoffrey A. Hosking, eds, *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 2.
49. Tucker, *Political Culture*, p. 1.
50. É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, quoted in Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974), p. 21.
51. Bergson, *Morality and Religion*, p. 84.
52. Compare S. N. Bulgakov, 'Geroizm i podvizhnichestvo', in *Vekhi: Sbornik statei o russkoi intelligentsii* (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1909), pp. 23–69.
53. David Pace, *Claude Lévi-Strauss: The Bearer of Ashes* (London, Boston, MA and Henley-on-Thames: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 98–99.
54. Georgii Plekhanov, 'On the so-called Religious Seekings in Russia' and 'Reply to Questionnaire from the Journal *Mercure de France* on the Future of Religion' in *Selected Philosophical Works*, 5 vols (Moscow: Progress, 1976), III, 98 and 311; G. V. Plekhanov, *Art and Social Life* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1953), p. 106.
55. Plekhanov, 'Religious Seekings', p. 314.
56. Ibid., p. 312.
57. Ibid., p. 325; Plekhanov, *Art and Social Life*, p. 106.
58. Joan Leopold, *Culture in Comparative and Evolutionary Perspective: E. B. Tylor and the Making of 'Primitive Culture'* (Berlin: Reimer, 1980), p. 46.
59. Edward B. Tylor, 'The Matriarchal Family System', *The Nineteenth Century*, No. 40 (1896), p. 96.
60. For definitions of the term 'primitive' see Pace, *Lévi-Strauss*, pp. 126–27. Evans-Pritchard notes the debt Tylor owed to the positivist philosopher Auguste Comte (1795–1851). Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, p. 24. Comte regarded reason as the superior human faculty, and the history of intellectual development as the key to social evolution: 'It is only through the more and more marked influence of reason over the general conduct of man and of society, that the gradual march of our race has attained that regularity and persevering continuity which distinguish it so radically from [. . .] the expansion of even the highest animal orders.' Quoted in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edn 29 vols (Cambridge, 1910), VI, 820. The notion of the 'noble savage', unspoilt by education, was popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), and Tylor's thoughtful 'primitive man' is likely to be an extension of the same figure. Tylor also argued for a strict analogy between primitive man and the mentality of the child. This accords with the ideas of G. E. Lessing (1729–81). In *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* ('The Education of the Human Race', 1780), Lessing explained the historical development and perfectibility of the human race in terms of the child's growth. Most evident of all is the reflection of nineteenth-century evolutionistic views in Tylor's work. These are drawn chiefly from the naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–82) and the social philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who both viewed the development of the natural and social world as a movement from simple, lower forms to higher, more complex ones. Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 15 vols (New York and London: Macmillan, 1987), I, 296–97.
61. Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, p. 25. For a short summary of Tylor's argument see Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, p. 18.
62. E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1871), II, 404.
63. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 5th edn, vol. 1 (1929), p. 497.
64. Ibid., p. 498.
65. Pace, *Lévi-Strauss*, pp. 80–81, 89.
66. Valentin Rasputin, *Proshchanie s Materoi, Nash sovremennik* (1976: 10), 3–71; (1976: 11), 17–64. Subsequent references are to Rasputin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1984).
67. Chabua Amiredzhibi, 'Data Tutashkhia', *Druzhba narodov* (1976: 11), 74–152; (1976: 12), 57–113; (1977: 3), 6–64; (1977: 4), 66–177. Subsequent references are to Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1979).

68. Daniil Granin, *Kartina*, *Novyi mir* (1980: 1), 3–132; (1980: 2), 85–176. Subsequent references are to Granin, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh*, vol. 4 (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980).
69. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. by John W. Harvey, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 26–27.
70. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1900), III, 62) Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, p. 27; Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard, *A History of Anthropological Thought*, ed. by André Singer (London and Boston, MA: Faber and Faber, 1981), pp. 137–38.
71. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, I, 63: Evans-Pritchard, *Anthropological Thought*, p. 136.
72. Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, pp. 32–33.
73. Ibid., p. 34.
74. Émile Durkheim, 'The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: the Totemic System in Australia', in *Durkheim on Religion: A Selection of Readings with Bibliographies*, ed. by W. S. F. Pickering, trans. by Jacqueline Redding and W. S. F. Pickering (London and Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 103.
75. Ibid., p. 107.
76. Ibid., p. 113.
77. Ibid., p. 115.
78. Ibid., p. 116.
79. Ibid., p. 123.
80. Émile Durkheim, 'Concerning the Definition of Religious Phenomena', Ibid., p. 98.
81. Durkheim, 'Elementary Forms', Ibid., pp. 129–31.
82. Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, pp. 56–57.
83. Ibid., p. 59.
84. Durkheim, 'Elementary Forms', in Pickering, *Durkheim on Religion*, pp. 124–25.
85. Ibid., pp. 131–32.
86. Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) appeared in Russian in 1900 and *Suicide* (1897) was translated in 1912.
87. For example, by E. M. Korzheva in *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, ed. by A. M. Prokhorov, 3rd edn, 32 vols (New York and London: Macmillan, 1973), VIII, 458.
88. Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, pp. 433–34.

CHAPTER 2

RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS DILEMMAS IN RETROSPECT

From the earliest years of its chronicled history, up to the Revolution and beyond, the Russian religious experience has vacillated between two principles: the theocratic and the ascetic. Russian society was traditionally sustained by the myth of its identity as a community of 'right believers'. Orthodox Christianity (*pravoslavie*: 'right worship' or 'right belief') defined the community more firmly even than language; at the turn of the twentieth century it was still more common for a Russian peasant to speak of himself as 'pravoslavnyi' than as 'russkii'.[1] Following the enforced conversion of Rus' to Christianity in 988, Russia knew an institutionalized religion closely tied to the state structure which gave the state the authority to claim a divine commission. But from that tradition there also emerged some remarkable religious figures who preferred to devote themselves, as far as possible, exclusively to spiritual practice.[2]

There has existed in Russian history an apparently endemic tension between a 'totemic' religious attitude — in the sense that the social unit, the state, was revered with all the trappings both of secular wealth and Christian tradition — and an attitude which might loosely be called 'animist', in that its adherents perceived the world solely in terms of an immanent Spirit, the Trinitarian Deity. This paradox between a spirituality which turns away from the material world, wealth and power, and a tradition which seeks to absorb secular and aesthetic values into its sphere, has been reflected as much in the institutional history of the Russian Orthodox Church, as in the lives and thinking of some of its greatest saints and scribes.

Christianity brought to Rus' a tradition of the Church's subordination to secular power and government structures. The conversion of Rus' in 988 is now widely recognized by historians as an event motivated by political rather than theological concerns.[3] The acceptance of Byzantine Christianity by Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev, Dmitrii Likhachev has remarked, was an act of state rather than spiritual enlightenment. It created a sought-after coalition between the Eastern Slavs and brought with it an advantageous alliance with Constantinople; but, from the start, it put the Church in a position subservient to the state.[4]

Conversely, another event in medieval Russian history which might appear to have a political rather than religious character has frequently been described

in terms that suggest the opposite. The repulsion of the Tatars by the Russians at the Battle of Kulikovo Field in 1380 is remembered as a spiritual victory. Aleksandr Blok called it a 'symbolic event', and in his cycle of poems *Na pole Kulikovom* ('Kulikovo Field', 1908) depicted it as an 'eternal battle' (*'vechnyi boi'*) between the forces of good and evil.[5] It was one of Russia's greatest saints, Sergii Radonezhskii, who is said to have given inspiration to the movement which thrust back Tatar domination by giving his blessing to the leader of the Russian insurrection, Prince Dmitrii Donskoi.[6] Sergei Bulgakov, too, called it an act of Christian 'otherworldliness' (*'podvizhnichestvo'*), a 'feat of meekness' (*'podvig smireniia'*) and a revolutionary act at once.[7]

In the fifteenth century the Russian Church gained independence from Constantinople and acquired a sense of its mission as protector of the original Christian tradition inherited from a fallen Byzantium.[8] Since then the tension between the spiritual calling of the Church in Russia and its historical and political role has remained unresolved. The letter which the elder Filofei of Pskov wrote to Tsar Vasilii III in about 1510, identifying him as the head of the Apostolic Church now in Moscow, and Moscow herself as the Third Rome, laid the foundations for a messianic attitude of mind which served at times to feed a political ideology of secular imperialism as much as Russia's perception of its religious identity in Europe and Asia.[9]

The doctrine gave some influential representatives of the Church, and the Muscovite state, a free hand in the appropriation and dispensation of possession and power in sixteenth-century Russia; but this was countered by a group of ascetics — the 'transvolga hermits' led by Nil Sorskii (*c.* 1433–1508) — who held that the Church should be independent of the state and questioned its right to any form of land ownership.[10] Less overtly, secularized religious forms were also challenged by traditional Byzantine beliefs which had permeated all levels of Russian society. One such was the characteristic notion of 'folly for the sake of Christ'. This carried to its limits the veneration of suffering and the renunciation of earthly wisdom. The 'holy fool' voluntarily stripped himself of all intellectual attributes and took upon himself the burden of madness. He was then entitled to be critical of those in power and continued to be treated with considerable respect.[11]

The struggle between ascetic and theocratic principles is probably most clearly marked by the Old Believer schism in the seventeenth century. A group of clergy led by the Archpriest Avvakum defied the reigning patriarch, Nikon, over unacceptable changes in liturgical practice. These, Avvakum and his followers objected, broke the continuity of the sacred tradition of 'right worship' (*'pravoslavie'*) for the sake of closer links with the Byzantine rite, which Nikon regarded as politically indispensable.[12]

The Old Believers were defending not just the purity of their religion, nor indeed the Russian messianic tradition, but, more important perhaps, the

sanctity of the ritual act. This, they argued, could not be changed because it was the prescribed, age-old link between the Deity and the material world.[13] Today — the schism notwithstanding — the Russian Orthodox Church continues to teach that it guards the glorification of God with 'right worship'.[14] The traditional ritual act is, as Georges Florovsky writes, 'the witness of the Spirit; the Spirit's unceasing revelation. [...] Tradition is not only a protective, conservative principle; it is, primarily, the principle of growth and regeneration. [...] [It] is the constant abiding of the Spirit and not only the memory of words.'[15]

This idea of tradition as a living thing, 'the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church'[16] or the point of encounter between the material and the spiritual, reflects one aspect of what Nicolas Zernov has called the 'fundamental conviction of the Russian religious mind', which is 'the recognition of the potential holiness of matter, the unity and sacredness of the entire creation, and man's call to participate in the divine plan for its ultimate transfiguration'.[17]

The belief that the material world is intimately a part of the Deity, and that there exists an immanently present link between God and matter (often personified in the figure of Hagia Sophia, Holy Wisdom, or in the figure of the Mother of God), was preserved among social groups unaffected by Western thought — particularly the Old Believers — until Vladimir Solov'ev revived the idea among the intelligentsia in the late nineteenth century.[18] It is a notion deeply ingrained in Russian thought and crucial to the understanding of the Russian experience, both historical and cultural. Until the eighteenth century, when Peter's reforms significantly changed the role and character of the Church, the struggle between 'involvement' and 'non-involvement' in politics and in the acquisition of wealth was at the deepest level a disagreement over the interpretation of the linkage between God and matter, personified in Hagia Sophia. Those within the Church who felt that power and material wealth should belong to it would argue that through the Church matter, as much as man, becomes holy.[19] Their opponents preferred to leave sanctification entirely to God.

The tension was rooted not entirely in acquisitiveness; in essence, it was theological. The doctrine of the Third Rome which laid the foundations for the theocratic attitude of mind grew, Sergei Zenkovskii is reported to have said, from a thirst to bring closer the incarnation of the Kingdom of God on Earth. It was a myth which developed from the need to combine 'the heavenly and the earthly, the divine and the human in a concrete reality'.[20]

The transfiguration of matter, man and, by extension, of wealth and society in history, and the way in which this would be achieved, remained a key problem in secular as well as ecclesiastical environments throughout the nineteenth century and well after the Revolution. And it was perhaps because

of the deeply held belief that the world is by its nature there to be transfigured — made perfect and whole — that Western utopian ideologies were able to take root and flourish in Russia as nowhere else.

There are firm grounds for tracing the secularization of this theological notion to the Petrine reforms. Tsar Peter the Great set himself the task of transforming Russia into a European power, and created a complex state structure intended to assist the transition. He was disturbed by the memory of Patriarch Nikon's political aspirations, and, as a precautionary measure, kept a tight hold on the Church hierarchy.[21] The death of Patriarch Adrian in 1700 saw the abolition of the patriarchate and the Church subsumed by a department of state, the Holy Synod, with a layman in charge. The Church in effect took on the role of a department of education and social welfare, caring for or supervising the common people.[22] It ceased to carry the spiritual authority touching upon every aspect of material existence which Orthodox theology, as much as the Church's social and political role, had previously bestowed on it. Commenting on the quality of Russian culture before the meeting with the West in the eighteenth century, Nicolas Zernov has emphasized a ritualism and piety with affinities in Old Testament prescriptions:

> The Muscovites distinguished between clean and unclean food, and between dress and customs becoming and unbecoming to a faithful Christian. The keenest among them combined this ritualism of daily life (*bytovoe blagochestie*) with a puritanical disapproval of popular amusements and with severe moral and bodily discipline.[23]

The effective subjugation of the Church in the eighteenth century to an increasingly developed, ostensibly religious, but actually secularized culture, was reinforced by Peter's successors. Under Catherine II, church land was expropriated and replaced by subsidies which did not compare with its proper value. The rural clergy were forced to gain their income from parishes and farming small plots of land attached to parish churches. They were frequently left in poverty, preoccupied chiefly by drawing funds from their parishioners.[24] By the beginning of the twentieth century, the activity of the Church was predominantly confined to the performance of the liturgy. Its independent voice, Metropolitan Antonii of St Petersburg complained in 1905, was unheard both in private and public life.[25]

But the spiritual tradition housed within the Church remained alive and active nonetheless. H. P. Liddon, Canon of St Paul's, observed after a visit to Russia in 1867, that the sense of the supernatural seemed 'to penetrate Russian life more completely than that of any of the Western nations'.[26] Indeed, the nineteenth century — chiefly remembered as an age of bureaucratic oppression, with a materially and intellectually stifled Church — saw the revival of some traditional beliefs which Peter's reforms had sought to brush away as unworthy of a modern Western power.

In a forest near the monastery of Sarov, for instance, a hermit named Serafim was preaching a doctrine of man's vocation to deification and union with God, re-emphasizing that not only the soul, but the body — matter — could be sanctified and transfigured.[27] His teaching, and that of other less well-known figures, descended from the tradition of unworldliness and independence from temporal concerns laid down by Nil Sorskii three centuries earlier, was taken up, for example, at the hermitage of Optina Pustyn', south of Moscow.[28] The influence of these elders (*'startsy'*) apparently penetrated nineteenth-century Russian society at all levels: from the peasantry — long attached to religious tradition and belief — to well-placed intellectuals, who tended to be non-believers.[29] The Optina monks affected the work of some of the most renowned *literati* of the time: Gogol', Dostoevskii, Solov'ev, and Tolstoi.[30]

These writers became spokesmen for Russian Orthodoxy in a way theologians and academics could not, since ecclesiastical and secular censorship was imposed on all Orthodox pronouncements.[31] Though now widely regarded as representatives of their era, they and the Slavophile thinkers with whom they sympathized were dissenting figures inasmuch as they questioned the basic tenets upheld by the intelligentsia of the time, particularly its positivism and materialism.[32]

The religious ideology professed by the Imperial Russian state bore a temporal character and was imposed by secular means.[33] It left little room for original thought within its bounds. And this, writes Geoffrey Hosking, predisposed all sectors of the population to an ideological posture which proclaimed secularism but bore unmistakably religious overtones, similar to those which later appeared in Stalinist state symbols:

> It is almost as if there were a church-shaped vacuum in that culture, waiting to be filled by any ideology or institution which could satisfy Russians' aspiration to join with others in order to be of service to their fellow men.[34]

A number of scholars have pointed out that the Russian intelligentsia as a social group was marked by some of the characteristics of a religious order. It was a class identified by conformity of dress, manner and values.[35] And it had a heroic vocation to save the world.[36] These characteristics, Sergei Bulgakov wrote, developed out of a tradition of subjection to government oppression, a sense of collective martyrdom on the one hand, and on the other an 'enforced separation from practical life' and ordinary people, leading to a tendency to sentimentalize and idealize. The intelligentsia with its unworldliness, its eschatological visions of the Holy City and the coming of righteousness suffered, Bulgakov said, from 'a deficient sense of reality' combined with a paradoxically patronizing yet worshipful posture towards 'the people'.[37] The journalist Harold Williams, who was closely involved in Russian liberal circles between

1904 and 1917, also sensed attitudes reminiscent of Puritanism, and a non-Conformist conscience directed not at the salvation of the individual but at a notional salvation of the populace.[38]

While rejecting the dogmatic basis of religion as an ideological ramification of the state autocracy, the intelligentsia also revived something of the quality of pre-Petrine religious faith: disciplined, uncritical, communal and messianic.[39] Its guiding principle was service to the people and a search for *pravda*: moral truth.[40] The Russian intelligentsia, Zernov writes, took upon itself the role of Christian prophet and herald, calling upon the Russians to fulfil their preordained mission and build their corporate life in social justice, harmony and peace.[41]

It did so by creating a cultural atmosphere which would encourage social responsibility and correct behaviour. Vissarion Belinskii, one of the fathers of socialism in Russia, saw literature in particular as the fibre which could knit the loose strands of society with thoughts and attitudes to help make it strong and whole:

> All our moral interests, our entire spiritual life has so far been concentrated exclusively in literature, and it will continue to be so for a long time to come. Literature is the living source from which all human feelings and thoughts filter into society.[42]

Nineteenth-century radical literature — novels and shorter tracts — offered didactic guidelines for living in a way similar to medieval hagiographic texts. A somewhat heavy-handed use of biblical or liturgical formulations and images was normal in these writings, since their aim — moral education — coincided with that of traditional religious works. As Katerina Clark remarks, much radical fiction consequently 'surrendered its generic identity to the language of rhetoric and the church'.[43]

Clark's observation could be directed with justification at the best writers of the period — Dostoevskii or Tolstoi — as well as at lesser figures such as Chernyshevskii or Stepniak-Kravchinskii. The nineteenth century was in many ways an age of final solutions to long-standing problems: economic, social, scientific, philosophical. And in Russian literature as in no other, it was *de rigueur* to offer answers to the 'accursed questions': to show the readership how to live, irrespective of the complexity of the moral or philosophical issues raised.

The notion that literature must have more than aesthetic significance was reflected in a didactic narrative stance, a fictionalized form of theological discourse, and in an urge to prophesy characteristic of some writing by Dostoevskii or Gogol'.[44] Related to this semi-sacral, prophetic role was Russian fiction's preoccupation with the depiction of characters who might serve as models for living.[45] As critics frequently point out, the hero of the time was less an individual than a representative of moral or social qualities which

might help to lead Russia out of stalemate.[46] Literature offered a prescriptive guide to 'right thought' and 'right behaviour' morally, socially and politically; and its 'positive' heroes were there to point the way forward.

The nineteenth-century positive hero carried a greater burden even than the saint of medieval hagiography or the valorous prince of the chronicles, to whom he has been compared.[47] His life did not merely present a conventionalized, exemplary pattern of virtue. He was to do no less than spearhead a movement designed to transfigure society and its individual members.

The prototype for the exemplary new man who would take the reins when the world was ready and, meanwhile, give his life to the realization of the social ideal, is generally said to be Rakhmetov, the taciturn revolutionary in N. G. Chernyshevskii's novel *Chto delat'?* ('What is to be Done?', 1863). Rakhmetov's role may be subordinate to the main relationships in the plot (which works chiefly towards a reassessment of the woman's role in society), but he is illustrative of the novel's driving purpose as a blueprint for the overthrow of an oppressive social order.[48] Fiercely disciplined, well-read and persistently active for his cause, Rakhmetov is a superior being (*'vysshaia natura'*), awaiting recognition as an example to the world and, perhaps, as its saviour.[49] His life recalls the hagiographic pattern of the Life of Aleksei, Man of God, who also abandons an affluent background to live by rigorous ascetic practice. And, certainly, the novel was invoked by the earliest leaders of the Soviet Union as the text which most inspired their Revolutionary activity.[50] Lenin is reputed to have commented: 'It is a thing which can fire one's energies for a lifetime.'[51]

Positive heroes, writes Richard Freeborn:

> whether Dostoyevskian and Tolstoyan or Soviet, have their literary beginnings in this post-Chernyshevsky concern for a vision of humanity transformed into exemplars, given a pattern of Christian humility to follow in Dostoyevsky, of structured religious doctrine in Tolstoy or of Marx-Engels-Leninism and scientific truth in Soviet literature.[52]

However, the line of exemplar heroes Freeborn identifies appears to bifurcate precisely at this point. On the one hand we see those representing the energies of the revolutionary collective who might be termed 'totemic' figures. They can be traced from Chernyshevskii through, for example, works by Stepniak-Kravchinskii, to Gor'kii and writers of the socialist realist school. On the other side stand heroes whose lives suggest that their positive nature resides in a relationship with a spiritual or noumenal sphere of existence. These are products of the 'animist' school of thought; characters from Dostoevskii, Tolstoi and — later — Mikhail Bulgakov, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn could be cited as examples.

The animist-totemist dichotomy expressed throughout Russia's religious history, was inherited, in the late nineteenth century, by a literature which had

taken upon itself the task of revealing all life's mysteries. The positive hero of the Rakhmetov school acts as a focus through which society is to perceive itself and its direction. He is an early sketch for the socialist realist hero who served as Soviet society's totemic god: the leader and father of the people, embodying and symbolizing collective forces.

The hero of the 'animist' school recognizes an immanent and personified spiritual reality, and allows it to be revealed in his life. Figures such as Father Zosima or Platon Karataev, Prince Myshkin or Nekhliudov are the bearers of a message affirming a numinous quality in things, and a God-given human capacity to perceive reality in its integrated unity through personal relationship. The teaching of the mystic elder, Zosima, in *Brat'ia Karamazovy* ('The Brothers Karamazov', 1879) reflects this most fully: 'Love all of God's creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, [...] love each thing. If you love each thing, you will perceive the mystery of God in things.'[53]

The particular quality of the divine mystery ('*taina bozhiia*') is that it is not just a way to redemption beyond the grave, but, more relevant for the here and now, an essential part of the mechanics of successful living. An important element in Zosima's teaching is the thought that life itself is a paradise hidden within every human being.[54] There is no such thing as separation between spiritual and material life. The mystical union between spirit and matter, once consciously affirmed, cannot but create miracles. As the narrator of *Brat'ia Karamazovy* comments: 'In the realist faith is not born from miracles, but miracles from faith.'[55]

Zosima's vision of total unity, and of the potential integration of physical and spiritual through life in communion and identity with what exists outside the self, is shared also by Tolstoi.[56] This is so despite Tolstoi's misgivings about institutional aspects of ecclesiastical life and official interpretations of Christian dogma.[57] Richard F. Gustafson writes:

> Estranged from Father Zosima's Church and monastery, Tolstoy dwells in his universe [...].
>
> The theological vision of life in *The Brothers Karamazov* [...] resembles the idea of the salvation of life in *War and Peace*. [...] Father Zosima's active love, which is understood as God's love in us given to be expressed and when expressed redemptive of life [...] stands in total agreement with Tolstoy's theology of redemptive love.[58]

Tolstoi's vision is based, like Dostoevskii's, on the assumption of an all-pervading unity to which things are subordinate, and on a sense that the world must be by its nature good — even when evil seems dominant — because it is rooted in the divine. This belief, as Gustafson shows, is in evidence throughout Tolstoi's writing. In many ways it resembles the teaching of other Russian religious thinkers who were Tolstoi's contemporaries and successors, in particular the visionary philosopher and poet Vladimir Solov'ev.[59]

Solov'ev's *Chteniia o Bogochelovechestve* ('Lectures on Godmanhood', 1877–81) proposed a philosophical structure illustrating the notion of total unity in terms of a metaphysical world of mutually penetrating, but separate, beings modelled on the Trinitarian God. These shared a wholeness, an 'All-unity' ('*vseedinstvo*') which was and was not the Divine Being.[60] The created universe was also, in Solov'ev's vision, a 'person', a single organism and a spirit which he identified as the 'World Soul' or as Sophia, the Divine Wisdom.[61] She was metaphysically 'married' to the Divinity, and advancing — with difficulty at times — towards an absolute union with Him.[62] This was ultimately to be established through the increasing closeness of the relationship between man and God.[63] The positive response of man to the love of the Creator could lead — through the person of Jesus Christ — to his ultimate transfiguration into 'Godmanhood' ('*Bogochelovechestvo*'). The term indicated the evolutionary integration of matter and spirit and the restoration of the ideal relationship between man and God, the world and God, or Sophia and the active, energizing and unifying life principle, the *Logos*.[64]

Solov'ev laid foundations for those Russian philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who chose to reject positivism, Marxism, and the socio-economic theories which governed the thought of the radical intelligentsia. Sergei Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdiaev, for example, turned away from the Nietzschean vision of man as God which the radicals had adopted and popularized in the heroic ideal of 'mangodhood' ('*chelovekobozhestvo*').[65]

Bulgakov argued that the heroic prototype had a dangerously divisive effect in the social and historical spheres. It demanded a separate, passive 'object' to be saved ('the people' or 'humanity'). It rejected the lessons of the past. It assumed a singleness of purpose which — once lost — could lead only to enmity and rivalry. The paradox, Bulgakov said, is that whereas unity is sought in the revolutionary doctrine of social collectivism and communality, in practice it is displaced by the persistent self-affirmation which heroism presupposes.[66] Instead Bulgakov reverted to the Christian idea that social transfiguration was to be achieved not by resisting and mastering the forces of the cosmos, but through a growing together of man with the Deity through an act of faith and humility ('*smirenie*') and by the consequent uncorrupted reflection of the Will of the Creator in the will of men: Godmanhood. There he saw a stable grounding for social coherence and the flowering of man's intellectual and spiritual potential.[67]

The writing of Bulgakov is also based on the sophiological conception of God and creation; he went on to re-emphasize Solov'ev's suggestion that Sophia, the spirit of creation linked to God, had her counterpart in the Orthodox Church.[68] It was through the Church that the Divine Wisdom was made manifest in the world, because the Church *was* the cosmos transfigured through its communion with the Deity.

Bulgakov's thought makes explicit an idea always inherent in the Orthodox religious tradition: that the cosmos and man were created to be deified through the mediation of the Church. Man, the icon or image of God, may if he chooses become God ('attain *theosis*') without losing his own identity in that union with the Deity.[69] But he may do so only within the corporate body of the Church with all its members, living and dead.[70] Deification is something which ultimately involves the body (though sanctity will be outwardly manifest to the full only on the Last Day) as well as the whole of material creation.[71] 'Redeemed man is not to be snatched away from the rest of creation, but creation is to be saved and glorified along with him', Timothy Ware writes.[72]

The radicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew significantly on ideas put forward by religious thinkers of their time: that man could and should be God, and that the world and man could and must be transfigured — not in isolation but in community. The distinction lay in the focus through which this change was contemplated. The religious thinkers held that it was to be achieved through the integration of the individual self with the objectively existing world of the spirit, the persons of the Deity.[73] The radical intelligentsia believed that it should be done by the submission of individual interests to collective interests via the totemic symbol of collective unity: the revolutionary man-god. And, if Bulgakov is to be believed, never the twain would meet.[74]

The two schools of thought had inherited, in effect, the dilemma which had teased the Russian religious mind since Prince Vladimir's conversion. Was the Deity a Spirit Being independent of, but somehow linked to, the physical world and waiting to be unified with it? Or was He rather the immanent fullness, the energy and power, the *mana* which is in the material world, particularly in the integrated community, the strong state, or utopian collective, and in its leadership?

The literature of the Soviet Union came to reflect this dichotomy no less clearly than earlier writing. But as the social theories of Russian radical intellectuals crystallized into the ideology of the post-Revolutionary state so, in officially approved works, the totemic line of thought took precedence over the animist and, for a time, stifled it almost completely. The theocratic aspect of religious life which had once offered Russian society a myth and an identity was translated into a collectivist ideology which gave new meaning to the traditional notion of communality. The revolutionary republic of Soviet Rus', as Lenin once called it, created its own sustaining myth in terms of a community of 'builders of socialism'.[75]

The decree on religion passed in 1918 ensured that religious thought and practice took on a wholly private character, isolated from the support of the state and the community.[76] Lenin had inherited Marx's personal anti-theism

and Engels's view that religion was a fantasy reflecting man's helplessness before the powers of nature and society in the earlier stages of history. With the increase of man's control over nature and social processes, religious practices would cease to have any function and eventually disappear. Discouraging any form of spiritual discipline or animist mode of thought — other than in the sense of cultivating deep personal links and loyalties to the group and its symbolic representations — became a strong priority in Party policy.[77]

The rejection of a religious model which had shaped Russian thought for over nine hundred years could not, however, force a total break with the past.[78] The characteristics retained by the new state lend further support to Lotman's thesis that the history of Russian culture can be divided into a series of dynamically opposing consecutive stages. Every new historical period — Christianization, for example, or the Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great — is orientated towards a rejection of the values of the preceding era and yet holds an intrinsic tendency to reproduce them in 'similar events, historical-psychological situations, or texts'.[79]

In radically negating cultural models of the past, Bolshevik ideology in many ways regenerated them. It called for as much commitment from its neophytes as religions demand from their followers. Virtually every aspect of cultural life in the Communist party state pertained to politics in a way paradoxically very similar to the classic Church-state model.[80] But the Leninist *Weltanschauung* was to be built on a prior rejection of any religious belief which might sully the purity of faith in the new doctrine. Atheism would clear the mind and be the precondition and test for the sincerity of any affiliation to the Communist Party.[81]

The inspiration of a Revolutionary mood became the task of all the arts. The newly formed Soviet Union was to be a tutelary state engaged in the proper political upbringing and education of all its members.[82] In consequence, the animist vision which had formed the basis of much of the finest literature of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia was declared taboo. With the censorship body GLAVLIT monitoring all published writing after 1922, the use of religious imagery was permitted only as parody of the reactionary past.[83]

But when, in 1934, the doctrine of socialist realism was promulgated as a guide for Soviet writers, the formula Andrei Zhdanov presented to the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers offered only a loose methodological framework. It recommended writers give 'an authentic, historically specific depiction of reality in its revolutionary development', and asked them to combine this with the task of 'ideologically reshaping and educating toilers in the spirit of socialism'. It also guaranteed the creative artist exceptional opportunities for the manifestation of his creative initiative.[84] Beyond that, the doctrine was defined largely by quoting lists of exemplary texts.[85] The Zhdanov precept affirmed a specific literary genealogy and gave writers a sense of their

common association in a collective enterprise to create the myth which would sustain Soviet society.[86] This rested on a teleological assumption, as Abram Tertz (Andrei Siniavskii) has observed: the notion of an all-embracing Purpose in reality and history.[87] In the tradition of religious scriptures, it was to present a complete answer to the meaning of human destiny.[88] In practice, Zhdanov's formula may have encouraged writers to reapply structures based on religious models which had been developed by nineteenth-century radical thinkers, and to translate them into a new set of interpretations drawn from Bolshevik and, later, Stalinist mythologies.[89] As Lotman and Uspenskii might have it, the old system of values was written into the new 'with a minus sign'.[90]

Many critics have regarded Maksim Gor'kii's novel *Mat'* ('Mother', 1907) as an excellent illustration of the transition from radical fiction to the socialist realist tradition.[91] It offered a new interpretation of the plot pattern and system of images which, in the writings of Chernyshevskii or Stepniak-Kravchinskii, had served to outline moral qualities and spiritual growth. Gor'kii's novel, Clark writes, gave significance to nineteenth-century clichés in accordance with the Bolshevik paradigm for historical progress, the 'spontaneity/consciousness dialectic'.[92]

'Spontaneity' (*'stikhiinost'*') refers to social behaviour inadequately controlled by political awareness. It may be erratic, inconsistent, or anarchic, stimulated by an uncontrolled nature rather than thoughtful deliberation. 'Consciousness' (*'soznatel'nost'*') identifies behaviour that is controlled and guided by correct political affiliations. It is a part of the Leninist vision of social progress that the forces of spontaneity and consciousness have since time immemorial been locked in a dialectical struggle which gives history its progressive dynamic and leads to a final resolution in communism.[93] Revolutionary consciousness is the prerogative of an enlightened minority, whose missionary efforts drive the struggle on.[94]

While establishing the precedence of the social value over individual drive, *Mat'* also offered a new formulation by depicting the development of the animist value into the totemic value. Gor'kii wrote the novel at a time when he was inclining towards the 'God-building' theory (*'bogostroitel'stvo'*) propagated in the early writings of Anatolii Lunacharskii. Collective energy, Lunacharskii argued, could effectively be tapped by means traditionally used in religious institutions. The 'enthusiasm' and motivation to creative activity which religion generated, could be valuable in the realization of the social ideal.[95]

Gor'kii's thinking on the subject appears to have been independent, however. As early as 1902 — six years before the appearance of Lunacharskii's *Religiia i sotsializm* ('Religion and Socialism', 1908; 1911) — he wrote to Leonid Andreev: 'We'll create a God for ourselves who will be great, splendid, joyous, the protector of life who loves everyone and everything.[96] Man as ideal

was, as Gor'kii believed, the inspiration by which people might transcend petty personal interests and fulfil their potential, submerging individual identity in the collective All.

Nilovna, the heroine of *Mat'*, develops, then, not from an outlook that is religious to one that is ideological but rather, as F. M. Borras has pointed out, 'from one kind of religious outlook to another, from that which worships God in heaven to that which looks to the establishment of His kingdom on earth'.[97] Her faith undergoes a shift from a naïve, mechanistic form of Christian worship, through a vision of the *imagio Christi* in the faces of her son's Revolutionary colleagues, to a religious sentiment directed at the unknown mass of humanity which she imagines as a colossus cleansing the earth of falsehood and revealing life in its simplest and fullest glory.[98] The revelation marks Nilovna's leap into consciousness and into the totemic outlook.

The parallels between the teleological aspect of Gor'kii's novel and medieval Russian hagiographic literature have not escaped critical attention.[99] Just as union with the Deity is the end to which the life of any saint progresses, so the purpose of Nilovna's life proves to be union with the collective Godhead. Another point which has been noted in relation to this is the abstract and formal nature of the characteristics of Gor'kii's heroes (also reflected in later socialist realist novels) and their similarity to the depiction of princes in the chronicles of Rus'.[100] The enlightened purposefulness of the positive hero in socialist realism in many ways gives him a literary role comparable to that of the medieval prince. His characterization is determined not by psychological factors but by political ones. Just as the prince represents not himself but his estate, so the positive hero (Pavel in *Mat'*, for instance) embodies the estate of the new Revolutionary man. The prince's attributes are defined by his position as feudal master; the socialist realist hero's are determined by his position as representative of the Revolutionary vanguard. The prince knows no doubts about his role, which is to rule and fight for Rus'; the traditional Soviet hero similarly has no doubts about his vocation. Finally, the medieval prince is glorified by *slava*, he receives the recognition and veneration of the people with whom he is identified; the socialist realist hero is blessed with the love of the Revolutionary masses.[101]

Aleksandr Serafimovich's novel *Zheleznyi potok* ('The Iron Flood', 1924) offers another early exemplar for the socialist realist hero of the more romanticized variety. Single-handed, the Cossack peasant, Kozhukh, forges a Revolutionary army from tens of thousands of starving peasants and, in 1918, leads them from Taman' to join the Red Army in the Kuban'. It is a superhuman feat. Kozhukh has none of the humanizing weaknesses of Aleksandr Fadeev's hero, Levinson, in *Razgrom* ('The Rout', 1925–26), for example. Against all odds, he succeeds in uniting an exhausted and rebellious mob into one massive body, beating with 'a single, inhumanly enormous heart'.[102]

Kozhukh emerges as a cross between a messiah and an Old Testament prophet, looking upon the multitude as his closest kith and kin, home and family. To them, he is a father, a godhead and the reflection of their cause.[103] *Zheleznyi potok*, Richard Freeborn has remarked, offers an unintentional parable on the way peoples seek, in their struggle against tryanny, 'to summon new gods to rule over them', and reveals the very processes that lead to the personality cult.[104] And the gods they summon are totemic. Kozhukh develops into a representation of the social unit, its focus and the guarantor of its identity and cohesion. He serves the function of 'society's official mandala': its religious representation or its totem.[105]

In the mid-1930s, the Lenin cult was overshadowed by the public image of Stalin, glorified as the 'Builder of Socialism'.[106] In literature, too, the totemic function was served less by primary characters than by the Soviet leader. It was traditionally through a momentous meeting with Stalin himself that the hero of the time attained 'consciousness'.[107]

Despite the God-building subtext of Stalinist fiction, the emphasis is notably less on individual growth and transfiguration than on the message that the value of the ordinary, 'little' man can be measured only in terms of his loyalty to the collective and its leader.[108] The hero denies himself, subordinates his will and his life to a greater power or authority, and accomplishes his mission. His efforts are beset with apparently insurmountable obstacles. He may, like Pavel Korchagin in Nikolai Ostrovskii's *Kak zakalialas' stal'* ('How Steel was Tempered', 1934), face not just the perils of battle, but the torment of progressive physical disability. Yet his work goes on. Paralysed and blind, Korchagin writes a successful war novel. He may not achieve the status of a god-like embodiment of the collective, but his capacity to strive and give for the Party is unbounded.

Clark's analysis of the structure of Stalinist cosmology suggests that it represents a travesty of the shamanistic system of cosmic order. She proposes a structure in which the Kremlin stands as a link between the terrestrial shadow world of ordinary mortals and the 'higher' reality inhabited by 'those supraterrestrial beings, Lenin and Stalin'.[109] Like the shamanistic cosmic tree or pillar, the Kremlin is a mediator between the heavens and the earth. It is given only to the elect who strive hardest, the artist-seers or the supreme achievers (which is what Korchagin — in a modest way — becomes) to climb the tree at great personal cost and, like the shaman, give the earth's inhabitants a promise of the transcendent.

The socialist realist texts of the Stalin era presented a focus on an unattainable supreme reality through which the reader was to realize himself in relation to the collective. The heroes of the time indicated that through faith and effort anything was possible. Social and even biophysical laws could be overcome. In Fedor Panferov's novel *Volga-matushka reka* ('Mother Volga', 1953) it is

suggested, for example, that the limits of science may yet be crossed, and dead matter revived.[110] In the submission of the individual will and the entire self to the group totem, there was the promise of neutralizing the division between the worlds, of breaking out of the bounds of banal possibility into a new and fuller life in the here and now.

It is probably true to say that only two major prose writers of this period took up the system of thought which, in the past, had resisted the impulse to identify the sacred with society and its current leadership. They are Mikhail Bulgakov and Boris Pasternak.

Set against the backdrop of 'classical' Stalinist socialist realism, Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita* ('The Master and Margarita', written 1928–40; published 1966–67) presents in many ways a challenge to the mythological model of its time. It does so in two ways. First, it inverts the relationship between the two spheres of reality which classical socialist realism postulated. The transcendent reality is not to be striven for by supreme effort and heroic achievement. It comes down to earth of its own accord. An encounter with it is shown to be not only attainable but ultimately inescapable. It is an immanent truth, intervening and participating in the world. Second, instead of offering a final answer to the meaning of past and future, Bulgakov's novel presents the reader with a problem or puzzle which demands participatory evaluation.[111]

Rather than paint a formal canvas of a modern god, Bulgakov offers us an animated sketch of the devil. Yet the attributes of Woland as demon have, it has frequently been noted, only limited importance.[112] He does punish and he does fall upon the acquisitive instinct as a way of ensnaring Moscow's bewildered population, but the purpose of his teasing is not to appropriate the human soul. The retribution he brings serves rather as evidence of a state of things in which denial of the supernatural and preternatural must bring with it the annihilation of consciousness. The fate of Berlioz — the rationalist decapitated — is emblematic.

The image of Woland as Mephistopheles goading a humanity sunk below its proper level, and seeking perhaps to be its master, loses the firmness of its outline as it becomes evident that he may be an agent of salvation or, at least, of relief from the troubles of this world. His shape is further disturbed by the role he shares with Bulgakov's 'Christ', Ieshua, as representative of another sphere of existence. And his arrival, like Ieshua's, gives characters caught up in the concerns of mundane reality a pointer towards a fuller level of being.[113]

Woland, then, is as much 'angel', or messenger, as demon. He brings retribution, but he also offers revelation. And, above all, he bears the story of Ieshua and Pilate. The devil, as Andrew Barratt remarks, 'is also a new evangelist'.[114] Interpretations of his role have led to conclusions that he is 'a punishing sword in the hands of justice', a catalyst, a satirist, or a folk-tale donor figure who provides the hero with a magical agent.[115] One attractive

proposal suggests that he is a 'Gnostic Messenger': a supernatural being descended to earth with a message which carries enlightenment, but only for the few able to decipher it.[116]

The notion of a Gnostic Message has bearing on the way the novel as a whole is formulated. It is built of clues and false trails. The characters from the other world are masked by their appearance, their names and the literary or religious allusions they carry.[117] Earthly characters who hear the message (Margarita, Master, Bezdomnyi) are granted, selectively, some degree of understanding; but only once they have risked abandoning the forms of thought and images of the self on which mundane reality is founded.

Master i Margarita is also structured around a traditional religious allusion (the Passion) which provides a 'cover' shading new modes of vision. Lesley Milne's argument — that the novel's form can best be compared to the dramatic tradition of the medieval mystery play and carnival — emphasizes the conflicting yet productive relationship in art between old hermeneutic patterns and the host of innovative (and frequently irreverent) thoughts they can help to release.[118] The carnival festivities which accompanied many religious feasts in the Middle Ages promoted, Mikhail Bakhtin writes, liberation from the prevailing point of view of the world. They encouraged new forms of perception, a sense of the relative nature of things and of the possibility of another kind of world order.[119]

The form of *Master i Margarita* is by its nature liberating. It gives scope for the subversion of established forms: religious, social, political, and literary. It breaks through the conventions of socialist realism and displays instead a more symbolist vision of dual reality (*'dvoemirie'*) — although Bulgakov does not allow himself to be drawn into the darkly pessimistic evocation of things earthly which frequently characterized symbolist prose.[120] As it challenges the socialist realist model, the novel inverts the heroic image: in Bulgakov's world, fear and cowardice are the norm. It gives the reader the devil as compère rather than the totemic god as guide. And it puts into the mouth of the most 'positively good' character (Ieshua is *'polozhitel'no prekrasnyi'*, in the tradition of Prince Myshkin) a philosophy with an 'anarchistic' flavour.[121] Ieshua's thinking rests firmly on the belief that there is no need for temporal power because all men are by nature good. Passing allegiances to temporal powers have no significance in terms of the true reality. Death may be an unexpected visitor, as the fate of Berlioz shows, and all the energy invested in securing position or possessions may be dissipated in an instant.[122]

The totemic glorification of wealth, state, or collective is exposed as hollow. And the importance of Christianity is shown to lie not in its tradition, nor in the history its records chronicle, but in the deeper levels of human experience it touches. The Christian story may be relived and recreated by a creative intuition which can unify men of the past and of the present. It is, in Jungian

terminology, an 'archetypal' narrative or expression of the collective unconscious which, Barratt observes, 'might be seen to have found fictional expression in Bulgakov's presentation of the Jerusalem narrative as a sort of primordial truth accessible to a number of individuals'.[123]

If primordial reality can be contacted through the work of the creative artist, then — as mediator between the mundane and the beyond — he performs the function of a priest. Such, indeed, was the part assigned for the artist by the symbolist system of metaphysics.[124] He would reveal, beyond the symbols and passing changes of the phenomenal world, the true order. It was a role Bulgakov seems to have allowed with a healthy degree of detachment and irony. And it was one which, in more sombre mood, was also taken up by Boris Pasternak.

The appearance in Italy of *Doktor Zhivago* ('Doctor Zhivago', 1957) generated a series of attacks in the Soviet press. The novel was dubbed 'historically prejudiced' and 'profoundly anti-democratic'.[125] One critic, A. Surkov, complained that it was a 'petty travesty of history' and contained 'not one sympathetic portrait of a revolutionary'.[126]

Like *Master i Margarita*, Pasternak's novel has no active or 'positively' effectual hero. In a world preoccupied with changing and remoulding the quality of existence, Iurii Zhivago, it has been alleged, seems to do little of practical use to help either himself or others. Isaac Deutscher impatiently, if memorably, dismisses him as a second Oblomov 'in revolt against the inhumanity of a revolution that has dragged him out of bed'.[127] In a more measured analysis, Ronald Hingley draws a parallel with Prince Myshkin: 'He *is* good certainly. But what good does he do?[128]

Zhivago's passivity, or his fatalism, forms part of a specific conception of historical change. Pasternak's purpose, as he expressed it (in English) in a letter to Stephen Spender was to:

> represent the whole sequence of facts and beings and happenings like some moving entireness, like a developing, passing by, rolling and rushing inspiration, as if reality itself had freedom and choice and was composing itself out of numberless variants and versions.
>
> Hence the not sufficient tracing of characters I was reproached with . . . hence the frank arbitrariness of the 'coincidences' (through this means I wanted to show the liberty of being, its verisimilitude touching, adjoining improbability).[129]

The moulding or changing of material substance has no application to the wholeness of a life which is free spirit, moved by its own breath, formed and reformed in a continuous re-enactment of resurrection: 'All the time, life, one, immense, identical throughout its innumerable combinations and transformations fills the universe and is continually reborn.'[130]

This vision, close as it is to the tradition of Russian religious thought, gave the novel a philosophical foundation and artistic shape which — more overtly

even than Bulgakov's — challenged the official literary model of its time. Implicitly it reaffirmed the beliefs of religious philosophers at the beginning of the century: that life is in a constant state of transfiguration, and advancing towards an end which is unknowable, but right, because it has love and creativity at source. It also indicated that the tools by which death might be overcome were already in human hands. Christ's doctrine of love for one's neighbour (which Zhivago's uncle, Nikolai Vedeniapin, sees in terms of driving 'energy' reminiscent of Zosima's notion of 'active love'), the belief in free personality and in life as a sacrifice by which individuality may be transcended, are means for historical man to respond to the obscenity of terminal existence.[131] Zhivago's poem 'Svad'ba' is a call for the self not to stand up and fight for individual rights, but to be, as it were, dissolved in the lives of others.[132] And without the element of artistic creativity, any formulated truths, ideological or religious, lose their value. Facts don't exist, Iurii Zhivago remarks, 'until man puts into them something of his own, a bit of free human genius — of myth.'[133]

Where the story, the freely-made creative link with the unconscious levels which define the nature of human bondage, has been lost — in a language full of platitudes, or in the subjugation of personality to an imposed doctrine — life is barren. And the artist as priest or prophet carries the burden of reawakening an awareness of the barely perceptible system of connections which weaves the fabric of human lives and histories.

Of the lyrical poems which form an appendix to the novel, 'Gefsimanskii sad' ('The Garden of Gethsemane') in particular reaffirms in Christian imagery the final order to which the ages are turbulently flowing:

> 'I shall descend into my grave. And on the third day rise again.
> And, even as rafts float down a river,
> So shall the centuries drift trailing like a caravan,
> Coming for judgement, out of the dark to me.'[134]

For Pasternak, Henry Gifford has written, 'to live in history is to live in the awareness of grace, of a divine purpose in things'.[135]

The impact of Pasternak's thinking on literature during and after the 'thaw' has not yet been fully measured. Given the wide circulation of *samizdat* in the 1960s and 1970s, it can reasonably be assumed to have been considerable long before the official publication of *Doktor Zhivago* in *Novyi mir* in 1988.[136] A revival of interest in Dostoevskii (a ten-volume edition of his writings began to appear in the mid-1950s, and a thirty-volume edition was launched in 1972), and the interest among intellectuals in early twentieth-century neo-Kantian philosophers such as Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdiaev, Petr Struve and Semen Frank (then unpublished in the Soviet Union) certainly encouraged an increasing consciousness of religious values among the intelligentsia.[137] Familiarity with Pasternak's writing would have added to this awareness still further.

Like the leading contributors to the *Vekhi* ('Landmarks') symposium of 1909 — Sergei Bulgakov, Berdiaev, Struve and Frank — Pasternak had known Marxism and its consequences directly. Like them he had turned away from it on the grounds that man was an independent creative being who freely chose his own life and determined his own history. With them, he concluded that the driving force in society was not the acquisitive instinct and class struggle, but personality. The uncorrupted personality was linked by nature with God and was moving not in the direction of proletarian revolution but of ultimate reunion with Him.[138]

The part Dostoevskii (who, it seemed, had predicted so many of the pitfalls of revolutionary socialism), Pasternak, and the *Vekhi* thinkers played in the 1960s was chiefly defined by their role as links between Russia's past and her present. Their thinking was particularly helpful to intellectuals disillusioned with Marxism but still vulnerable to its influences. And it also carried the fascination of bringing readers closer to the pre-Revolutionary Russian tradition which Marxism-Leninism had sought to obliterate.

Dimitry Pospielovsky has suggested that the religious orientation in cultural circles of the 1960s was, initially at least, secondary to the interest in Russia's heritage.[139] A thirst for national and cultural identity, together with a sense of the paltry role allotted to the individual by Soviet ideology, helped create conditions in which the image of the uneducated and impoverished peasant — as the guardian of authentic Russian values and victim of the Soviet experiment — could become central to the literature of the period. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novella *Matrenin dvor* ('Matrena's House', 1963), which introduced the figure into Soviet fiction, became a model for much subsequent writing about the daily life and traditions of country people and communities. Under Brezhnev, Solzhenitsyn's heroine, Matrena, was elevated to the status of a new literary icon.[140]

In the 1950s 'rural fiction' (*'derevenskaia proza'*) had offered a new, critical portrayal of country life after collectivization. Khrushchev's declared concerns about the sad state of Soviet agriculture were taken up by writers such as Valentin Ovechkin or Efim Dorosh.[141] But in the mid-1960s literature took up the moral teaching on social repercussions of individual virtue from *Matrenin dvor*, and developed a strikingly anti-teleological quality. Much of it is concerned with the implicit rejection of historicism, purpose, and progress, in favour of the exploration of the potential of personal experience. In their existential search for truth not as an abstract 'Idea' or as pure thought, but (in Kierkegaard's words) as something 'to exist in', the writers of rural prose turned to the familiar and the authentically known.[142] They reassessed man's condition and identity in terms of their own memories of the past and those of their generation.

The mood of their writing suggested that life directed towards a specified purpose was lived in error, and urged that the objective moral content of

existence was a better measure of its value. The experience of Stalin's camps, and the boldness with which dissenting writers such as Solzhenitsyn or Varlam Shalamov depicted the human consequences of a system which had deprived so many people of their lives, freedom, and personal dignity, could not but demand an alternative framework within which to examine moral, social, and historical issues. The urge to turn literature back into the art form designed to 'straighten the twisted paths of man's history' and 'preserve the national language and the national soul' (as Solzhenitsyn put it in his 1971 Nobel Prize Speech) was shared by intellectuals associated with the establishment as well as by dissidents.[143] The bankruptcy of the Stalinist myth had been exposed, and Soviet society had lost any transcendent meaning in the eyes of its citizens. Anatolii Lanshchikov's statement in support of the Orthodox Christian tradition at a closed meeting for critics in 1969, has been cited as one of the more striking official calls for a system of thought to fill the spiritual vacuum in a society divorced from the vision which had once sustained it:

> We are seeking a lost ideal! Our young people can find no ideal to live by [. . .].
> We need [. . .] positive ideals [. . .].
> Regarding religion, I will say frankly: if one were to reject the role of Orthodoxy, I don't know what would remain of Russia.[144]

The purpose had been lost; the end could no longer be presented as justification for action and the means were now subject to assessment according to moral not sociological criteria. 'It is not the result that counts!' is the heartfelt cry in Solzhenitsyn's *Arkhipelag GULag* ('The Gulag Archipelago', 1973–76): 'It is not the result — but *the spirit*! Not *what* — but *how*. Not what has been attained — but at what price.'[145]

Writing on the nineteenth-century terrorist Nechaev, and using an idiom and frame of reference which reflects the socialist rhetoric of the early 1980s, Iurii Trifonov expresses a remarkably similar thought:

> For Nechaev, as for the Jesuits, the most important thing was the purpose. The means signified nothing to him. This deprived the purpose of any moral content. And it led to extraordinary complications because the purpose was deprived of the human aspect. For morality is always synonymous with humanitarian values. That is why Nechaev's philosophy degenerated into revolutionary violence.[146]

After the revelations of Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech', and the reports of those who returned from the camps in the years following the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, it became impossible for writers to continue looking upon individuals exclusively, or even predominantly, as projections of social forces. To a degree, recognition had to be given to the need for personal freedom, diversity, and dialogue. And in that thinking lay the animist surmise that reality consists not of one unit of consciousness — the collective — but also of other independent forms of consciousness, other realities embedded, reflected, or expressed in natural phenomena.

As Sergei Zalygin wrote in 1972, literature was there to chronicle the burgeoning changes in the Soviet vision of things:

In our present vision and understanding of the universe is there not a hidden surmise, a premonition of another world in which things are 'different' and, above all, time and the limits of human life are not the same?

If literature cannot now draw attention to these new feelings and perceptions, then who can?[147]

NOTES

1. Tucker, *Political Culture*, p. 116.
2. In his study of 'desert' monasticism, Andrew Louth draws attention to the following major figures in the history of Russian hesychasm: Sergii Radonezhskii (*c.* 1314–92), Nil Sorskii (*c.* 1433–1508), Paisii Velichkovskii (1722–94), Tikhon Zadonskii (1724–81), Serafim Sarovskii (1759–1833), Amvrosii of Optina Pustyn' (1812–91). Andrew Louth, *The Wilderness of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991). See also G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946–66) and *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, ed. by G. P. Fedotov (London: Sheed and Ward, 1950).
3. Zotz, 'Personal Spiritual Orientations', p. 15.
4. Dmitrii Likhachev has suggested that the official acceptance of Christianity by Kievan Rus' was an act of state which deprived the Church of its freedom. Andrei Chernov, 'Predvaritel'nye itogi tysiacheletnego opyta: Beseda s D. S. Likhachevym', *Ogonek* (1988: 10), 12. See also William van den Bercken, 'The Rehabilitation of Christian Ethical Values in the Soviet Media', *Religion in Communist Lands*, 17 (1989), 9.
5. Aleksandr Blok wrote in his introduction to the cycle *Na pole Kulikovom*: 'The Battle of Kulikovo belongs [. . .] to the symbolic events of Russian history. Such events are certain to return. Their resolution is still before us.' Quoted in Aleksandr Blok, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1955), I, 734.
6. R. M. French, *The Eastern Orthodox Church* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), pp. 97–98. Nicolas Zernov also lends his support to this interpretation of the liberation of Russia from the Mongol yoke. He writes of Sergii Radonezhskii: 'The peace-loving saint contributed more than anyone else to the liberation of his nation from fear and from the Mongols.' Nicolas Zernov, *Eastern Christendom* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), p. 119.
7. Bulgakov, 'Geroizm', p. 53.
8. Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. Timothy Ware observes: 'To the Russians it seemed no coincidence that at the very moment when the Byzantine Empire came to an end, they themselves were at last throwing off the few remaining vestiges of Tartar suzerainty: God, it seemed, was granting them their freedom because He had chosen them to be the successors of Byzantium.' Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 112.
9. Ibid., p. 114.
10. Ibid., pp. 114–17; Jean Meyendorff, *L'Église orthodoxe hier et aujourd'hui*, 2nd edn (Paris: Les Univers, 1960), pp. 88–89.
11. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 118.
12. Ibid., pp. 121–22. As Ware also points out, *'pravoslavie'* means both 'right belief' and 'right worship' or 'right glory'. The Orthodox regard their Church as the guardian of true belief about God, and of the correct way of worship (p. 16). Zernov explains that Nikon's campaign for the unification of Muscovite, Greek, and Ukrainian rituals was prompted by his desire to champion the cause of oppressed Christians from Ukraine to the Balkans. For that purpose differences in ritual had to be ironed out. Zernov, *Eastern Christendom*, pp. 144–46.
13. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 122. Nicolas Zernov, however, interprets the schism as a quarrel between 'Third Rome' messianists such as Avvakum, who were refusing to relinquish their role as the new chosen people, and Nikon's willingness to abandon the 'Third Rome' theory in favour of closer links with Byzantium (*Eastern Christendom*, p. 153).
14. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 16.
15. Georges Florovsky, 'Sobornost: The Catholicity of the Church', in *The Church of God: An Anglo-Russian Symposium*, ed. by E. L. Mascall (London: SPCK, 1934), pp. 64–65, quoted in Ware, *Orthodox Church*, pp. 206–07.

16. Ibid., p. 206.
17. Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963), p. 285.
18. Ibid., pp. 285–86, 289–92.
19. Iosif Volokolamskii argued not only that profits from monastic land were used for the poor, but that 'things dedicated to God' were in themselves sacred and inalienable. J. L. I. Fennell, 'The History of the Conflict between the "Possessors" and the "Non-Possessors" in Russia and its Reflection in the Literature of the Period — the End of the XVth Century and the First Half of the XVIth Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1951), pp. 71–72.
20. S. Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo: dukhovnye dvizheniia semnadtsatogo veka* (Munich: Fink, 1970), p. 42, cited in Kirill, Archbishop of Smolensk and Viazma, 'Russian Orthodox Life Today — The Second Millennium', *Gresham Special Lecture 1988*, 14 July 1988, p. 4.
21. Meyendorff, *L'Église orthodoxe*, pp. 90–91.
22. Geoffrey Hosking, 'Homo Sovieticus or Homo Sapiens? Perspectives from the Past', *Occasional Papers No. 6*, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London (1987), p. 5.
23. Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, p. 7.
24. John Sheldon Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire — 1900–1917* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 27, 83, 120–23; I. S. Bellius-tin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia: The Memoir of a Nineteenth-Century Parish Priest*, trans. by Gregory L. Freeze (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 26–27, 122–32.
25. Gerhard Simon, *Church, State and Opposition in the USSR* (London: Hurst, 1974), p. 12, quoted in Hosking, 'Homo Sovieticus', p. 5.
26. Quoted in Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 112.
27. Ibid., pp. 130–32.
28. Ibid., p. 133; French, *Eastern Orthodox Church*, p. 108. The hermitage of Optina Pustyn' was closed in 1923–24. The official decision to reopen it was taken on 17 November 1987. 'Three Monasteries Returned to the Russian Orthodox Church', *Keston News Service*, No. 297, 31 March 1987, pp. 5–6.
29. Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, pp. 53–56.
30. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 133; Louth, *Wilderness of God*, p. 136.
31. Zernov comments that 'up to the twentieth century sermons were rarely preached, for the priest was expected to submit the text of his proposed instruction for the approval of the diocesan consistory before he delivered it'. Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, p. 44. See also Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia*, pp. 35–37.
32. Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, pp. 17–18.
33. Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia*, pp. 35–48.
34. Hosking, 'Homo Sovieticus', p. 6.
35. Scholars who have noted the similarity include P. V. Annenkov, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Fedor Stepun. See Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, pp. 3–4.
36. Bulgakov, 'Geroizm', p. 37.
37. Ibid., pp. 59–60; *A Bulgakov Anthology*, ed. by James Pain and Nicolas Zernov (London: SPCK, 1976), p. 51.
38. Harold Williams, *Russia of the Russians* (London: Pitman, 1914), p. 129, quoted in Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, p. 4. See also Bulgakov, 'Geroizm', p. 29.
39. Ibid., pp. 31–33.
40. Ibid., p. 30.
41. Ibid., p. 31.
42. V. G. Belinskii, 'Mysli i zametki o russkoi literature', *Izbrannye filosofskie sochineniia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1942), pp. 328–29.
43. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, p. 50.
44. Richard Gustafson writes: 'Narratives may be one of the best forms of theology [. . .]. If they are very old, we call them myths. In nineteenth century Russia, this sense of the theological role of human narratives was still operative; indeed it may still be so. The images created by artists were taken seriously as words which reveal the Truth.' Richard F. Gustafson, *Leo Tolstoy — Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. xi–xii. The prophetic quality of nineteenth-century literature is reflected, for example, in Raskol'nikov's feverish dream in the epilogue to Dostoevskii's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (1866), in which he sees peoples and nations infected by a plague of

evil spirits, bringing madness, division, and destruction. Consider also the concluding lines of Gogol''s *Mertvye dushi*, vol. 1 (1842), where Russia is seen as a *troika* galloping onward, past other nations and states, to an unknown destination.

45. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, p. 251.
46. Ibid., pp. 46–47. Chernyshevskii comments directly on the representative or 'typical' nature of his heroes in *Chto delat'*: 'I wanted to depict decent, ordinary people of the new generation, those I met by the hundreds. [. . .] Yes, I wanted to show people behaving just like ordinary people of this type.' Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *What is to be Done?*, trans. by Michael R. Katz (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 311–12.
47. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, p. 47.
48. Richard Freeborn, *The Russian Revolutionary Novel: Turgenev to Pasternak* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 25.
49. Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'? Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1947), pp. 278, 302.
50. V. I. Lenin, 'Zamechaniia na knige G. V. Plekhanova "N. G. Chernyshevskii"', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 55-ti tomakh*, 5th edn (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), xxix, 541–42, 601–03; Clark, *Soviet Novel*, pp. 50–51; *Khrestomatiia po drevnei russkoi literature XI–XII vekov*. ed. by N. K. Gudzii, 6th edn (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1955), pp. 99–104.
51. 'Lenin o Chernyshevskom i ego romane "Chto delat'?" (Iz knigi N. Valentinova "Vstrechi s V. I. Leninym")', with an introduction by B. Riurikov, *Voprosy literatury* (1957: 8), 132; Freeborn, *Russian Revolutionary Novel*, p. 24.
52. Ibid., p. 246.
53. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London and New York: Quartet, 1990), p. 319.
54. 'Life is paradise [. . .]. Paradise [. . .] is hidden in each one of us.' Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 302–03.
55. Ibid., p. 26.
56. Gustafson, *Tolstoy*, p. 463.
57. Ibid., p. 456.
58. Ibid., p. 463.
59. Ibid., pp. 457–58.
60. Ibid., p. 457: Jonathan Sutton, *The Religious Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov: Towards a Reassessment* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 62–67.
61. Sutton, *Solovyov*, pp. 75–78.
62. Gustafson, *Tolstoy*, p. 458.
63. Nicolas Zernov, *Three Russian Prophets* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1944), pp. 133–34; Sutton, *Solovyov*, p. 77.
64. Sutton, *Solovyov*, pp. 70–74, 78–86. Solov'ev terms the direct and perfect cooperation between the creator and the creature '*teokratiia*' ('theocracy'). See Zernov, *Three Russian Prophets*, p. 134.
65. Christopher Read, *Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900–1912: The Vekhi Debate and its Intellectual Background* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 58.
66. Bulgakov, 'Geroizm', pp. 40–41, 55.
67. Ibid., pp. 48–49, 52–53, 68.
68. In *The Wisdom of God*, Bulgakov writes:

> The Church in the world is Sophia in the process of becoming, according to the double impulse of creation and deification. [. . .] God created the world only that He might deify it [. . .].
>
> The world has already, in principle, become godly in becoming Churchly, through the twofold revelation [. . .] in the incarnation of the Word and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

Sergius Bulgakov, *The Wisdom of God: A Brief Summary of Sophiology*, trans. by Patrick John Thompson, Oliver Fielding Clarke, Kseniya Braikevich (New York: Paisley Press; London: Williams and Norgate, 1937), p. 203; Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, p. 269. Solov'ev remarks: 'True life should be realised in a spiritual humanity: in the Church. The life of the Church mediates between the life of God and the life of nature.' V. S. Solov'ev, 'Istoriia i budushchnost' teokratii', in *Sobraine sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva v 10-ti tomakh*, ed. by S. M. Solov'ev and E. L. Radlova, 2nd edn (St Petersburg: Prosveshchenie, 1911), iv, 259.

69. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, pp. 236–37.
70. Ibid., p. 242.

71. Ibid., pp. 237–38.
72. Ibid., p. 239.
73. Bulgakov, 'Geroizm', pp. 48–49, 52–53.
74. Ibid., p. 55.
75. Tucker, *Political Culture*, pp. 116–17.
76. Christel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), p. 27.
77. Ibid., pp. 26–27; Pospielovsky, *Atheism*, vol. 1, pp. 12, 16, 18. Marx argued that religion was shaped by the ruling class and served to promote its interests by encouraging obedience and acceptance of the social and political status quo. See, for example: Eugene Kamenka, 'Marxism and Religion', in *Religion and Politics in Communist States*, ed. by R. F. Miller and T. H. Rigby (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986), p. 7.
78. Tucker, *Political Culture*, pp. vii–viii.
79. Iurii M. Lotman and Boris A. Uspenskii, 'Binary Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (to the End of the Eighteenth Century)' in *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, ed. by Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 31.
80. Tucker, *Political Culture*, pp. 5–6, 35.
81. Pospielovsky, *Atheism*, 1, 25–26.
82. Tucker, *Political Culture*, pp. 40, 43, 202.
83. *The Soviet Censorship*, ed. by Martin Dewhirst and Robert Farrell (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1973), p. 4; Andrzej Drawicz, 'Ku wieczności wyciągam dłonie' ('Reaching out to Eternity'), *Więź*, May 1988, p. 3.
84. The description, derived from A. Zhdanov's speech at the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934, comes from the textbook *Russkaia sovetskaia literatura* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 315–16, quoted in Geoffrey Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since Ivan Denisovich* (London: Elek, 1980), p. 3.
85. These have included N. Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'*? (1863); M. Gor'kii, *Mat'* (1907); F. Gladkov, *Tsement* (1925); A. Serafimovich, *Zheleznyi potok* (1924); A. Fadeev, *Razgrom* (1927); and the first three parts of M. Sholokhov, *Tikhii Don* (1928–33). Hosking, *Socialist Realism*, p. 6.
86. Tucker, *Political Culture*, p. 132.
87. Tertz, 'On Socialist Realism', p. 150.
88. Ibid., pp. 152, 155–56.
89. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, p. 48.
90. Lotman and Uspenskii, 'Binary Models', p. 34.
91. Hosking, *Socialist Realism*, pp. 5–6; Clark, *Soviet Novel*, p. 52.
92. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, pp. 47–48.
93. Ibid., pp. 15–16.
94. Tucker, *Political Culture*, p. 36.
95. Read, *Russian Intelligentsia*, p. 85; Timothy Edward O'Connor, *The Politics of Soviet Culture: Anatolii Lunacharskii* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), p. 11; Bertram D. Wolfe, *The Bridge and the Abyss: The Troubled Friendship of Maxim Gorky and V. I. Lenin* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 45.
96. *Letters of Gorky and Andreev, 1899–1912*, ed. by Peter Yershov (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 40.
97. F. M. Borras, *Maxim Gorky the Writer: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 110.
98. Maksim Gor'kii, *Mat'* (Minsk: Mastatskaia literatura, 1973), pp. 10, 27, 42–44, 85, 166, 221.
99. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, p. 65.
100. Ibid., pp. 57–63.
101. The characterization of the medieval prince is drawn from D. S. Likhachev, *Chelovek v literature drevnei Rusi*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), pp. 26, 29–31, 39.
102. A. S. Serafimovich, *Zheleznyi potok, Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: OGIZ, 1946), p. 501.
103. Ibid., p. 538.
104. Freeborn, *Russian Revolutionary Novel*, p. 109.
105. Clark, *Soviet Novel*, p. 48.
106. Tucker, *Politcal Culture*, pp. 117–18.
107. Ibid., p. 132.
108. Ibid., pp. 152–55.
109. Ibid., p. 142.

110. F. Panferov. *Volga matushka-reka* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1958), p. 234, cited by Igor P. Smirnov, 'Scriptum sub specie sovietica, 2' in *Ideology in Russian Literature*, ed. by Richard Freeborn and Jane Grayson (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 163–64.
111. Andrew Barratt, *Between Two Worlds: A Critical Introduction to the Master and Margarita* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 3–5.
112. For example, V. Lakshin, 'Roman M. Bulgakova "Master i Margarita"', *Novyi mir* (1968: 6), 307–08; Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 144.
113. Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 128–29; Lesley Milne, *The Master and Margarita — A Comedy of Victory* (Birmingham: Birmingham Slavonic Monographs, 1977), p. 6.
114. Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 160.
115. Ibid., p. 144; Ellendea Proffer, *Bulgakov: Life and Work* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), p. 534; Milne, *Master and Margarita*, p. 20; Sona Stephan Hoisington, 'Fairy-Tale Elements in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*', *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 25, No. 2 (1981), p. 49.
116. Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 171.
117. Woland by his Mephistophelian image; Ieshua by his Christ-like demeanour. Ieshua, as Milne notes, is a phonetic rendering of the Aramaic 'which avoids all preconceived attitudes of antagonism towards the name Jesus'. Milne, *Master and Margarita*, p. 7; Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 135–36.
118. Milne, *Master and Margarita*, pp. 2–3.
119. M. Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekov'ia i renessansa* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965), p. 41.
120. Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 317–20.
121. Nikolai Berdiaev writes: 'It is a serious mistake to identify anarchism with anarchy. Anarchism is opposed not to order and harmony, but to power, violence, the kingdom of Caesar. Anarchy is chaos and discord; it is ugliness. Anarchism is the ideal of a free, inwardly defined harmony and order. It is the victory of the Kingdom of God over the kingdom of Caesar.' Nikolai Berdiaev, *Russkaia ideia: (Osnovnye problemy russkoi mysli XIX veka i nachala XX veka)* (Paris: YMCA, 1946), pp. 154–55.
122. Proffer, *Bulgakov*, p. 532.
123. Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 249.
124. Ibid., p. 318.
125. Letter from the editors of *Novyi mir* to Pasternak (1956), published in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 25 October 1958; cited in Robert Conquest, *Courage of Genius* (London: Collins and Harvill, 1961), p. 163.
126. Interview with A. Surkov, *News Chronicle*, 19 January 1959, quoted in Conquest, *Courage of Genius*, p. 69.
127. Isaac Deutscher, 'Pasternak and the Calendar of the Revolution (1959)', in *Pasternak: Modern Judgements*, ed. by Donald Davie and Angela Livingstone (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 249.
128. Ronald Hingley, *Pasternak: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 217.
129. *Encounter*, No. 4–5, August 1960, quoted in Freeborn, *Russian Revolutionary Novel*, p. 212.
130. Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, trans. by Max Hayward and Manya Harari (London: Collins and Harvill, 1958), pp. 67–68.
131. Ibid., pp. 9–10, 42, 65–66.
132. Ibid., p. 535.
133. Ibid., p. 121.
134. Ibid., p. 559.
135. Henry Gifford, *Pasternak: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 188.
136. Boris Pasternak, *Doktor Zhivago*, *Novyi mir* (1988: 1), 5–112; (1988: 2), 96–157; (1988: 3) 90–174; (1988: 4), 48–128.
137. The rejection of Marxism by the *Vekhi* thinkers was, Geoffrey Hosking points out, stimulated by an encounter with Kant which gave them the insight that 'man was not primarily a causally generated material phenomenon, to be explained in a "science of society" generated by pure reason, but above all a free spirit, the subject and creator of history'. Hosking, *Socialist Realism*, p. 31. See also Aleksandr Piatigorskii, 'Zametki o "metafizicheskoi situatsii"', *Kontinent*, 1 (1974), 211–24.
138. Hosking, *Socialist Realism*, p. 31.
139. Pospielovsky, 'Neo-Slavophilism', p. 322.

140. Hosking, *Socialism Realism*, pp. 55–56; Pavlyshyn, *Glasnost'*, p. 8.
141. Valentin Ovechkin's *Raiennye budni* ('District Routine', 1952–56) gave an objective and frank portrayal of rural life, while Efim Dorosh's *Derevenskii dnevnik* ('A Country Diary', 1956) criticized the clumsiness of attempts at modernization.
142. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), trans. by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 275, quoted in H. J. Blackham, *Six Existentialist Thinkers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 3.
143. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, '"One Word of Truth ", The Nobel Speech on Literature 1970', trans. by BBC Russian Service (London: Bodley Head, 1972), p. 15.
144. 'Na seminare literaturnykh kritikov' (Central House of Writers, Moscow, 25 April 1969), *Politicheskii dnevnik: 1964–1970* (Amsterdam: Fond im. Gertsena, 1972), pp. 505–06. See also Pospielovsky, 'Neo-Slavophilism', p. 323.
145. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, trans. by Thomas P. Whitney, vol. 3–4 (New York, Evanston, San Fransisco and London: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 609.
146. Iu. Trifonov, 'Roman s istoriei', interview by Ral'f Shreder, *Voprosy literatury* (1982: 5), 68; David Gillespie, 'Man and Soviet Society in the Works of Vasily Belov and Valentin Rasputin, 1960–81' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1984), p. 25.
147. S. Zalygin, 'Pisatel' i Sibir'', in *Literaturnye zaboty* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1972), p. 63.

PART II

ANIMIST VISIONS

CHAPTER 3

VALENTIN RASPUTIN

The spate of prose about life in rural communities was a form of cultural reaction to a stale, urban-orientated ideology, and to socio-economic policies which Stalin and later Khrushchev had implemented. Collectivization, the onslaught on the kulaks and the migration of millions of Soviet peasants from their home villages to towns — for education, jobs and escape from officially denigrated life in the countryside — produced two generations of disorientated town-dwellers, with displaced identities.[1] They had been uprooted from an agricultural environment that was self-sufficient and culturally hermetic, to find themselves in a mechanized world that was incomprehensible, isolating and ultimately demeaning.

In 1969 the dissident playwright, Andrei Amal'rik wrote of the confusion and anxiety of those consigned to the newly formed 'proletarian' class:

> The mass exodus of peasants to the city has created a new type of city dweller: a person who has broken with his old environment, way of life and culture and who is finding it very difficult to discover his place in his new environment and feels ill at ease in it. He is both frightened and aggressive. He no longer has any idea to what level of society he belongs.[2]

In response to this common psychological plight, writers who shared a similar background recreated in their work a setting to ease the suppressed nostalgia of those who, like them, had abandoned and perhaps denied the life they knew and understood most fully.[3]

Many of the best-known writers of 'rural prose' had personal memories of the confusion and distress of transition from country to city. Their work sought to record the cultural roots from which Soviet society had torn itself away: but it also represented an attempt to recapture a lost integrity of personality by stirring up memories of village childhood and formative experiences in a rural environment.[4] Lévi-Strauss is well known for his view that 'primitive' societies are not stuck in aspic but have developed in a different direction. Following a similar line of reasoning, Soviet rural writers looked to a traditional way of life for evidence of how the people who still followed it had evolved.[5] They were seeking not an anthropological lesson but a moral one: a way of incorporating what they saw as the spiritual maturity of the rural dweller into their own lives.

Through recollection and observation they hoped to recover ways of living and perceiving with which to fill the vacuum of an industrialized urban wasteland.

To that extent rural prose was an invocation to pastoral tranquillity, to the healing power of memory, and a way of directing thought to an internal point of balance. The introductory section to Viktor Astaf'ev's *Oda russkomu ogorodu* ('Ode to a Russian Kitchen Garden', 1972), for example, reflects more than just the sentimental 'yearning for [. . .] a rural childhood' which David Gillespie has detected.[6] It suggests, too, that happy and serene memories, invoked in a style similar to prayer, can help to restore psychological health and clarity of vision.

> Oh my memory, work your miracle once more, take the fear from my soul, the torpid burden of weariness, which brings gloom and the sweet poison of solitude. Revive [. . .] the child within, let me find peace and purity beside him. And if you will — godless though I am — I shall invoke you in the name of the Lord, just as once, deafened and blinded by war, I prayed to be lifted out of the lifeless depths and to find any glimmer in the darkness. And then I recalled [. . .] that which they had sought to destroy in me, and I awoke the child, and the surrounding emptiness was again filled with sounds, colours and aromas.[7]

If emotional and spiritual health were not to be irredeemably lost, a new blueprint for living was indispensable. However far removed from the actualities of Soviet life *derevenskaia proza* might appear, it was just such a blueprint that its writers sought to offer. Vasilii Belov's reflective depiction of the traditional life of the northern peasantry, *Lad* ('Harmony', 1979–81), suggests, for instance, that holistic rural existence in tune with the cycles of nature allowed for fuller, more creative and varied, human development. Its pace permitted an individual to develop in his own way and reaffirmed the harmonious variety of life, allowing the creative source within to follow its full, natural course.[8]

> Rhythm is a condition of life [. . .].
>
> Spiritual and physical harmony [. . .] is life itself, the full-blooded quality of living, life's rhythmic pattern. A break in the rhythm leads to sickness, disorder, discord, confusion. [. . .]
>
> A rhythmic life — like the sound of music — does not imply monotony [. . .], it helps to give resonance and shape to individuality, like a melody in music. Rhythm strengthens the creative aspect in a person.[9]

Ekaterina Starikova's observation that village prose sought less to reflect the panorama of rural existence than to point to the spiritual consequences of the social transformation of the countryside, draws attention to its role as a window on moral re-evaluation.[10] The rural environment could act as a litmus test for truth and falsehood, right and wrong, because it gave direct access to structures and laws organically inherent in human beings as in the natural world. These, if followed, might prove to be man's deliverance.[11]

The introduction of rural, simple people as models in literature undermined the mental configuration that country folk within the Soviet Union were

'primitive', 'childlike', and unable to cope without Party guidance. Moreover, fiction explored aspects of preternatural experience which suggested that the surrounding world was not to be scientifically analysed and controlled, but that it was personified, demanding and capricious. Man's relationship with it was based on a kind of mystic participation where emotional perception is as real as sense perception.[12]

Gillespie has observed that, in respect of its rediscovery of new values based on emotional or spiritual links with the natural world and the cultural tradition formed thereby, 'village prose [. . .] reflects the tradition of "man and nature" in [. . .] pre-revolutionary Russian literature.'[13] It would be unrealistic to refute out of hand the influence of the idealized nineteenth-century image of the peasant as the human embodiment of 'natural, elemental wisdom and morality'.[14] But it is also true that depictions of peasants by writers as diverse as Vasilii Belov or the Armenian *derevenshchik*, Grant Matevosian, give evidence of serious, innovative attempts to identify some of the elements which make up the raw, 'primitive' personality unsoiled by industrial civilization. As the Soviet critic Lev Anninskii observed in a comparison of these two writers published in 1982: 'Before us is an attempt, in different ways, to assemble the human being.'[15]

The narrative orientation of leading writers of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Belov, Vasilii Shukshin, Zalygin, Astaf'ev, or Rasputin, gave rural or uneducated figures a degree of linguistic and psychological autonomy uncharacteristic either of nineteenth-century prose or socialist realism.[16] This had, of course, already been pioneered by Solzhenitsyn in *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* ('One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich', 1962) with a depiction of prison-camp life through the prism of one inmate's consciousness. And in 1977, shortly after the publication of the novella *Proshchanie s Materoi*, Valentin Rasputin remarked how important it was that an author should be on an equal footing with his characters and never presume himself to be wiser or more experienced than they.[17]

The increasingly polyphonic range of characters and voices in Soviet writing was also interwoven with a strong sense of their cultural background and the Russian millennial tradition. As Zalygin wrote in 1969:

> Our generation is perhaps the last to have seen, with its own eyes, the millennial way of life from which we have all emerged. Who will speak of it and of the decisive transformation it underwent in such a short period of time, if we fail to do so?[18]

The past, Zalygin reportedly also observed, had been written into human psychology.[19] The awareness in Russian rural prose of an ancestry and a millennium of chronicled history, tradition, and religious thought allowed literature once again to explore more profound ontological issues. Such renewed sense of a personal and historical heritage, from which the Soviet

people had been torn by revolution and social change, was bound to beg questions on their relationship with a lost ancestry, and with that most ancient ancestry of all — nature.[20]

The restoration of the broken connection between modern man, his ancestry, his land and locality became the most salient theme of prose in the late 1960s and 1970s. And it was expressed most richly in the form designed to encompass both history and metaphysics — myth.[21]

The function of myth, it has been suggested in Chapter 1, is to build an historical, cosmological, and moral bridge between a temporal order and an eternal order. It may also be that — in Joseph Campbell's words — a 'recognition of that ultimate mystery transcending names and forms "from which . . . words turn back"' could be a criterion for discriminating between a genuine mythological model and an artificial one.

If the novelist who most successfully dismantled ideological 'myth', and revived an authentically mythological quality in prose published in the 1960s was Mikhail Bulgakov, his successor in the 1970s was arguably Valentin Rasputin. In his fiction, Rasputin evoked in archetypal imagery, accessible beyond the Russian context, experiences of the numinous which socialist realism categorically excluded. The term 'numinous' is used here as it was defined by Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), indicating the mystical sensation of 'sacred' or 'holy', without the moral or rational elements which either of these words might carry.[22] As Otto explains it, the 'numinous' carries the fascination of a supreme, incomprehensible, unapproachable, vital, overpowering presence. It is objective, outside the self, and on this presence the self knows that it ultimately depends.[23] The term makes it possible to circumnavigate difficulties arising with the use of words such as 'sacred' and 'profane', which are laden with associations inappropriate and unhelpful in this context. When used here, 'profane' denotes neither 'irreverent' nor 'polluted', but rather 'known' or 'familiar'. Similarly, 'sacred' carries no moral or interdictory connotations.

In Rasputin's writing, the numinous principle (which is unchangeable, formless, and unbounded) is shown to be manifest in relative or profane reality. Paradoxically, the two opposing and irreducible principles — sacred and profane — coexist. This notion is termed a 'hierophany' in religious anthropology, and may be recognized in a natural phenomenon, an object, an animal, or a human being.[24] It is, Eliade observes, '*the* cardinal problem of any religion', and may be observed as much in Christianity as in more 'primitive' traditions.[25]

The numinous is identified in Rasputin's work through images recognizable as archetypes of the sacred: symbolic compounds which represent the numen in the collective imagination of a range of unconnected cultures worldwide (sun, sky, earth, or tree are typical examples).[26] Rasputin's use of these representations

carries general imaginative associations from folktale, myth, and legend; but his imagery gains particular definition and colour if examined in relation to Siberian, or Altaic, beliefs, and to those of pre-Christian Slavs as well as of Russian Orthodox Christians.[27]

There are striking parallels between Rasputin's philosophical perception and the religious vision noted by anthropologists among the undeveloped agricultural and nomadic communities of the Central Asian and Siberian area. Indeed, one should look perhaps in this direction, rather than to the Russian context, to identify the tradition closest to Rasputin in the early period of his development as a writer.[28]

Rasputin was born and brought up in the Irkutsk area of Siberia, close to the Autonomous Republic of Buryatiya, a region in which Buryat and Russian communities are closely integrated.[29] The way of life he encountered in his formative years would have comprised, therefore, a mixture of Russian Orthodoxy, Mongolian Buddhism, and Altaic cult. And though, as I understand from verbal reports, he has been received into the Russian Orthodox Church, his writing consistently indicates that for him Siberian shamanism and the spirit world it embraces are not simply a local curiosity, but a familiar and well-assimilated system of belief.

The tenet on which the Altaic tradition rests is that man lives in a sacred Nature not as her servant, but as her helper and her kinsman. According to traditional beliefs of the people of the area, all things in Nature are wholly integrated. There exists a vital force or spirit which emanates from the Supreme Deity or deities in the sky, permeates all form, animate or inanimate, and returns to the sky after death. Everything in the world is a manifestation of the sacred, and falls into a universal pattern of variation, decay, death, and rebirth. This goes for rocks and stones and trees, as much as for planets and stars, the waters, the earth and all that is on it, including man. In the world, form may vary but essence does not; and death is merely the taking on of another form. The prevailing idea is that there exists a supreme reality beyond appearances lodged *in* appearances, to the extent that all inanimate objects are thought to have their 'owner spirits' ('*ezhin*').[30]

This paradoxical manifestation of a dual reality in the mundane is plainly evident in Rasputin's prose. It accords with a sense of the unity and integration of all life's forms, reminiscent of Solov'ev's notion of the created universe as a single organism and spirit. It is there in evocations of cyclical mutation; or in hints of immanent spiritual presences active in human life. And this, even more perhaps than the social and moral aspect of his writing (studied by Gillespie and Klaus Holtmeier), lends Rasputin's fiction its originality and substance.[31]

The remainder of the chapter will explore perceptions of the numinous and their integration with social and moral dilemmas in three of Rasputin's

best-known novellas: *Poslednii srok* ('Borrowed Time', 1970); *Zhivi i pomni* ('Live and Remember', 1975); and *Proshchanie s Materoi* ('Farewell to Matera', 1976). All are concerned in different ways with the theme of transition from a familiar form of order into one that is unknown or, in Otto's terminology, 'numinous' and 'wholly other'.

The earliest novella, *Poslednii srok*, broaches the theme most directly.[32] Its narrative structure loosely reflects Tolstoi's *Smert' Ivana Il'icha* ('The Death of Ivan Il'ich', 1885–86), relating as it does the last few days in the life of an unremarkable character who is bed-ridden, dying, and surrounded by sympathetic, but otherwise preoccupied relatives. But where Ivan Il'ich's end is uncomprehending and tormented almost to the last, Rasputin's *starukha* Anna slips into death with neither question, fear, nor resistance. Her life, like that of the peasant in Tolstoi's *Tri smerti* ('Three Deaths', 1858–59), has been ruled by the biological cycle, and in death she allows it to run its course.[33]

Illness provides the opportunity for a final meeting with her children. Three have been uprooted in search of education or a better life and sucked into the urban whirlpool.[34] Of the remaining two, Anna's son, Mikhail, is all but an alcoholic; her daughter, Varvara, now in her sixties, is absorbed by the practical difficulties of bringing up a sprawling family. Over the old woman's deathbed the children exchange memories, and tensions emerge as their conflicting cultural expectations become apparent. Starukha Anna's favourite daughter fails to appear from Kiev. After several days, weary of their mother's protracted illness, the children depart. Only Mikhail remains. With that, the old woman's flickering consciousness finally turns in upon itself, and she dies.

Superficially, the story draws attention to the conflict of values and expectations stimulated by the encounter of an old cultural framework with the new. Beyond that, however, it also points to the more insurmountable divide between a consciousness wavering on the verge of the numinous, and minds still caught up in the conflicts and anxieties of the material world. References to formal religion are oblique. The Orthodox tradition colours Anna's beliefs, but more serious narrative attention is given to visionary ideas outside the Christian framework.[35] Two themes emerge in particular: the symbiotic relationship between human personality and its external environment; and manifestations of the numen in the physical world.

In Rasputin's universe, the integration between man and the surrounding world is absolute. The environment — emotional, physical and social — determines what people are, and personalities affect each other to the degree that a presence or absence can determine life or its extinction. Anna revives briefly when her children arrive; their departure signals her death.

At a more subtle level, the quality of personality permeates surroundings and transforms them in substance and appearance. The bond between person

and place may be such that they seem barely distinguishable. Anna's cottage is an extension of herself:

Everything here [. . .] seemed to repeat and reflect her words and gestures — speaking when she spoke, falling silent when she stopped [. . .] and listening with quiet, unobtrusive attention. [. . .] They seemed to have reached exactly the same old age, the utmost limit of life, each clung on only thanks to the other. You had to tread carefully on the floor, so as not to hurt Mother, and everything you said to her was trapped and held in the walls, the corners, everywhere.[36]

The symbiotic quality of relationships is also transposed into a metaphysical mode. *Poslednii srok* points to the active participation in the tangible universe of a protective, life-supporting, numinous presence which touches Anna when her awareness is wavering between the physical world and its spiritual counterpart. It is communicated through images of sky and sun. The sky has mysterious, impenetrable depth, but its distance is qualified by the warmth, peace, and protection it generates, or by the comforting presence of a single puff of cloud.[37] The sun's rays are the passage by which the vital force in the sky communicates its presence to the earth. At a time when earthly reality appears more in the guise of dream or memory, the sun offers Anna intimations of another dimension of truth:[38]

The sun held her in a kind of spell — not the fiery globe up there in the sky, but the light and warmth that fell to earth from it and warmed her. For the second day she strained her senses, looking for something in it besides warmth and light, but not knowing what. She didn't worry. No doubt everything she needed to know would be revealed to her in good time, and the time had evidently not come yet. She was certain that when she died she would learn not only this, but many other secrets which had not been hers to know in life, and which would finally explain the age-old mystery of all that had happened to her in the past, and all that would be in the future.[39]

The role of the heavens as an archetypal expression of transcendence, infinity, eternity, and creative power (because they bring rain) is widely recognized.[40] The Buryat venerate the sky ('*Tengri*') as Divinity in itself, as well as the home of multiple divinities.[41] In *Poslednii srok*, sunlight pouring across the sky suggests to Anna a mediating passage between the earthly and the numinous:

The morning sun did not fall into the house, but the old lady could tell it had come up, even without the windows: the air around her stirred and sprang to life, as if something were blowing on it from the side. She raised her eyes and saw the first joyful rays of sunlight, which had not yet found the earth, like the rungs of a ladder flung across the sky, on which only bare feet could step. This made her feel warmer at once and she murmured, 'Oh Lord . . .'[42]

The image of the sun's rays as ladders in the sky reflects a feature of the shamanistic universe — traditionally espoused by the Buryat — in which the shaman's ascent to the higher world may be made by various kinds of ladder

including a sunbeam.[43] A single sunbeam, the Buryat say, is a 'window from heaven'.[44] The sun expresses the sacred without losing its profane quality as sunlight, and so fulfils the nature of a hierophany. It is the force which can as joyfully dissolve life as give it, and offers Anna the certainty that all is well with the world.[45]

Anna's intuitions of the experience of dying suggest that she may have experienced it before. She perceives it as a descent down a stairway to a place where the earth is covered with fresh hay. There she meets a double with whom she is united to the sound of a ringing bell.[46] Without weakening the impact of the original image, it is worth noting that there is here an intriguing combination of elements from both Christian and Buryat traditions. Hay is the dead matter on which, in the Christian tradition, the world's spiritual rebirth took place: Christ, the incarnation of the numen, was laid in a manger. The bell is the Christian call for attention to be turned to Him. According to the Buryat understanding of the afterlife, the souls of the dead are exact 'doubles' of the living personality in a physical and moral sense, and they live on in a world which also replicates the earthly life.[47]

Having been united with her double, the soul, and become whole, Anna continues her journey alone into the sounding bells watched by a pair of eyes which then sink under the hay, to earth, while she goes on into a 'living dawn' ('*zhivoe utro*').[48] According to Buryat beliefs, a man may be composed of three parts or souls. The first has access to the higher world and is judged after death; the second remains on earth and becomes a ghost or spirit ('*bookholdoi*') which lives on as did the living man; the third remains with the material body and may be reborn.[49] Czaplicka also notes a belief that during illness one soul is held captive by the spirits. The encounter and union of Anna with her soul and their subsequent apparent reseparation suggest that as she is made whole with herself in death, so part of her consciousness (*bookholdoi*) is shed to the earth, while she continues into the next life.[50]

Meanwhile, the third soul is left behind with the material body, perhaps to be reborn. Anna also has intimations of a previous life and death. She is hazy about the form she was given in earlier lives ('Whether crawling, walking or flying, she could not remember, nor even guess'); but she recollects a storm, lightning and rain which she believes may once have killed her.[51] For the Buryat, to be killed by lightning is to be 'chosen' by *Tengri*.[52] Within that model of understanding, Anna may be counted among the blessed.

The numen touches not only the dying Anna; it also disturbs her more sophisticated daughter, Liusia, who has moved furthest from the forms of thought and communication into which she was born. Unconsciously, while distanced from her mother's thinking, Liusia has created a travesty of the same animist model, in which correct aspect and success are amulets to be worn as protection against ill luck: 'Liusia believed that misfortune had eyes, and that

before descending on somebody, it studied his demeanour, his worth and even his appearance. It didn't often dare strike at a strong, happy person'.[53]

In a reflex response to the gulf between her new life and her childhood, Liusia relives her memories and is subjected to a revelatory experience which brings her face to face with her old self. It forces her to recognize that her past has not been lost, but remains present and watching, a disembodied form of awareness in the very fibre of space and matter.

> Life seemed to have sent her back because she had left something behind here, forgotten something very precious, without which life could not go on. But these events, long past, having returned, did not vanish altogether, they simply stepped aside to see what would happen to Liusia after their return visit, to see what she had gained or lost, what had awoken, and what had perished.[54]

The world is permeated by an intangible consciousness which watches over nature and man. It is in the rays of the sun which fall upon Anna; it lifts the early morning mist;[55] it touches Liusia through the power of memory. It exists in matter and in the human mind, much like the vital force which emanates from the Sky God, returns to him after death and remains the single, principal spirit in things: the all-pervading hierophany which drives the eternal cycle ever on.

The more conventional subject matter of the novella *Zhivi i pomni* ensured that it was given a warmer welcome by Soviet critics. But the story also stimulated debate on individual commitment to society, and the tension between personal loyalties and duty to the community.[56]

Its primary theme — desertion and the recovery of personal life — no doubt touched a raw nerve in the Soviet readership. The more so as Rasputin's treatment of the subject, though apparently condemning desertion in principle, also aired the idea that withdrawal from commitment to the group may be excusable if the preservation of values of greater importance is at stake. *Zhivi i pomni* is set in the winter of 1945. It portrays the dismal consequences of a relationship between Andrei Gus'kov, an army deserter who has returned to his Siberian home village on the Angara river, and his wife, Nastena, who shields him from the authorities and helps him survive, ultimately at the cost of her own life. The novella operates on several planes, the simplest resting on questions of social ethics, the more subtle on problems relating to man's shifting position in a system of cosmic order which comprises a numinous reality, earthly life, and a third, subhuman level.

Gus'kov betrays the collective unit by deserting from the ranks as war draws to a close, and thereby challenges the authority of the group. As he does so, he descends to a lower form of life. He lives like an animal in the forest outside his village, tormented and isolated, humanized only by the (perhaps misguided) loyalty of his wife. She hides him and, as the authorities close in, drowns herself and an unborn child to prevent his discovery. After her death, she is granted a

grave in the village cemetery despite her suicide, and is remembered with pity by women in the community.

Examination of the work within the frameworks of Christian and Altaic tradition, however, shows a more complex inner design. Gerald Mikkelson has commented in some detail on the novella's underlying structure as a Christian parable.[57] Nastena's role, he argues, illustrates the impulse to Christian sacrifice and forgiveness. She emerges, Mikkelson writes, as a mediator between Andrei and salvation, and as his protector from the destructive, even demonic aspect of his personality. She is both Saviour and life-giver. The dating of her pregnancy at the end of March seems to coincide with the Feast of the Annunciation ('*Bogoroditsa moia*', Andrei calls her), while her name may imply associations with Resurrection and the salvation of fallen souls (Anastasis)[58]: 'The Russian Anastasis is not so much a "voskreseniie" as a "soshestviie v ad". In *Live and Remember*, Nastena represents both the One who descended and those including Andrei for whom the descent was made.' Nastena's step into the water is her voluntary 'descent into hell', heralding Resurrection and Salvation.[59]

The emphasis Mikkelson gives to Christian symbolism in the story is a little exaggerated, but the general thrust of his argument is persuasive. The more so since, in the light of Altaic tradition, the Christian dimension is imaginatively reinforced. Religious elements in the story are fused throughout with the folkloric. An awareness of the spirit world (werewolves, forest spirits, and demons) comprises part of Nastena and Andrei's consciousness in a way which Christianity does not.[60] Prayer, for instance, is a magic incantation to ensure protection in times of danger or distress.[61]

Ostracized from the collective, Andrei is, in social terms, a dead man. His fate is unknown. By his desertion he has denied his place in the human community. He is doomed to be forgotten and to disappear without progeny.[62] He returns to his village, Atamanovka, to function like a spirit and to reaffirm his existence by breaking a series of social taboos.[63] He re-establishes a secret relationship with his wife, drawing her out of the collective into his own shadow life. He also kills a grazing goat and, later, a calf ('*bychok*'), the young of the Buryat totemic ancestor, the bull.[64] He returns like a demon in the *bania* — the unclean place where malicious powers and unclean forces are said to lurk.[65] Nastena initially perceives him as an '*oboroten''* (an animal spirit, a werewolf or changeling) or '*leshii*' (forest spirit). For his part, Andrei sees himself as a wolf or a bear — both demonic images in Russian folklore. As his position grows more desperate, he retires under the earth into a cave.[66] Having lost his place in human society, Andrei is reintegrated into the eternal cycle through a series of mutations which take him underground: perhaps to the underworld whence there is no reprieve.[67]

The Buryat belief that man has three souls has been outlined earlier in the chapter. One of these (*bookholdoi*) returns home after death, lives in a dark,

abandoned place and may perform acts of revenge to mock the living.[68] One also leaves the body in sleep, and its wanderings are recalled as dreams.[69] Nastena wonders if a dream she shared with Andrei marked the visitation of her soul to his, while he was at war.[70] Nastena's own dreams also suggest that she has contact with the spirit world and premonitions of her fate.[71]

As Mikhailov notes, however, the soul may also leave the body as a result of fear; and unless it is persuaded to return by special shamanistic rites, death will ensue.[72] Gus'kov's reappearance in his home village may, therefore, be less the return of a deserter and an outcast than of a wandering spirit. It is the homecoming not of the whole man, but of the shadow of the man who has known war.

While remaining sensitive to Nastena's personal tragedy as a figure caught between a deep emotional bond and her ties with the community, one might also consider her fate in terms of the system of images in Buryat religious culture. Within that model, Nastena's role is comparable to the shaman's. She straddles two worlds: those of men and of spirits, where different moral values prevail. In the one, the Absolute is social responsibility, and morality is gauged by notions of duty and loyalty to the group. It is, in Durkheim's terminology, 'totemic'. In the other 'animist' reality where Andrei resides, the good is seen as preservation of life, personal communication, fertility and procreation.

The worlds are as divided as the two shores of the Angara on which Nastena's dual life is lived. And as the world of men increasingly threatens Andrei, so, together with her unborn child, she abandons both systems of understanding to step into a third dimension. In the Altaic system of belief, the waters participate in the Supreme God of the Sky, *Tengri*.[73] Indeed, it is the sky Nastena sees as she looks for the last time from her boat into the river which will take her life.

The fusion of Christian and Altaic culture weaves into the story a subtext which supports the surface model but also suggests dilemmas which are deeper than the plot indicates. Andrei is more than a deserter drawn (by Soviet standards of the time) with unusual empathy. His characterization is shadowed by the suggestion that he is the rebellious spirit of a man who has lost his life to the demands of war. Nastena is not just a positive heroine overcome by the conflict between love and duty. Her image evokes the concomitant thought that she may be a mediator between the worlds. Her last act, if weighed in the context of Siberian beliefs, is not self-annihilation, but a step into another, better order from a torn reality where the human spirit is abused.

In *Proshchanie s Materoi*, the numinous element also predominates over and qualifies the treatment of a topical, if hackneyed, social and ecological theme: the violent sacrifice of the environment and a traditional way of life to technological progress. The island of Matera, set in the river Angara, is to be flooded to make way for the building of a new hydroelectric power station.[74] Its

few remaining inhabitants — mainly old peasant women who have known no life away from the island — wait to be forcibly re-settled in a new purpose-built village on the mainland. Matera, its homes, monuments, its past and its way of life are to be wiped off the map.

Rasputin's depiction of the flooding of Matera gives the event an apocalyptic dimension, noted by a number of critics.[75] It suggests the end not just of an age, but of a cosmic era: a time when the elements are fused, the earth ravaged by fire, drowned by the waters and dissolved to fade away in a rolling mist. The final paragraph also suggests that Matera is lifted up and carried away whole, out of the profane world of the earthly into the numinous world of the sky.[76]

The subject matter is complemented by mythological overtones in the narrative structure, which recalls the legendary tale of the sunken city, *Grad Kitezh*.[77] It also has a didactic quality absent from other works discussed here, but appropriate to the mythological function, as outlined by Joseph Campbell (see Chapter 1).[78] *Proshchanie s Materoi* is shaped like a latter-day deluge myth. The island of Matera has reached the moment when it must revert to formlessness or chaos. In the tradition of deluge myths, as Eliade explains them, the story signals the end of an era while also pointing towards a new beginning, transcending the eternal cycle, of which the old woman, Dar'ia, has intimations throughout the story.[79]

The mythological significance of cataclysmic immersion in water or flooding is almost universal. Eliade expresses it well:

> Water symbolizes the primal substance from which all forms come and to which they will return either by their own regression or in a cataclysm. [...] In cosmogony, in myth, ritual and iconography, water fills the same function in whatever type of cultural pattern we find it; it *precedes* all forms and *upholds* all creation. Immersion in water symbolizes a return to the pre-formal, a total regeneration, a new birth, for immersion means a dissolution of forms, a reintegration into the formlessness of pre-existence; and emerging from the water is a repetition of the act of creation in which form was first expressed. Every contact with water implies regeneration.[80]

In Central Asia and Siberia, water has traditionally held a special quality, as has been noted earlier in this chapter. To the Mongolian and Altaic peoples, it participates in the divinity insofar as it falls from the sky and reflects it.[81] But it is also a healer and life-giver to the Russian Slavs. As A. N. Afanas'ev explains, the waters released in the Spring are the waters of life ('*zhivaia voda*'), with the capacity to cleanse, heal and regenerate:

> The cold winter, laying its fetters on the holy waters [...] enslaved them. [...] In Spring, the mighty Perun would smash the solid fetters with his hammer and clear the way for the torrents of rainwater [...], the water which heals wounds, gives strength, knits the broken body and restores life itself.[82]

Proshchanie s Materoi opens in the Spring of cyclical time with the grandiose image of cracking ice which Afanas'ev also draws:

And once again Spring came, true to its endless progression, though it was to be the last for Matera [. . .]. Once again the ice stirred with roar and passion, hummocks piled high on the shore, and the Angara lay open, released, stretching into a mighty, glistening stream. [. . .] Once again greenery blazed forth upon the earth and in the trees; the first rains fell; the martlets and swallows flew in; and, in the evenings, the marsh frogs croaked their love song to life as they awoke.[83]

In Matera's Spring reawakening, nature is galvanized along with the four elements: the greenery over the earth and trees burns; the waters descend; the air is filled with bird-life; and the creatures of the muddy earth awaken to express their passion for existence. This is the beginning of the last year of cyclical time for Matera. As it advances, the island passes through all the stages of a cosmic loop or 'Great Year', opening with a creation, passing through a history, a period of degeneration, and concluding with a return to chaos and fusion with the elements.[84]

Eliade also points to the association of water symbolism with earth symbolism:

Water *precedes* every creation, every form; earth *produces* living forms. While the mythological destiny of water is to open and close cosmic cycles, the destiny of the earth is to stand at the beginning and end of every biological form and of every form sharing in the history of *place*. [. . .] The living form as such, as the species, will never disappear till the end of the term allowed to earth by the waters.[85]

In *Proshchanie s Materoi* that term is set. The image of Matera comes to express, iconographically, all earthly form, all place and history.[86] But above all, Matera has the qualities of which earth is the archetypal symbol: its creative and nutritive properties, its subjection to the cyclic passage of time, its patient resilience, its vocation to serve and act as home for the custodian spirits or souls which inhabit its form.

These qualities are communicated particularly through images which come to characterize the island. They are expressed in the two trees — a giant larch and a birch — which overlook the village; in the anthropomorphically depicted huts which are painfully burned one by one; and, above all, in the figures of the spirit owner ('*khoziain*') of Matera and its oldest inhabitant, Bogodul.

On the island's pastureland stands an ancient and majestic larch tree, protectively, like a shepherd, Rasputin's narrator tells us.[87] Its top has been struck off by lightning (the fire of the gods); its roots are said to touch the very river bed on which the island rests.[88] It is held that while it stands, Matera will continue to stand. Until recently it was venerated with offerings. These practices were discontinued as life was modernized, but it nevertheless continues to evoke respect and fear. The branches of the tree spread not up but out. All attempts to destroy it prove fruitless; as the story draws to a close, it remains standing over the burnt-out void that was the island's village, rising out of what appears to be a sepulchral mound formed of the bark it has shed over the years.[89]

There is strong evidence to suggest that the larch is an image of the Cosmic Tree which in the shamanistic tradition stands at the world's axis and unites the three cosmic zones: the sky, the earth, and the underworld.[90] It may have been witness to that ancient time when communication between the worlds was easier: its branches are like rungs.[91] Once it may have been climbed to reach the heavens. But now it stands decapitated, cut off from the sky.[92]

Beside it stands a birch — used in shamanistic ritual to represent the Cosmic Tree, and symbolically planted in the homes of Buryat shamans.[93] Rasputin's birch is ancient ('*starcheskaia*') and mortal ('*smertnaia*').[94] Together, the two trees reflect the 'dual' aspect in nature: 'masculine' strength and inflexibility, 'feminine' vulnerability.[95] While the larch proves too resilient to be defeated, the birch is finally cut down, as if executed, by men clearing the island.[96]

The feature most unequivocally drawn from folk tradition both Altaic and Russian, however, is the *khoziain* of the island — its roaming spirit owner — described as a small creature, little bigger than a cat.[97] He is, the narrative informs us, the island's equivalent of a Russian house spirit ('*domovoi*').[98] But he may be more directly derived from the Buryat belief that every feature of the natural environment has its 'owner' ('*ezhin*') which, Roux emphasizes, reflects belief in a vital principle which penetrates all things, animate and inanimate.[99]

Rasputin's *khoziain* knows everything and disturbs nothing. He communicates with the spirit of all that is on the island: with its 'living' cottages ('*zhivye izby*') or with the burning wood of Petrukha's home. He senses imminent destruction and the end of his own service.[100] He is so close to the earth, so much the custodian of Matera's earthly form, that the boundlessness of the sky is fearsome to him ('it led him into a vague state of anxiety, without cause, and frightened him with its threatening, unfathomable depth').[101] But his perceptions also reach beyond the disruption of temporal order into an undefined beyond ('he saw all things from their beginning to their end. [. . .] And he saw further yet . . .').[102]

Another prominent element in the story is the theme of ancestral spirits combined with the notion of reincarnation. The souls of the dead, Buryat tradition teaches, are lodged in features of the natural environment.[103] Even today, Humphrey has noted, sacrifices are made to spirits of the ancestors. This is so particularly among the western Buryat (nearer Irkutsk, where Rasputin lives), where the link between the cult of ancestors and of locality spirits has tended to be stronger than in the east.[104]

The power of the spirits lies in the vengeance they must exact on the living for their sufferings; these will be reproduced unless compensated for by prayers and sacrifices. All misfortune — even bad weather — continues to be ascribed to unsatisfied vengeful spirits inhabiting particular sites.[105] In *Proshchanie s Materoi* the link between the living, their ancestors, and their locality is of central importance. In abstract, it might give rise to the notion that it is only by

giving recognition to the past that we may live fully in the present. The dead are considerably more than a memory: they participate in the lives of the living. They descend at night to communicate with sleeping villagers; they make demands, and the living have a responsibility towards them.[106] Through the living, Dar'ia believes, the dead remain alive, and by departing from the place where her ancestors live and lie she is doing them harm.[107] For that they will judge her, because she will have left them without hope and without a future.[108] It is the function of the spirits to watch the living and assess their capacity to remember, because — somehow — memory defines existence:

She imagined how, later, when she had descended from this place to her kith and kin, many, many people would gather for the judgement. Her father and mother would be there, her grandfathers and great-grandfathers, all those who had served their turn before her [. . .] all with gloomy, severe and questioning faces.[109]

Through Dar'ia they speak:

'We see each one of you and we will make our demand of each of you. [. . .] You are on display before us; we gaze upon you all to see what you do, what you remember. Truth is in memory [. . .].'

He who is without memory is without life.[110]

According to Mikhailov, the Buryat believe that after death the souls of the distinguished, influential members of their society sit in council to judge issues of special importance:

The souls of people such as this, having become *bookholdoi*, maintained a high status in the other world. The Buryat believed that the souls of dead kinsmen formed a special group of spirits and held *suglany* — meetings and judgements — to take decisions on legal, moral and other issues.[111]

The way in which the quick and the dead communicate in *Proshchanie s Materoi* might also reflect the Buryat belief that in sleep the soul is temporarily disengaged from the body, just as in death the two are permanently separated. It is in dreams, then, that the living and dead may meet:

Only at night, having cast off from the shore, do the living meet with the dead. The dead come to them in body and word and demand the truth, in order to pass it further, to those whom they remember. [. . .]

Now dreams flashed pale in the windows like far distant lightning and from these reflections alone one could tell where there was human life and where there was none.[112]

Communication with the dead, which the living read as dreams, has an elemental quality. It is also reminiscent of the way the dead manifest themselves in ancient Indo-Iranian or 'Arian' tradition, as described by Afanas'ev: 'According to a belief common to all Arian tribes, the spirits of the dead were seen as creatures of the elements: spirits marching in storm clouds, fast flashing lights (lightning) or blowing winds.'[113]

A further association may be made between a *bookholdoi* and Bogodul, the apparently ageless old man who lives in a shack in the village, but wanders about as he pleases, visiting the old women and sharing their food.[114] Like the *bookholdoi*, he lives in a dark, deserted place and feeds off the living. His physical appearance has a quality of stubborn resilience like that of the great larch.[115] His head is shaggy enough for birds to nest in, he is heavy and bent and walks barefoot. His hands are monkey-like; his feet immune to snake bites. In winter he appears to hibernate. He has the characteristics both of a tree spirit and a Holy Fool (*'iurodivyi'*). The other old men complain that the women treat him like a god. His presence is a mystery: he is not entirely of the village, but seems to be a vestige of peoples and times past.

> It seemed that he had always been about, that he had been presented to the village as a little gift by those people of earlier times who had gone to their rest, one and all. [...]
>
> He had not changed for many years, looking just as when he first appeared; it was as though God had set himself the task of seeing at least one man through several generations.[116]

Bogodul's is not a life of the living. He has no ties; little concerns him — except the destruction of the cemetery. He is more the vagrant ancestral spirit awaiting a death which will come only with the passing of the island itself and of its *khoziain*.[117]

The passage out of form and the dissipation of vital energy which take place throughout the story are sensed with special intensity by Dar'ia. She acts as a mediating figure between the worlds and between past and present.[118] She seems to be in touch with the spirits, and makes prayers which are echoed and borne away into unknown reaches of space.[119] In order to make her farewell to Matera as her ancestors wish, she is given as guide a little yellow-breasted bird (representing a soul in Altaic cult). It helps her find the fir — the first tree created — with which to decorate her cottage before it is burned.[120] She is also granted sight of the island's spirit owner, while roaming bewildered after the burning of her home. That evening she is found sitting alone under the larch, the image of the shamanistic Cosmic Tree.

Dar'ia pronounces the hortatory lesson which Rasputin's tale gives on conscience, service, and participation in the holistic unit which man and nature form. The essence of morals, Bronisław Malinowski has remarked, is that unlike legal and customary rules, they are enforced by conscience.[121] Without this, as the modern world has shown Dar'ia, moral discrimination ceases to be possible. She longs to see moral instinct revived, together with the recognition that life's vocation is service.[122] Once contribution is outworn, death should follow. If it does not, this is a tragedy and, Dar'ia believes, a punishment.

The notion of service is related to the recognition of man's place in nature and of his role as custodian rather than master of his environment. By ceasing

to participate in it, man breaks a bond with himself, because as the narrative teaches, he and nature are one:

> You are not only that which you bear within yourself, but also that which is, sometimes imperceptibly, around you. And to lose that can be more terrible than to lose an arm or a leg. This [. . .] is what will live on in the soul: a light which never fades, a joy. Perhaps this alone is eternal, only this, passed like the holy spirit, from man to man, from fathers to children, from children to grandchildren confusing, protecting, directing and purifying them. And there will come a time when it will bring them to something for which generations of people have lived.[123]

The consciousness of a common identity shared by man and his external surroundings is the essence of the spiritual tradition passed across generations. It has the power to protect, purify, and direct towards the ultimate end. And if that is so, it follows that whatever disrupts awareness of this identity contravenes the end of life itself. By these categories, the flooding of Matera is not just tragic; it is a violation of Natural Law and a metaphysical crime.

The final scene is enacted in Bogodul's hen-house, where the apocalyptic transition from form to chaos takes place. Matera dissolves in a strange watery light, seeming to evaporate into a foggy mist where formless presences move.[124] Bogodul's shack is invaded by the elements in which the dead have their life: cloud, light, and wind.[125] The closing lines evoke final disengagement from earthly form as the island's *khoziain* is washed away, then fusion with the elements in which the past and its spirits live on; and, finally, as the sound of a motor boat is heard from below (*'budto spodnizu'*), perhaps Matera's assumption, like that of the Universal Mother, *Bogoroditsa*, into an elemental chaos of wind and colour.[126] The island appears to be carried upward, out of the earthly waters of the Angara into the heavenly ocean: *'okean-more'*.[127] As the custodian spirit of her earthly form is washed away, Matera is lifted whole — like the ark — out of the temporal dimension into the numinous, with the Cosmic Tree standing and her last inhabitants still on board.

For the author of apocalyptic fiction, David Bethea writes:

> Aesthetic shape [. . .] is the most appropriate surrogate at hand for suggesting a divine shape to human history. [. . .] The voices in an apocalyptic fiction are [. . .] not all equal. [. . .] These authors encourage their readers to see a hierarchy of utterance whose highest level is, as Bakhtin would hold, the novelistically impossible — 'dialogism', or the full awareness of life's competing voices, *within* 'monologism', or the hope that, despite the fragility of paradigms, there is an order outside it all.[128]

'Monologism' is centrally characteristic of ideological literature. But it can be as much a feature of religious art. It reflects the 'purposefulness', or sense of movement towards a pre-ordained and meaningful end, which can drive religious thought as much as utopian socialist ideology. The 'end' is determined by Divine Intervention in the first instance, by History in the second.[129] But

because the two systems of thought share a similar teleological dynamic, it can take just the slightest shift in perspective for the religious structure to become an ideological one.

Bethea's remark goes some way towards explaining the inversion of Rasputin's political position (and that of other village prose writers such as Belov and — for a time — Astaf'ev) after the introduction of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* policy. Where Rasputin had been a figure on the verge of dissent in the 1970s — speaking out against the oppression of ideological collectivism and stimulating a dormant awareness of the historical, cultural, and religious past — in the mid-1980s he became a publicist closely associated with the hard-line nationalist, collectivist camp: the '*patrioty*'.[130] This posture may have been, in part, a result of Rasputin's natural conservatism of taste and his dislike and suspicion of the unrestrained, anarchic image of Western youth culture — expressed particularly, he felt, in rock music. It may have been a reflection of his fear that 'spiritual values' ('*dukhovnye tsennosti*'), neglected in Soviet times, would again slip off the political and cultural agenda.[131] But it points also to a way of thinking firmly rooted in a reading of pre-Revolutionary Russian philosophy and literature.

As *Proshchanie s Materoi* suggests, Rasputin's Siberian animism falls within a broader framework of 'purposeful' unity and integration, looking towards apocalypse, the End of History or union with God. In that he follows the system of thought adopted by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Christian writers and thinkers: Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, Solov'ev, Berdiaev, or Sergei Bulgakov. And yet, Siniavskii has observed, the 'purposeful' aspect of religion is precisely what brings it closest to the ideological cast of mind.[132]

Why the animist vision, which by its nature recognizes 'dialogue' between different forms of consciousness, should revert to a collectivist or totemic model of thought which does not, might be tentatively explained, perhaps, in two ways. First, as a reaction to the social and political disorder which the dissolution of the Empire and attempts at democratization and free-market economics have brought to the former Soviet states.[133] Second, in terms of the threat to the cohesion, indissolubility and security of the community and the state unit. The collective principle has been lost and communality itself is at risk: that is the time to rally around the totem.[134]

NOTES

1. Geoffrey Hosking, 'The Rediscovery of Politics: 2. The Return of the Repressed', 1988 Reith Lectures, *Listener*, 17 November 1988, p. 19.
2. Andrei Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1970), p. 34.
3. Hosking, 'Return of the Repressed', p. 19.
4. Ekaterina Starikova mentions Vasilii Belov and Viktor Likhonosov. E. Starikova, 'Nabroski k teme' (unpublished article, 1987). Valentin Rasputin is also a prominent example, as Semenova notes. Svetlana Semenova, *Valentin Rasputin* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1987), pp. 7–14.

5. Pace, *Lévi-Strauss*, p. 87.
6. Gillespie, 'Man and Soviet Society', p. 60.
7. Viktor Astaf'ev, *Oda russkomu ogorodu. Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1979), I, 442.
8. At this stage in Belov's literary development, his suggestion that beauty *is* variety becomes translated into a statement in support of individualism: 'Beauty is variety, diversity in the world. The idea that humanity is a crowd of identical, grey people led by exceptional and colourful individuals precludes beauty and contradicts the aesthetic principle.' Vasilii Belov, *Lad: Ocherki o narodnoi estetike, Izbrannye proizvedeniia v 3-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1984), III, 320.
9. Ibid., pp. 4, 105–06.
10. E. Starikova, 'Sotsiologicheskii aspekt sovremennoi "derevenskoi prozy"', *Voprosy literatury* (1972: 7), 28. Kozhinov has also remarked on the moral re-evaluations made in village prose. Vadim Kozhinov, 'Tsennosti istinnye i mnimye (1967)', in *Stat'i o sovremennoi literature* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1982), p. 42.
11. Belaia, *Literatura v zerkale kritiki*, p. 14.
12. Compare Pace, *Lévi-Strauss*, pp. 130, 136.
13. David C. Gillespie, *Valentin Rasputin and Soviet Russian Village Prose* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1986), p. 1.
14. loc. cit.
15. See, for example, Grant Matevosian, 'My i nashi gory' in *Avgust* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1972), pp. 5–106; Lev Anninskii, 'Oblomki raia: Mir Granta Matevosiana', in *Kontakty* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1982), p. 195.
16. Belaia, *Literatura*, p. 34.
17. Valentin Rasputin, 'Ne mog ne prostit'sia s Materoi', interview by V. Pomazneva, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16 March 1977.
18. Sergei Zalygin, 'Interv'iu u samogo sebia', in *Sobesedovaniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1982), p. 13.
19. G. A. Belaia, *Khudozhestvennyi mir sovremennoi prozy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), p. 58.
20. Belaia quotes Iu. Davydov's view of the conflicting ontological status of man, torn away from his roots in the natural world and seeking daily to renew the connection on his own terms. Iu. Davydov, 'Kul'tura — priroda — traditsiia' in *Traditsiia v istorii kultury* (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1978), pp. 45–46, quoted in Belaia, *Khudozhestvennyi mir*, p. 123.
21. A. Bocharov traces the attraction of myth for Soviet writers to the popularity of Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita* and of Latin American fiction, with its combination of ancient myth and contemporary realism. A. Bocharov, *Chem zhiva literatura: Sovremennost' i literaturnyi protsess* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1986), p. 18.
22. Rudolf Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 5–6.
23. One of the features of the experience of the numinous is, Otto writes, 'creature consciousness' or 'creature feeling': 'It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures.' Otto also notes and analyses the *mysterium tremendum* or 'mystical awe' which accompanies this, the sense of the absolute unapproachability of the numen and of its 'otherness'. It remains outside the limits of the canny yet is totally fascinating to the mind. Ibid., pp. 10, 13–23, 25–40.
24. The term 'hierophany' is used by religious anthropologists to denote any place, object, animal, phenomenon, or person that is acknowledged as manifesting the sacred. A hierophany is profane in itself, his or herself, but paradoxically also has a dimension of sacredness without ceasing to be what it is perceived to be: the sky, for example, or a tree, or a human being. Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, pp. 1–30.
25. Ibid., p. 29.
26. Eliade writes: 'Religious life, and all the creations that spring from it, are dominated by what one may call "the tendency towards an archetype". However many and varied are the components that go to make up any religious creation (any divine form, rite, myth or cult) their expression tends constantly to revert to an archetype.' Ibid., pp. 58–59.
27. The Altai is a region of south-western Siberia in the basin of the Ob river and its headstreams, the Biya and the Katun, bordering on Mongolia and China in the south-east.
28. V. Rasputin, 'Byt' samim soboi', interview by Evg. Osetrov, *Voprosy literatury* (1976: 9), 142. Rasputin emphasizes his Siberian background and underlines the importance of childhood experience for a writer's development: 'Ia uveren, chto pisatelem cheloveka delaet detstvo.' V. Rasputin, 'Ne ishchu geroev na storone', *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 11 September 1977, quoted in Semenova, *Rasputin*, p. 7.

29. Caroline Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 23.
30. Jean-Paul Roux. *Faune et flore sacrées dans les sociétés altaïques* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1966). See Chapter 1, 'Unité de la vie', esp. pp. 21–25.
31. Gillespie, *Rasputin*; Gillespie, 'Man and Soviet Society'; Klaus Holtmeier, *Religiöse Elemente in der sowjetrussischen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1986).
32. V. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, *Nash sovremennik* (1970: 7), 3–53; (1970: 8), 8–54. Subsequent references are to: Rasputin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v 2–kh tomakh* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1984), I. English translation: Valentin Rasputin, *Money for Maria and Borrowed Time — Two Village Tales*, trans. by Kevin Windle and Margaret Wettlin (London, Melbourne and New York: Quartet, 1981).
33. Compare Tolstoi's understanding of the peasant's attitude to death: 'His is another kind of religion, even though he has performed Christian rituals in the traditional way. His religion is in the Nature with which he has lived. He has felled his own trees; sowed and reaped his own rye; killed sheep and watched over their birth; and he has watched over the birth of his own children and the death of the old. This is a law he knows well; he has never turned his back on it [. . .] and has looked it firmly and simply in the eye.' L. N. Tolstoi's letter to A. A. Tolstaia on the story *Tri smerti*, L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, LX, 265, as quoted and noted in Semenova, *Rasputin*, p. 54.
34. In addition, the city has wrought physical changes in Il'ia and Liusia. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 156.
35. Anna is a deist as tradition demands. She has icon cases in her cottage and remarks that her faith has helped her to be more fully human. She asks to be buried with traditional incantations. Ibid., pp. 159–60, 164, 283–84.
36. Ibid., p. 163; Rasputin, *Borrowed Time*, p. 193.
37. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 284; Rasputin, *Borrowed Time*, p. 368.
38. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 155.
39. Ibid., p. 221; Rasputin, *Borrowed Time*, p. 276.
40. Eliade writes: 'What is quite beyond doubt is that there is an almost universal belief in a celestial divine being who created the universe and guarantees the fecundity of the earth (by pouring rain down upon it).' Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, p. 38.
41. In fact, as Mikhailov also notes, the sky (*Tengri*) while remaining a unity, also has warring factions of high gods living in it. This aspect of Buryat belief seems to be absent in Rasputin's story, due perhaps to Christian influence. T. M. Mikhailov, *Buriatskii shamanizm: istoriia, struktura i sotsial'nye funktsii* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1987), pp. 12–14.
42. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 173; Rasputin, *Borrowed Time*, p. 206–07.
43. Mikhailov suggests that the first religion of the tribes of the Baikal area was totemism and animism. This evolved into shamanism between 3000 and 1000 BC. Other Soviet writers date the development of shamanism later. Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective*, pp. 373, 481 (note 2); Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), p. 490.
44. Caroline Humphrey has noted this in a personal letter to me (17 April 1991). She also remarks that the sun's rays penetrating the house occur in many Buryat myths as principles of fertility. They are used to tell the time.
45. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, pp. 160, 282–83.
46. Ibid., pp. 262–63.
47. M. N. Khangalov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Ulan-Ude: [n. pub.], 1958), II, 194, quoted in Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 39.
48. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 263.
49. Mikhailov writes:

    > The Buryat of Balagansk and Alarsk thought that a person had three souls. The first, the 'kind' soul, has access to the higher gods or Tengri and takes care of its host. The second (*dunda*) is also to be found in the body. Sometimes it is harassed by spirits who capture and devour it, and then the person grows ill and dies. After the death of the host it becomes a *bookholdoi* — a ghost or spirit. The third soul remains permanently with the body, and stays with the host after death, protecting the bones. According to the beliefs of the Alarsk Buryat, the first soul is captured by the spirits of Erlen Khan [God of the Underworld, IM] and taken for judgement immediately after death. The second becomes a *bookholdoi* and lives like its host, while the third is reborn in human form.

    Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 39. However, M. A.Czaplicka, in an earlier study (first published 1914), identifies the three parts of which man is composed as the material body ('*oyeye*'), the lower soul or breath ('*amin*'), and the soul belonging to man only ('*sunyesun*').

Amin leaves the body in death and changes into a *bokholdoy* (or *bookholdoi*) which continues to live on earth in a manner similar to that which the man had formerly followed. *Sunyesun* leaves the body in sleep and after death is born again in the form of another human being. M. A. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia: A Study in Social Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 287.

50. Czaplicka also notes that when a man dies, spirits named *erliks* capture one of his souls and bring it before Erlik-Nomon-Khan for judgement. Once the soul has been captured a man may live on for up to nine years, but he never enjoys his former health and strength. Rasputin's Anna may, perhaps, descend into the underworld to meet the soul which has been judged. Ibid., pp. 158, 287.
51. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 271.
52. Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 45. However, Roux writes that anyone or anything struck by lightning is regarded as the object of divine anger and ostracized. Roux, *Faune et flore*, p. 43. Caroline Humphrey resolves the incompatibility of these interpretations by remarking, in her letter (see note 44), that although lightning is evidence of the anger of the sky, or its warring eastern and western factions, it also gives the stricken one power.
53. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 196: Rasputin, *Borrowed Time*, p. 239.
54. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 213; Rasputin, *Borrowed Time*, p. 264.
55. Rasputin, *Poslednii srok*, p. 142.
56. V. Rasputin, *Zhivi i pomni, Nash sovremennik* (1974: 10), 2–88; (1974: 11), 58–91. Subsequent references are to Rasputin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, II. Boris Pankin, 'Proshchaniia i vstrechi s Materoi: Zametki o proze Valentina Rasputina', *Druzhba narodov* (1978: 2), 241–44; Gerald E. Mikkelson, 'Religious Symbolism in Valentin Rasputin's tale "Live and Remember"', in *Studies in Honour of Xenia Gasiorowska*, ed. by Lauren G. Leighton (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1983), pp. 183–84.
57. Mikkelson, 'Religious Symbolism', p. 175.
58. Ibid., pp. 176–79.
59. Ibid., p. 181.
60. Ibid., pp. 176, 186 (Note 10).
61. Ibid., pp. 176–77.
62. Rasputin, *Zhivi i pomni*, pp. 111, 178. Caroline Humphrey also notes the importance of progeny for the Buryat: 'A man without sons was considered to have extinguished the sacred fire (*gal gulamta*) of his patrilineage, and a woman who had borne no children was disliked and feared. It was thought that she would become an evil spirit (*ada*) after death.' Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective*, p. 69.
63. Rasputin, *Zhivi i pomni*, p. 79.
64. Roux notes that the 'spirit host' of Lake Baikal is the 'Bull Prince' (*Buqa noyan*) who lives on mountain summits. Roux, *Faune et flore*, p. 344. Mikhailov observes that the bull (*Bukha noion*) was originally the totemic ancestor of the *Bulagaty* tribe and later came to be recognized by other tribes as well. Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 28. To kill and eat the totem is taboo (see, for example, Roux, *Faune et flore*, p. 415). This is something Andrei seems to sense. He sees a threat in the eyes of the mother-cow: 'Her head bent, she stared at him with intense immobility, and he saw a threat in her eyes, an alien, unbovine threat, one that might come to pass.' Rasputin, *Zhivi i pomni*, p. 149; Valentin Rasputin, *Live and Remember*, trans. by Antonina W. Bouis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992), p. 156.
65. S. A. Tokarev, *Religioznye verovaniia vostochnoslavianskikh narodov XIX–nachala XX v.* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1957), p. 98; Lotman and Uspenskii, 'Binary Forms', p. 38.
66. In Russian folklore the wolf is a demon. See A. N. Afanas'ev, *Drevo zhizni: Izbrannye stat'i* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1982), p. 163. According to Tokarev, belief in wolves who had once been men was widespread among Belorussians, Ukrainians, and Russians. The bear was also an animal who had once been a man. Tokarev, *Religioznye verovaniia*, pp. 44–45, 48.
67. Buryat tradition holds that the underworld is ruled by Erlen-khan and his spirits. Shamans may not enter it, and a soul once fallen may not be retrieved. Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, pp. 14–15.
68. Ibid., p. 23; Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia*, p. 287; Roux, *Faune at flore*, p. 36.
69. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia*, p. 287; Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 40.
70. Rasputin, *Zhivi i pomni*, p. 90.
71. Nastena converses with a wise cow: the mother of the totemic bull (see note 64) whom Andrei has killed. She also teaches herself to swim, anticipating the manner of her death. Ibid., p. 161.

72. Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 40.
73. Roux writes: 'The expanse of water is a mirror which reflects the sky and so, like rainfall, allows the water to participate in the life of Tengri.' Jean-Paul Roux, *La Religion des Turcs et des Mongols* (Paris: Payot, 1984), p. 141. See also pp. 137–38.
74. The topicality is emphasized by the fact that the river is identified. The Angara is dammed by the largest series of hydroelectric power stations in the former USSR. *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, ed. by A. K. Prokhorov, I, 394.
75. Mikhail Agursky, 'Against the Melting Pot' (unpublished paper, 1985); Gillespie, *Rasputin*, p. 45; Robert Porter, *Four Contemporary Russian Writers* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1989), p. 18.
76. The suggestion that Matera undergoes a form of 'assumption' (see above p. 65) is supported by the associations of the island's name with *mat'* (mother) and by extension with the archaic divinity Moist Mother Earth (*'mat' syra zemlia'*), Mother Russia (*'matushka Rossiia'*) and, finally, the Mother of God. Marija Gimbutas, *The Slavs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 169.
77. The traditional story tells of a town which sank into Lake Svetloiar and so escaped destruction by the Tatars. The legend relates that in calm weather the ringing of bells may be heard over the lake, and the buildings of the town may still be seen in the water. V. L. Komarovich, *Kitezhskaia legenda: Opyt izucheniia mestnykh legend* (Moscow and Leningrad: [n. pub.], 1936), cited in *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, XIV, 349–50.
78. Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, p. 416.
79. Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, p. 210.
80. Ibid., pp. 188–89.
81. Roux, *Religion des Turcs*, pp. 137–41. See note 70 above.
82. Afanas'ev, *Drevo zhizni*, pp. 101–02.
83. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 208.
84. Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, p. 407.
85. Ibid., p. 254.
86. An icon is traditionally said to be a 'window' onto the numinous world. In Rasputin's story, the image of Matera could be said to serve a similar function. It 'points' to another world order, and that world order speaks through it.
87. The islanders refer to the larch in the masculine (*'tsarskii listven'*) to emphasize its strength. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 352.
88. loc. cit.
89. Ibid., pp. 352–53.
90. The image of the Cosmic Tree, which connects the three cosmic zones, is an important feature of the shamanistic order. It is associated with the notion of the World Pillar or Cosmic Mountain, which may also represent the axis by which the shaman could reach the sky. Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 259, 261, 264–66, 269–74. Starikova also notes the association between the larch and *drevo zhizni* (the tree of life): E. Starikova, 'Obratimsia k zhizni', *Voprosy literatury* (1977: 2), 75.
91. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 352.
92. Eliade describes the shamanistic climbing rite as follows: 'Sometimes this complex of religious practices and ideas appears to be related to the myth of an ancient time when communication between sky and earth was much easier. Regarded from this point of view, the shamanistic experience is equivalent to a restoration of that primordial mythical time and the shaman figures as a privileged being who individually returns to the fortunate condition of humanity at the dawn of time.' Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 144.
93. Ibid., p. 270; Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia*, p. 188.
94. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, pp. 353, 357.
95. In a study of shamanism among the Yakut, Buryat, and Tungus, G. V. Ksenofontov points to a belief that when creating the earth, God created two trees: the larch and a female, the fir. G. V. Ksenofontov, *Legendy i rasskazy o shamanakh u iakutov, buriat i tunguzov*, 2nd edn (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1930) cited in Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), p. 257.
96. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 357.
97. Ibid., p. 247.
98. loc. cit.
99. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia*, p. 284; Roux, *Faune et flore*, p. 24.
100. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 249.
101. Ibid., p. 247.
102. Ibid., pp. 267–68.

103. Roux, *Faune et flore*, p. 23.
104. Humphrey reports that in summer months such sacrifices ('*tailgan*') are held in nearly every *kolkhoz* in the area. She also observes, on the basis of data from the 1960s, that relations with the supernatural continue to be mediated by shamans not only in rural areas but in industrial cities. Fees are quite substantial. Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective*, pp. 373, 382, 415–16.
105. Ibid., pp. 382, 406–08.
106. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, pp. 250–51.
107. Ibid., p. 230.
108. Ibid., pp. 349–50.
109. Ibid., p. 349.
110. Ibid., p. 351.
111. Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 43.
112. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, pp. 250–51.
113. Afanas'ev, *Drevo zhizni*, p. 181.
114. There is, Mikhailov writes, a special category of 'poor' souls who wander the world in rags, scavenging to assuage a constant hunger, and who lick the pots, cups, and spoons of the living. Mikhailov, *Shamanizm*, p. 47.
115. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 355.
116. Ibid., p. 226.
117. Ibid., p. 249.
118. The passage out of form is anticipated early in the story by the weak quality of light (the sun shines '*so sderzhannoi siloi*'; there are no shadows) and by the dispersed quality of sound. The village lies sleepy and silent, awaiting its end patiently, as if the vigour of life had withdrawn from it and allowed for the invasion of forces of decay and destruction. Ibid., pp. 209, 229. Dar'ia's role as mediator has been noted by Gillespie, 'Man and Soviet Society', p. 195.
119. Rasputin, '*Proshchanie*, pp. 234, 324–25, 365.
120. Ibid., p. 140. To the Altaic peoples the bird represents the soul, or may be the representation of wandering spirits. The shaman's auxiliary spirit, which helps him in his cosmic voyage, is represented as a bird or a winged animal. Roux, *Faune et flore*, pp. 26, 28. Dar'ia returns bearing fir twigs (see note 92) with no recollection of the walk home and with a sense of being 'guided'. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 364.
121. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, p. 57.
122. Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 337. Dar'ia's view parallels thoughts attributed to the *khoziain*: 'There is just one meaning to everything that exists in the world, and that is service', p. 249.
123. Ibid., p. 298.
124. Ibid., p. 387.
125. According to the Arian tradition as recorded by Afanas'ev, *Drevo zhizni*, p. 181.
126. The effect is given greater emphasis in later editions of *Proshchanie*, where the final sentence reads: '[The Host] seemed to be swept away there and then, and the lights in the window grew brighter, and the wind whistled harder and, from somewhere beneath them perhaps, came the weak, barely perceptible sound of an engine.' Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, p. 388. In the original journal version this is followed by another sentence which weakens the impact. It is absent from subsequent versions: 'Its clatter grew clearer, and became more distant and muffled again. And then the voice of the Host rang out once more, even more closely and sharply.' Rasputin, *Proshchanie*, *Nash sovremennik* (1976: 11), 64.
127. A. N. Afanas'ev, *Zhivaia voda i veshchee slovo* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1988), pp. 355–56.
128. David M. Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 151.
129. Ibid., p. 15.
130. Belov's position is discussed in Chapter 9. For Astaf'ev, see his correspondence with N. Ia. Eidel'man, published in Paris. N. Ia. Eidel'man, V. P. Astaf'ev, 'Perepiska iz dvukh uglov', *Sintaksis*, No. 17 (1987) pp. 80–89. Rasputin's views are discussed in Peter Matthiessen. 'The Blue Pearl of Siberia', *New York Review of Books*, 14 February 1991, pp. 37–47. See also 'Pis'mo pisatelei Rossii', *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, 2 March 1990. Here, the image of the Russians as victims of outside forces in their own country bears comparison with Igor' Shafarevich, 'Rusofobiia', *Nash sovremennik* (1989: 6), 167–92; (1989: 11), 162–72.
131. Pavlyshyn, *Glasnost'*, pp. 3–4; Graffy and Hosking, *Culture and the Media*, p. 4.
132. Tertz, *On Socialist Realism*, pp. 155–56.

133. Most notoriously, Rasputin was a signatory to the open letter 'A Word to the People', penned by Aleksandr Prokhanov and published a month before the coup of August 1991. This proposed an authoritarian solution to the Soviet Union's problems. 'Slovo k narodu', *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 23 July 1991, p. 1; Irena Maryniak, 'Whither the Writers' Union', *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 21, No. 2, February 1992, p. 8.
134. See also Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty*, p. 385.

CHAPTER 4

CHABUA AMIREDZHIBI

According to Tylor's minimum definition of religion as a belief in spiritual beings, the idea of the soul is initially projected onto external phenomena, animals and inanimate objects. Later, however, it comes to lose its material limitations. Spiritual beings need not be manifest in the physical world; they may exist in a different dimension. This kind of logic takes one eventually to a belief in gods who have the capacity to control human fate, and powers which humanity could never hope to acquire.[1]

There is a well-known dream image in Jung's writing which represents the human psyche as a house with storeys marking different historical eras: the top is the present, the basement a primaeval cave. In Jungian terms the personalized gods of myth and religion reflect a 'higher', or more recent, level of historical consciousness than the spirits of animist traditions.[2] They are archetypes which appear later in the cultural development of peoples than those of object souls. That said, simpler mythological archetypes are evidently as integral to the psyche as their more 'developed' counterparts and need to be explored with as much attention. As the Jungian analyst and writer Bani Shorter remarks in her Wolfson College Lecture on 'Memory in Service of Psyche' (1988):

> Jung recognised [. . .] [myth] as the supreme interlocking model of the remembered imagery of humanity, a model to which one is unconsciously turned and returned by the necessity to explain and heal oneself. No longer is the science of mythology to be seen as a misguided attempt to explain the workings of gods believed in by less enlightened peoples. 'The gods', viewed psychologically, are the omnipresent archetypal metaphors, and in their workings man sees reflected that which is at work within himself.[3]

Jung and his successors have argued, and done much to demonstrate, that we come into the world equipped with a whole 'inventory of archetypal patterns of thought and relationship that express themselves in common myths and folk tales'.[4] If this argument is allowed to stand, then it follows that the Soviet experiment of deleting and rewriting history, restructuring art and destroying religion, was damaging not just intellectually, culturally, and linguistically, but above all psychologically. It blocked access to the archetypal forms which allow the psyche to acknowledge, recognize and heal itself.

The retrieval of memory — historical, cultural, and personal — formed the thematic core of Soviet writing published in the 1960s and 1970s. It remains, perhaps, its greatest achievement. This is true in terms of historical documentation (Solzhenitsyn's *Arkhipelag GULag*), personal recollection — Nadezhda Mandel'shtam's *Vospominaniia* ('Hope Against Hope', 1970; 'Hope Abandoned', 1972) — and in terms of the retrieval of archetypal forms from different 'strata' of mythological and religious consciousness.

Rasputin's writing touches a level of experience expressed by the imitation or repetition of archetypes embedded in the pre-Christian religious tradition of the Siberian peoples. Similarly, Chabua Amiredzhibi's successful historical novel *Data Tutashkhia* (1972; author's Russian translation 1976–77) reflects the forms of a religious system once common in the author's own, Georgian locality: Zoroastrianism.[5] Gods from the ancient Zoroastrian pantheon are introduced into Amiredzhibi's novel and support the ethical dilemmas it poses. In semiotic imagery, they express the absolute ethical structure on which Creation was thought to be founded.

In his *History of the Georgian People*, W. E. D. Allen points to the spread of the Zoroastrian religion in Georgia, together with a feudal culture in the Iranian tradition, after the fourth century BC.[6] In the days of the first Georgian Dynasty, the Farnazavi, he writes, Zoroastrianism swept Georgia and became the cult which 'for the next nine hundred years, constituted the intellectual background of half the people of the Caucasus, and whose devotees, later, for so long contested for supremacy with the followers of Christ'.[7] And, as Georges Charachidzé has pointed out, the Georgian myth of the creation of the universe has a great deal in common with the Zoroastrian tradition.[8]

Zoroastrianism was the major pre-Islamic religion of Iran, dating probably from the fourth century BC. Its vision, expressed in the 'Yasna' ('Act of Worship') section of the *Avesta* scriptures — consisting of poems, hymns and treatises which are the source of Zoroastrian beliefs — is generally viewed as dualistic. It represents good and evil as necessary projections of one Supreme Deity: Ahura Mazdah.[9]

Mazdah, a sky god possessing the additional attributes of omnipotence and righteousness, rules from his celestial mansions surrounded by an escort of divine beings. He is closely united with Vohu Manah (the Good Mind) and Spenta Mainyu (the Beneficent Spirit), but remains in eternal combat with Angra Mainyu (the Destroying Spirit).

Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu are twin spirits fathered by Mazdah himself. They have determined their own nature by choosing to absorb two opposing principles: truth and the lie (or *Asha* and *Druj*). Spenta Mainyu has elected to be the spirit of justice, good and life; Angra Mainyu has chosen deceit, evil and death.[10] The following well-known hymn or 'Gatha' from

'Yasna 30', said to be attributable to Zoroaster himself, describes the choice as it is made at the beginning of time:

In the beginning those two Spirits who are the well-endowed [...] twins were known as the one good and the other evil, in thought, word, and deed. Between them the wise chose rightly, not so the fools. And when these Spirits met they established in the beginning life and death that in the end the followers of the Lie should meet with the worst existence, but the followers of the Truth with the Best Mind. Of these two Spirits he who was of the Lie chose to do the worst things; but the Most Holy Spirit, clothed in rugged heaven, (chose) Truth as did (all) who sought with zeal to do the pleasure of the Wise Lord by (doing) good works. Between the two the false gods did not choose rightly; for, as they deliberated, delusion overcame them, so that they chose the most Evil Mind. Then did they, with one accord, rush headlong unto Fury that they might thereby extinguish [...] the existence of mortal men.[11]

As E. O. James explains, behind the twin spirits lies the dualism between truth and the lie, righteousness and evil, equated with light and darkness in the cosmic order, and manifest in human behaviour. But in the *Gathas* the perpetual struggle between these opposed angelic and demonic forces meets in the higher unity of Ahura Mazdah. Neither *Asha* or *Druj* has an independent existence, but each is dependent on the other, so obviating a basic dualism.[12]

Mircea Eliade agrees that Zoroastrian theology is not dualistic in a strict sense since Mazdah is not confronted by an equal anti-god. Both good and evil proceed from Mazdah through their identification with his offspring. But because Angra Mainyu chose his mode of being, the Supreme God cannot be held responsible for the appearance of evil, although he does nothing to prevent it. The Supreme Deity transcends all contradictions and, as Eliade writes, 'the existence of evil constitutes the preliminary condition for human freedom'.[13]

However, E. O. James also points out, the precise relationship between the twin spirits and Ahura Mazdah is never clearly defined in the 'Gathas'. Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu may have had the choice, but behind them was the Wise Lord, omniscient and omnipotent, who endowed them with opposing natures and presumably would have known the consequences for Creation. While the final destiny of man remained in Mazdah's hands and good was bound to prevail, he remained responsible for the origin of evil. This was a problem which the followers of Zoroaster sought to resolve only after his death. In a later dualistic development of the Zoroastrian system, Mazdah (renamed Ormuzd) and Angra Mainyu (now named Ahriman) are envisaged almost as equals.[14]

From the point of view of practical ethics, man's involvement in the cosmic struggle was a vocation to fight with the rest of the material universe for the good and for the Creator.[15] As the later Zoroastrian tradition holds, the pre-existent souls of men agreed at the beginning of time to go down to earth of

their own volition. There they would fight and suffer in Mazdah's service, anticipating the world's end, when they would be resurrected and granted immortality, with evil banished to the Abode of Lies.[16]

Charachidzé's comment on the parallels between the Georgian myth of Creation and the Zoroastrian system also points to the complementary character which the two conflicting aspects of reality — divine and demonic — seem to hold in the Georgian tradition. He writes:

> Zoroastrian reform effected a definitive separation between the two constituents of the world. The Good Creation could not enter into any relationship with the Evil Creation and their reconciliation supposed the destruction of the latter by the former. In Georgia, however, the components created by God and those which are due to the demons are complementary. The whole forms a coherent universe, which is not called to be transformed. (In contrast to Mazdean Iran, Georgian paganism has no eschatological preoccupations.)[17]

Amiredzhibi's novel *Data Tutashkhia* examines the application of ethical principles in life, within a philosophical system which closely parallels the Mazdean one. It depicts the lives of two cousins — Data Tutashkhia and Mushni Zarandia — in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Georgia. They are identical, we are told, in appearance and character, brought up with equal kindness by Mushni's father, a country church reader (*'d'iachok'*). But they come to serve opposing ethical principles.

Zarandia chooses personal ambition, corrupt temporal legislation and deceit. Data Tutashkhia devotes his life to a search for justice, truth and eternal law. Zarandia makes a brilliant career in the tsarist gendarmerie, frustrated only by his attempts to exercise control over his cousin. Tutashkhia lives out his life as an outlaw (*'abrag'*), persecuted by the authorities but beloved by the populace. He is also free to make choices not normally open to those who abide by the law. In a metaphorical as well as literal sense he tests the limits of freedom, as Belaia observes:

> He is an outlaw, and this presupposes a practical situation in which he is constantly obliged to choose his own course of action. But he is also an outlaw in a metaphorical sense. He is a seeker for the truth, a wanderer [. . .]. And that is why, as he searches for a meaning in life, he is also perpetually faced with spiritual and moral choices.[18]

Amiredzhibi's own view of the relationship between the cousins confirms the importance of its symbolic value and seems to refer indirectly to a Mazdean cosmic structure, fused with its Georgian variation. Evil and good coexist in unresolved eternal combat. He writes:

> The brotherhood, kinship, even the external similarity between Data Tutashkhia and Mushni Zarandia [. . .] are conditioned by the reality I sought to depict. It was thought then that good and evil coexist in man and nature; that they are present in

parallel. They are eternal and there is a constant struggle between them [. . .]. Good and evil are 'doomed' to exist at the same time. They are [. . .] linked. [. . .] And when one brother dies, so the other follows [. . .]. In the book, Mushni Zarandia represents evil, which dies. To me Data Tutashkhia embodies goodness. Physically he too dies, but the book and its author would have him live on in the heart of the reader.[19]

Galina Belaia has argued forcefully that the strength of the novel lies in its qualities as a work of the 'psychological' genre, in which personalities not principles are examined. It is a mistake on Amiredzhibi's part, she suggests, to think of it as a latter-day parable:

After the appearance of the novel, Amiredzhibi did not attempt to dispel the idea that Mushni and Data Tutashkhia are the two poles of the story. Indeed he tried to give this opposition a symbolic significance. He made them into embodiments of good and evil and sought to interpret their widely noted duality as a representation of the transience and paradoxical nature of man in whom good and evil frequently co-exist almost simultaneously.

But, having read the novel it is hard to agree with this view. Data and Mushni are not different elements in a single character, but different characters [. . .]. And the author's emphasis on the external similarity of their initial condition (a single family, the same traditions and upbringing) only serves to emphasize the contrast between the two personalities.[20]

Without belittling the substance of Belaia's remarks, it is also true to say that, for all its attention to psychology, *Data Tutashkhia* is built around several underlying and conflicting modes of thought: political and religious.

The novel is set out as a series of documents culled from witnesses of Data's life, and presented chronologically by a narrator who briefly introduces himself as the archivist behind the publication. The material is to serve as evidence for the reader's assessment of the lives and personalities of Data and Mushni. The work has a studied polyphonic character. Each witness speaks from within the limits of his own perception and understanding.[21] An omniscient narrator is conspicuously absent. We observe Data and Mushni as they are seen by those whose lives they have affected, and watch the development of their moral character and understanding of themselves through their reported words and actions. But ultimately it is the quality of their deeds, reflected in the lives of those who knew them, which the novel offers as evidence for the reader's judgement. Their philosophical observations — which in any case are not always consistent — are pointers to moral development rather than contributions to a dogmatic literary statement.[22]

Amiredzhibi's novel can be considered from at least three apparently incompatible viewpoints: as a racy historical thriller, promoting Soviet values in the context of pre-Revolutionary Georgia; as a political statement propagating Georgian nationalism and separatism; or as a philosophical study on the nature of the struggle between good and evil within the personality and in the world.

As a 'Soviet' novel it offers a hero who is a man of the people, and a villain well-read in ancient Georgian literature and theology whose life is enmeshed in a corrupt imperial regime. The chief witness of and commentator on the action is the one-time head of the Caucasian gendarmerie, Graf Segedi. Through his acquaintance with the cousins, he discovers the fallacy of trust in the tsarist administration. Data himself is cast as an epic hero. Like Grigorii Melekhov in Sholokhov's *Tikhii Don* ('Quiet Flows the Don', 1928–40), he is ostracized by the community but nonetheless carries the burden of the fortunes of his people. He is not a revolutionary leader; but he does have a passing association with a revolutionary terrorist organization and, towards the conclusion of the novel, helps to orchestrate an uprising in the prison to which he has voluntarily submitted himself.[23]

Predictably in this context, formal religion tends to carry negative associations. Data is seen resisting vice among the *khlysty* — a neo-Christian religious sect where acquisitiveness and promiscuity are rife.[24] Though frequently to be found in the company of priests and nuns, he is critical of the Christian monastic tradition insofar as it attempts to penetrate beyond practical ethics into personal spiritual life.[25] The Church does nothing to prevent corruption among the clergy. A priest is involved in an episode of assault and rape specially engineered by Mushni to compromise and entrap his cousin.[26]

In terms of a nationalistically orientated scheme, the novel presents its hero both as a legendary *bogatyr'* figure and as a wanderer with neither home nor identity. Data is the son of a people deprived, by an alliance with Russia and her empire, of their rightful role in the community of nations. As Sandro Karidze — a socialist intellectual from Tiflis — declares, the Georgians no longer have any sense of life's meaning, or of moral direction, because they have lost identity as a nation:

'No two things in nature depend on one another as much as the morality of the individual on the fate of the nation, or the morality of the citizen on the qualities and shortcomings of his state. And vice versa [. . .]. They are so firmly fused, that you do not know which takes priority over the other [. . .]. Morality is the inner force which helps the individual [. . .] to combine his desires with the interests of his people, his state [. . .].

'Union with Russia settled many urgent problems in our life [. . .]. But it carried certain conditions: the Georgian, whose history had taught him to be answerable to his country and to humanity, was left without a meaning in life [. . .]. Our nation became like a herd released into the meadows — with grazing as its only task!'[27]

As an outcast and an observer, Data explores life in his country from a range of perspectives and environments: religious, political and social. He is seen in abject poverty; living in a community subjected to a personality cult; or, later, enjoying the liberal, cultivated company of intellectuals in Tiflis.[28] In all these environments he remains isolated, less by his status as an outlaw than by moral posture. He refuses to be defiled by the evil which pervades the world.

Non-defilement, the Zoroastrian tradition holds, is a form of resistance in the cosmic battle against evil.[29] If man chooses to enlist in the struggle, he must do so with his soul and with his body: both must be kept pure. The best form of life to select is farming, as Ninian Smart writes:

> The good man is one who looks after the cattle and tills the soil in peace and neighbourliness. He is upright and has a burning regard for the truth. It is his duty to keep away from those who worship the *daevas* [malignant gods-IM], and to resist them with force if necessary. Angra Mainyu, the great evil spirit, threatens the farmer's life.[30]

Data Tutashkhia has all the attributes of a good man. Before being outlawed for defending the honour of his sister in a duel, he is a herdsman. It is a role to which he seeks to return later in life.[31]

It may be incidental that the cause of his ostracism is a woman. With a misjudged shot, he kills his sister's lover; this sends him into hiding for decades. According to Mazdean cosmology, following the initial defeat of Ahriman by Ormuzd, it was the Primal Woman (or 'Whore Demoness') who stirred up the evil spirit as he lay prostrate. The effect of his return, after three thousand years, was felt both in the spiritual and material universe.[32] As Jamsheed K. Choksy observes in his study of the principle of purity in Zoroastrianism, there was in its tradition a 'tendency to consider women as the polluted allies of the Evil Spirit'.[33] In Amiredzhibi's novel, too, it is the woman who sets the scene for conflict between Data and Mushni, the forces of good and evil.

Such contingent detail may have the Zoroastrian, or indeed the Judaic, tradition at source.[34] More important is the development of Data and Mushni into figures expressing the principle by which each has chosen (or been elected) to live and its Zoroastrian quality. Their innate potential is identical, Count Segedi tells us in his introduction; only the paths they tread differ. Individual nature determines characteristics, 'talent' and perhaps even morality:

> Society was ever a field for the eagle, the buzzard and the common little bird, and the path of each was paved according to its moral disposition [. . .].
>
> This is a story of the life and relations of two powerful natures [. . .]. Providence endowed them with equally great ability, but their disparate nature sent them along different paths.[35]

Belaia observes that Segedi's remark not only displays little respect for social determinism, but suggests the presence of an intuitive moral sense, independent of the will, which may shape the personality and decide its fate.[36] Data and Mushni have different moral proclivities. These determine the qualitative effect of their actions. As Segedi remarks in his narrative: 'The value of any achievement is defined by the moral calibre of the achiever.'[37]

The cosmic quality of their conflict is emphasized in five introductory 'quotations', allegedly from an ancient text. They were added, Amiredzhibi has said, after the completion of the novel.[38] The passages describe five eras in

the cosmic battle: 1. the Creation; 2. its invasion by evil; 3. its near destruction; 4. the decision by a deity named Tutashkha to descend into the world and become a man;[39] 5. Tutashkha's sacrifice of his human body for the salvation of mankind.

In the beginning, the world is created by the Supreme God, and Tutashkha is delegated to rule and judge mankind. Tutashkha, we are told, is not a man, but the spirit of man permeating the human soul and the body. Man — an imperfect creature, but blessed with a conscience by which to recognize his imperfections — works as a herdsman and a farmer as Zoroastrianism dictates.[40]

In the second passage, temptation is sown in the world by 'the scouts of the tribe which venerates Mammon'. Men are poisoned with desire; envy and conflict ensue. Tutashkha intervenes to restore balance but finds that, even then, treachery, injustice, and vanity stalk the world. He withdraws and resolves to intervene no more.[41]

Thereafter the world is overrun by hate and destruction. The high priest of the people is a dragon who devours men. Tutashkha perceives that the dragon triumphs by cunning; mounted on a white horse and wielding a spear in the manner of St George (Georgia's patron saint), he swears to overcome evil by force.[42]

The fourth passage depicts Tutashkha's battle with the dragon, which proliferates heads as he decapitates it. Its blood falls to earth and humanity turns to war as the dragon gains in strength. Tutashkha understands that mankind will be saved only if he becomes fully human. With that decision, he is transformed from a demi-god into God.[43]

The final 'citation' shows Tutashkha offering his body to be devoured by the dragon. As the demon eats he grows increasingly human and, declaring himself satiated, refuses Tutashkha's heart. Evil has been transformed into good. Tutashkha's physical form is returned to him, as are the bodies of all those men who willingly gave themselves to be consumed. Tutashkha's soul ascends into heaven, his body remains on the earth.[44] The Christian parallels at the conclusion of the story are self-evident: Spenta Mainyu, Christ and St George merge in the figure of Tutashkha. The Christian tradition, religious anthropologists tell us, owes much to Zoroastrianism. Satan or Lucifer — 'murderer' and 'father of lies' as he is — stands particularly indebted to his Iranian prototype.[45] The syncretist quality of Amiredzhibi's tale reflects the model he applies.

Data Tutashkhia's life enacts in the world of men the cosmic dilemma which the god Tutashkha faces: by what means may he overcome what must be defeated? To fight or not to fight? To make an active contribution to the destruction of evil or to allow it to destroy itself? To suffer

> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them?

It is, as Amiredzhibi has observed, also Hamlet's difficulty.[46]

Data matures from a raw youth of nineteen into a man with a strong if naïve sense of social responsibility by wrestling with the problem of whether evil should be actively challenged. The conundrum is eventually resolved by his recognition of the fact that evil is not overcome until it becomes the good. This is the point at which the duality between Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu dissolves, thanks to the intervention of a third principle (Mazdah). The two-fold system is fused into one. Amiredzhibi assesses his portrayal of Data's development in the following way:

> He begins by attempting to change the world, and does not even consider the result of his actions. The second phase is a time of despair, non-intervention [. . .]. The third — activity again, a violent battle with an evil he has now understood; here he is defeated. And, finally, there is the fourth, most important phase, when Data takes full heed of his earlier errors and is not only strong but wise in the fight against evil. He understands that a radical victory over evil is possible only when one succeeds in transforming evil into good.[47]

His last battle is among the people, the imprisoned *narod*. Behind bars, he is involved in armed resistance, remaining all the while the invincible demi-god, immune to bullets and police traps. His greatest insight towards the end of his life is that the struggle is directed not against individuals but against the evil principle. As he explains to his adopted brother, Bilial' Zankshi:

> 'Do not consider a bad man to be either friend or foe. You should see the corruption emanating from him. [. . .] You should pursue the corruption and the evil in order to transform them into good. [. . .]
>
> 'Mushni is doing evil. I am an outlaw; it is my duty to follow the same paths as he and to correct what he has defiled. That is how we live: he does his work, I do mine. That is as it must be.'[48]

To the enlightened man evil is divorced from the human being responsible for it, because in every personality the two aspects of the cosmic struggle, divine and demonic, coexist. Zarandia, if we are to take Count Segedi's observations seriously, is wholly capable of finer feelings towards Data, but loyalty to the state, or ambition, counter his more humane qualities.[49] He is, to use religious terminology, 'possessed'. The demonic archetype which has taken over his life (*'demon kotoryi "ne mog inache"'*) is reflected in appearance. He becomes, at times when Segedi perceives this aspect of his nature, a snake — or a dragon (*'zmei'*)[50]: 'The two principles, human and demonic, acted together, without engendering any spiritual duality, and this gave expression to the fullness and distinctiveness of Zarandia's personality.'[51]

The nature of the demon dictating the practical application of Mushni's positive characteristics (intelligence, hard work, loyalty, creative intuition) is identified with deceit. Mushni's personality is possessed by *Druj*, the lie. It is the method by which he compromises Data in the eyes of the rural population

which shelters him, and sabotages the career of a rival and superior in the police administration.

Just as the primal relationship between nature and will remains ambivalent in Zoroastrianism, so the reader is left to judge whether Mushni has chosen his Machiavellian disposition, or whether it has chosen him. Mushni's own preference is for the theory that moral intuition is an aspect of personality, inherited and nurtured, that cannot be controlled: 'Everything happens of its own accord. My moral disposition will not allow me to compromise, doubtless even under the threat of disaster [. . .]. Such is my nature, with its imprint of heredity and upbringing.'[52]

As Belaia has noted, this radical belief in a congenital moral disposition liberates Mushni from any need to examine his actions. His philosophizing (like Ivan Karamazov's in *Brat'ia Karamazovy*) has a relative, not absolute, significance in the novel and reflects a stunted moral personality which emerges fully only in the ruinous consequences of his actions. It becomes evident that somewhere there has to be room for choice:

> The 'intuition' of which Mushni speaks so much is innate morality (or 'moral disposition'). Amiredzhibi does not raise any doubts about its existence. But he believes that this condition of the formation of the personality is [. . .] 'necessary but inadequate' [. . .].
>
> According to Amiredzhibi, a man's moral condition is formed of particular ethical components: there is nature; there is upbringing and the environment; there is the level of moral principle and purpose which determine action and behaviour in different circumstances. *A man's character is determined by his moral formation.* To test a man, examine his actions.[53]

Mushni's justification of the evil act is that of a visionary rather than a pragmatist: the evil that men do is vindicated by the good that they envisage. Judas, he suggests, calculated the good that would come of his betrayal.[54] Perfidy and evil are the weapons by which the state may protect justice and good.[55] Zarandia collaborates with evil to assure a temporal advantage and enforce his flawed perception of what is right. Data, for his part, resists collaboration with any form of evil despite the risk of consequences which may (and frequently do) prove tragic to others or to himself.

Tutashkhia finally succumbs to the lie through his failure to admit his fatherhood to his natural son, Gudu. This once, he lays aside his devotion to *Asha* or truth in favour of a worldly advantage: he prefers Gudu not to go through life branded with illegitimacy. Gudu, meanwhile, is already caught up in Zarandia's far-reaching network and has no qualms about firing a pistol at a wanted outlaw. To preserve his son from the knowledge and consequences of parricide, Data casts himself from a cliff into the sea. His body is never found, but his spirit returns to haunt his enemies.[56]

Tutashkhia's death — ennobled by his final act — is the consequence of just a single submission to the demon of deception. But it heralds the demise of

Mushni Zarandia shortly after. Melancholia sends him to the grave within three years. In accordance with the Georgian variation of the Zoroastrian system, the good and evil aspects of creation remain complementary: neither may exist without its moral antipole.

NOTES

1. Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, p. 25.
2. C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. by A. Jaffé, trans. by R. and C. Winston (London: Collins, and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 155, quoted in Bani Shorter, 'Memory in the Service of Psyche: The Collective Unconscious in Myth, Dream and Ritual', in *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind*, Wolfson College Lectures, ed. by Thomas Butler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 62–63.
3. Ibid., p. 68.
4. Thomas Butler, 'Memory: A Mixed Blessing', in Butler, *Memory*, p. 3.
5. The novel originally appeared in the Georgian journal *Tsiskari* in 1972. In 1981 it was televised under the title *Berega* with a script by Amiredzhibi, and won a State Prize. English translation: Chabua Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, trans. by Antonina W. Bouis (Moscow: Raduga, 1985). Lidiia Grafova calls Data Tutashkhia a 'national hero' (*'narodnyi geroi'*). Chabua Amiredzhibi, 'Veriu v energiiu dobra', interview by Lidiia Grafova, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 4 May 1983.
6. W. E. D. Allen, *A History of the Georgian People: From the Beginning Down to the Russian Conquest in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1932), p. 41.
7. Ibid., p. 42.
8. Georges Charachidzé, *Le système religieux de la Géorgie païenne: analyse structurale d'une civilisation* (Paris: François Maspero, 1968), p. 705.
9. Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (Glasgow: Collins, 1977), p. 303.
10. See for example: E. O. James, *The Worship of the Sky God: A Comparative Study in Semitic and Indo-European Religion* (London: Athlone Press, 1963, pp. 95–96; Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, trans. by William R. Trask (London: Collins, 1979), I, 310; R. C. Zaehner, *Concordant Discord: The Interdependence of Faiths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 387–88; Smart, *Religious Experience*, p. 306.
11. 'Yasna' 30: 3-6, as quoted in Zaehner, *Concordant Discord*, p. 388.
12. James, *Sky God*, pp. 95–96.
13. Eliade, *Religious Ideas*, I, 310.
14. James, *Sky God*, pp. 97–98.
15. Smart, *Religious Experience*, p. 308.
16. Zaehner, *Concordant Discord*, pp. 391–92.
17. Charachidzé. *Géorgie païenne*, p. 705.
18. Belaia, *Literatura*, p. 311.
19. Chabua Amiredzhibi, 'Khudozhnik v kruge vremeni', interview by Genrikh Mitin, *Voprosy literatury* (1979: 5), 139–40.
20. Belaia, *Literatura*, pp. 308–09.
21. Ibid., p. 321; Amiredzhibi, 'Khudozhnik', pp. 143–44.
22. Belaia, *Literatura*, pp. 316–17.
23. Ibid., pp. 312–13; Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, p. 606.
24. Ibid., pp. 30–36.
25. Ibid., p. 200.
26. Ibid., pp. 357, 360, 369–70, 394.
27. Ibid., pp. 251, 257–58.
28. Ibid., pp. 24, 52–75, 201–314, and elsewhere.
29. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings, 13 vols (New York: [n. pub.], 1921), XII, 864; Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1989), pp. 1–22.
30. Smart, *Religious Experience*, p. 307.
31. Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, pp. 16, 320–21.
32. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution*, pp. 95–96.
33. Ibid., p. 96.
34. It scarcely needs to be said that in the Judaic tradition, too, the Primal Woman (Eve) is depicted as the first collaborator with Evil.
35. Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, p. 10.

36. Belaia, *Literatura*, p. 303.
37. Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, p. 10.
38. Amiredzhibi, 'Khudozhnik', p. 140.
39. Tutashkha, we are told in a note, is the Supreme Deity in the Georgian, pre-Christian pantheon. Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, p. 5.
40. loc. cit.
41. Ibid., p. 9.
42. Ibid., pp. 139–40. St George has importance in the Russian context as well. In ancient Rus', he was depicted on princely seals and coins, and in tsarist Russia, on the state seal. *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, 3rd edn, VI, 299.
43. Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, p. 339.
44. Ibid., pp. 514–15.
45. 'St John' 8:44, in Zaehner, *Concordant Discord*, p. 393.
46. William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*, III, 1, 57–60; *Literaturnaia ucheba*, No. 4 (1982), quoted in Belaia, *Literatura*, p. 312.
47. Amiredzhibi, 'Veriu', p. 14.
48. Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, pp. 655–56.
49. Ibid., p. 505.
50. Ibid., pp. 485, 505–06, 627.
51. Ibid., p. 506.
52. Ibid., pp. 177–78.
53. Belaia, *Literatura*, pp. 304, 308.
54. Amiredzhibi, *Data Tutashkhia*, pp. 630–31.
55. Ibid., p. 499.
56. Ibid., p. 692–93.

CHAPTER 5

DANIIL GRANIN

As earlier chapters have suggested, the need felt by writers of the 1960s and 1970s to revive cultural memory stimulated their awareness of semiotic systems embedded in religions traditionally associated with their locality. If a literary piece was to be accepted for publication, the language of Orthodox Christianity was disallowed; but religious ideas could be expressed in the less familiar language of more ancient cults.

In some instances, however, the revival of memory touched less upon archetypal systems of images than upon displaced ideas. The writings of certain key nineteenth-century thinkers (notably Vissarion Belinskii, but also Tolstoi and Dostoevskii) served as pathways back to pre-ideological and theistic thinking. Belinskii, and the German Idealist philosophers who influenced him, worked with concepts which carried strong vestiges of animism. They wrote, for example, of a transcendent Mind, Spirit, or Order which expressed and realized itself through the workings of nature, and of art and beauty as living forces active in human life.

In later editions of *Primitive Culture*, Tylor emphasized that in developed civilizations, intellectual formulations of ideas have a role equivalent to that of object souls in more primitive societies. Indeed, he said, ideas frequently continue to be understood in terms of visual images which have an independent life of their own. In Classical Greek philosophy, Democritus's notion of images thrown out by objects and received by a recipient soul was, Tylor wrote, a surviving doctrine of primitive animism decanted into the form of metaphysics. Regarding the prevalent doctrine of ideas, he observed that it had undergone a transition similar to the doctrine of soul. The term 'idea' (Greek: *ἰδέα*) originally indicated a 'visible form'. Its abstraction to denote subjects of thought was, Tylor believed, still a relative innovation[1]: 'The notion of ideas as real images of things [. . .] does linger much in modern minds, and [. . .] people who talk of ideas do often, in some hazy metaphorical way, think of sensible images.'[2]

It has been suggested earlier (see Chapter 1) that Daniil Granin's novel *Kartina* ('The Picture', 1979) may serve as an example of writing in which the notion of object-soul also comes to denote a more abstract conception: that of the spirit of beauty. Though a simple work in terms of narrative structure, the

interest of *Kartina* lies particularly in the weight of derivative ideas from Belinskii, German Idealism, and Dostoevskii, which it carries. It seems to serve as a bridge to pre-Revolutionary philosophical thought, built in accordance with a standard 'thaw' design, and displaying conventional views on environmental conservation, memory, and the value of art.

Kartina reads rather like a publicistic work in novel form, promoting the moral and social effects of art and the saving grace of aesthetic perception.[3] The title carries echoes of Gogol''s story *Portret* ('The Portrait', 1835; revised 1842) along with the suggestion that a work of art becomes 'possessed' of its subject. But Granin's novel lacks the unambivalently demonic strain at the centre of Gogol''s tale. The eponymous 'portrait' induces in its owners acquisitiveness, envy, anxiety, and despair. In contrast, Granin's 'picture' acts as a catalyst for the release of psychological and spiritual powers trapped by social convention or personal ambition.

While on a visit to Moscow, the provincial Party official Sergei Losev chances upon an art exhibition. There he sees a painting which he recognizes as a depiction of a familiar landscape with a pre-Revolutionary building from his home town, Lykov. The house is about to be demolished to allow for the erection of a new branch of a computer firm. Losev finds himself strangely fascinated by the canvas, which carries him back to his childhood. He determines to acquire it for the town. Having done so, he finds himself at the centre of a struggle between conservationists looking to save the building, and Party *apparatchiki* who can see no useful purpose in leaving it standing. On a personal level he is also subjected to the transforming power of art. He rediscovers youth, individuality, and capacity for moral judgement, to a degree which leads him to abandon a successful Party career for unspecified private principles. The historical monument is saved, but Losev is lost to the *apparat* and to Lykov. Only his memory appears to have been stamped on the painting which determined his fate. As the novel closes, a visiting art historian notes that the painting also faintly represents the figure of a boy swimming in the creek. The writer I. Grekova — rightly, I think — surmises that this is an image of Losev himself, liberated from the spiritual confines of his old position, 'released from the constricting framework of his former life into a vast sunlit world'.[4] The painted landscape represents and embodies the aesthetic principle, shown to have an irrational power which can galvanize and transform lives. Astakhov's painting is the image by which we come to understand the dynamic properties of art and beauty.

In the 1970s the role of art — its social influence, its part in education — was widely discussed in the Soviet press. The issue reflected public concern over the preservation of culture, and distress about monuments which had been destroyed under Stalin and Khrushchev. It was raised at the 24th Party

Congress in 1971, and again at the 25th Party Congress in 1976. There, the role of the writer or artist was recognized primarily as a moral one, drawing on the ethical principles of communist ideology. A statement from the 1976 Congress declared: 'The merit of our writers and artists lies in that they endeavour to maintain the best qualities in man: his principles, honour and depth of feeling, while drawing on the firm principles of our communist system of morality.'[5]

Granin's lecture at the RSFSR Writers' Union in 1978, entitled '*Lichnost', NTR, literatura*' ('The Personality, the Scientific-Technological Revolution and Literature'), complained that people were being assessed less by their moral qualities than by academic or technical skills. Schools were producing an over-pragmatic generation and the arts were not getting enough exposure; 'there is a deficit of romanticism and poeticization of life', he said.[6]

Granin's complaint has a nineteenth-century flavour characteristic of views on art expressed in a wide range of Soviet publications of the 1960s.[7] It was Belinskii, a figure consistently influential in Soviet literary criticism, who suggested that aesthetic sense lay at the base of all moral discrimination:

> The person whose spirit is unmoved by music, who sees a painting as mere decoration, [...] who has not learned to love poetry since childhood, who regards drama as mere play-acting, and a novel as a story worthy only to relieve boredom — is not a human being. [...] The aesthetic sense is the foundation of good, the foundation of moral behaviour.[8]

As Victor Terras observes in an important study of Belinskii and his literary heritage, the social, cognitive, and prophetic powers of art remained highly valued in Soviet aesthetic theory after the Revolution.[9] The emphasis given to Belinskii's ideas was greatest in the 1920s and after the 'thaw'; but the sense of art as an important 'organizer' of emotions through the formulation of 'true' ideas, and as a contributor to the class struggle, was never lost in Soviet criticism. Art, it was frequently restated, was a source of moral transformation for the Soviet people.[10] Belinskii's association with German Idealist philosophies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries remained a matter of controversy, however.

The 'organic' conception of art which Belinskii put forward consisted of a neo-Platonic notion that the work of art is balanced, like an animate being, according to patterns found in the natural world. The relevant passage from Plato's *Phaedrus* reads: 'A composition should be like a living being, with a body of its own, so as not to be headless or footless, but so as to have middle and extremities fitting one another, as well as the whole.'[11]

This conception has been variously treated by philosophers since: either metaphorically or literally. Some recognized as real art only those works which could be likened to a living organism expressing some kind of vital force. The second interpretation more closely resembled the original Platonic view that a

true poem or oration has a soul, infused into it by the poet's inspiration, which is God's gift and therefore prophetic.[12]

The notion that a work of art has an independent life and therefore not only mirrors nature but is equal to it, was condoned by Schelling and Hegel, and by Belinskii: 'The poet does not imitate nature, he rivals it. His works emerge from the same source and travel through the same channels as all the phenomena of nature, with the sole difference that consciousness — which nature lacks — also contributes to the poetic creative process.'[13]

It is widely recognized by scholars of Belinskii's work that, up to about 1840, his thought fell broadly in line with German Idealism. After 1840 there are strong indications that he became dissatisfied with this, and more concerned with social, rather than purely philosophical, issues. In 1836, certainly, he was writing of the 'form' (*'forma'*) of the work of art as the 'living and organic body' (*'zhivoe i organicheskoe telo'*) of its 'idea', which is its 'soul'.[14]

In 1842 Belinskii criticized neo-Platonic conceptions of art, arguing that today art demanded intellectual content (*'razumnoe soderzhanie'*) and historical meaning (*'istoricheskii smysl'*) rather than beauty (*'iziashchestvo i krasota'*). But only a year earlier he had published a lyrical eulogy to poetic art which Terras compares to Pasternak's *'Opredelen'ie Poezii'* ('Definition of Poetry') in *Sestra moia, zhizn'* ('My Sister, Life', 1922)[15]:

> Poetry is primarily life. [. . .] Poetry is the shining triumph of existence, the blessing of life [. . .] it is the eternal and insatiable thirst to embrace everything and to be fused with everything; it is that sacred inspiration through which our heart beats in harmony with the universe [. . .] that sacred inspiration through which the earthly shines with the heavenly, and the heavenly combines with the earthly.

Earlier in the same article he writes: 'In poetry life is more fully lived than in reality itself.'[16]

It is noteworthy that the ideas of the early Belinskii, rather than the thoughts of the more socially orientated critic he later became, appear to re-emerge in the Soviet aesthetic theory of the 1960s and 1970s. The connecting link presumably lies in Soviet criticism of the 1920s; this saw in Aleksandr Voronskii, editor of the journal *Krasnaia nov'* ('Red Virgin Soil', 1922–28), an influential and consistent defender of the Belinskian view of art. Under Stalin, Voronskii's writing was banned and all reference to him removed from published works, but in the 1960s he was rehabilitated and, together with many of his contemporaries, acclaimed as a major critic.[17]

Voronskii seems to have shared the early Belinskii's understanding of art as a way of seeing through banal, chaotic, everyday reality into a 'real', 'objective', 'ideal' world beyond.[18] Art tore away the veils of a lower (seen) reality to reach a higher, less perceptible truth.[19] It did so through the creative intuition of the artist who had the capacity to create an organically integrated, 'true', and independently living form.[20] As Voronskii suggests in his article *'Iskusstvo*

videt' mir' ('The Art of Seeing the World', 1928), art restores to humanity those primal, childlike perceptions which have been dulled by the years:

A man continues to retain unspoilt, authentic images of the world in his mind, sometimes, perhaps, as a distant, troubled dream. They break into his life despite all obstacles. He knows about them thanks to his childhood, his youth; they are revealed to him at special, exceptional moments, during his life in the community. A man yearns for these pure and clear images; he constructs sagas, legends about them, he sings songs, he writes novels and stories.[21]

The notion that art can satisfy the yearning to see again with the eyes of a child is reiterated in *Kartina*. As Grekova has noted, through aesthetic response, Losev regains lost innocence and clarity of insight.

When *Kartina* appeared in 1979, it attracted attention because it touched upon tensions over the environment and the national heritage between the Party *apparat* and the intelligentsia. These were issues already high on the public agenda. In addition, the novel raised a problem which was to claim full public attention in the early 1980s: the moral and cultural inadequacies of members of the Party élite. Furthermore, in a way which says much about Granin's sociological acumen, it anticipated the coming of a 'restructured' official, capable of individual initiative and of withstanding Party pressures. Losev is not given the opportunity to prove himself in his new role because the time is not yet ripe. Like Rakhmetov in Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?*, he disappears. But the conclusion hints heavily at an imminent return. We learn about him from Lykov's village drunkard, Matvei (perhaps another modern equivalent of the Holy Fool):

'He was an independent boss. [...] A legendary figure! [...] He left his job voluntarily. They offered him promotion. He refused. [...]
'And then he left. Disappeared. But I think he'll return. [...]
'The conditions in which we live will demand such a figure!'[22]

The Soviet critic L. Fink has argued that Granin's main interest as a novelist and publicist is in maintaining 'spiritual and artistic' values as stable points in an ever-changing world.[23] It appears that it is the figure of the ultimate idealist, Don Quixote, who most completely personifies these to Granin:

Everything around us changes so fast: the map of the world, the pace of life, technology [...]. Working conditions change. [...] What remains constant? Books, pictures, records [...]. Don Quixote [...].
It is difficult to imagine what would happen if Don Quixote were removed from the daily life of contemporary Spain [...].[24]
Dostoevskii recognizes the cleansing power of spiritual beauty and faith. He valued Don Quixote above anything else in literature.[25]

This idea is derived from Dostoevskii's letter of January 1868 to his niece, Sof'ia Ivanova, concerning *Idiot* ('The Idiot', 1868) and his attempt to portray a

hero who is truly '*polozhitel'no prekrasnyi*'. The reference confirms the importance of the Dostoevskian influence on Granin's moral vision.[26] In *Kartina* it can be seen, for example, in the way the principle of pragmatism, or the practical solution, is countered by the redeeming power of aesthetic appreciation.

When the novel opens, Losev is introduced as an uncomplicated man, interested in facts and palpable results. His task is to create material improvement; maternity wards, sewers, and refuse collection are the priorities. But by providence or coincidence, Losev encounters a work of art which, despite himself, he deems beautiful. It evokes lost perceptions and is a monument to the past. It appeals to senses, memory, and understanding. The judgements Losev makes thereafter — aesthetic and later moral — are prompted by reawakened intelligence and a new capacity to contemplate and recognize order. He discovers it first in the painting, then in its relationship to the real object in nature, and, finally, in the object itself and the purpose it serves. In other words, the aesthetic experience gives Losev a sense of the design in nature. This finds reflection in his cognitive capacities and, as the plot develops, in moral perceptions and actions. Reference to Voronskii's views on the capacity of art to reveal a higher unseen truth has already been made. Directly or not, these were derived from German Idealist philosophy. A short layman's reference to Immanuel Kant's theory of aesthetics may be helpful, in recognition of the fact that he is quoted in *Kartina*.[27]

According to Kantian thought, beauty pleases mainly because it satisfies our cognitive faculties, and our shared sense of belonging to a universe which is ordered and 'purposive' ('*zweckmässig*').[28] As Roger Scruton writes in his short introduction to Kant's work: 'The concept of purposiveness is "supersensible": it is the idea of a transcendental design, the purpose of which we cannot know.'[29]

Granin's novel shows beauty to have the power initially to awaken an intelligent response, subsequently to increase perception and understanding, and, finally, to transform the personality. Specific ideas on its nature appear in a series of notes written by Losev's father, Stepan Iustinovich, which have been preserved thanks to the efforts of a penitent Stalinist, Polivanov, who now devotes himself to collecting objects of cultural interest. They show how easily the animist vision and Idealism can blend and fuse.

Stepan Iustinovich holds that all of nature's forms have a spiritual dimension:

> Where there is life, there is a soul. The tree, the fly, the stone, rivers — all live their own life. Man is no exception. The soul exists not in objects but in natural forms. That is why not a single one of these has yet been fully explained.[30]

Beauty, he writes, signals the soul.[31] It is also an expression of the order which exists in nature. That which is beautiful is so by virtue of the contribution it

makes to that order: its 'purposiveness' in Kantian terminology, or its part in the cosmic design:

> Our river, the Pliasva, babbles so pleasantly for universal beauty's sake and because this is the river's natural expression of itself. And the sounds of a landslide or a falling tree are unpleasant, fearsome even, because they indicate a disaster in nature. This tells us that the substance of all things is revealed through beauty. The beauty of everything in existence contributes to the common good in nature. It is no coincidence that all normal development in nature is so beautiful.[32]

The artist, as Stepan Iustinovich's record of conversations with Astakhov shows, communicates that order. He reveals the spirit in nature and expresses a deeper quality of truth: 'The artist has painted a house [. . .] it is beautiful [. . .] because you come to know the house better. He has revealed its soul; beauty brings one closer to the soul, to truth.'[33]

The Kantian aesthetic is particularly pertinent in the light of an inconspicuously placed quotation from Immanuel Kant which encapsulates the novel's main moral, social, and political message. As Losev flips through a volume of Kant's writings lying in the home of his one-time mentor, Arkadii Matveevich, he reads a passage in the *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785), which formulates the reasoned basis for moral action: the categorical imperative.[34] And he learns from it that man is an end in himself and may never be used only as a means.[35]

Just as the pattern of Losev's life shows the Soviet bureaucrat shaking off the view that individuals should be treated as objects serving higher state interests so, it emerges, Astakhov's life was an affirmation of artistic freedom against the expectation that art must serve the same purpose. In the 1930s Astakhov exposed himself to unspecified repressions for painting his apolitical picture and for his belief in the liberating power of creativity. To his sweetheart, Liza Kislykh, he writes:

> We shall have to answer before the Creator [. . .]. To me the Creator is a mysterious force, the impulse which compels me to write. It at once compels and liberates me. When I write, I am free. I am God; no power can prevail over me. I create the world as I please.[36]

The parallels with Pasternak's perception of the poet as a figure poised between the temporal and the eternal are close enough to merit brief comment. Astakhov's views reflect some of the thoughts expressed in the *Zhivago* poem, 'Gamlet' ('Hamlet'): the sense of the predestined quality of the creative act, the artist's personal responsibility before the community and his accountability before the Creator with whom he is one:

> Night and its murk transfix and pin me,
> Staring through thousands of binoculars.
> If thou be willing, Abba, Father,
> Remove this cup from me.

I cherish this thy rigorous conception,
And I consent to play this part therein;
But another play is running at this moment,
So, for the present, release me from the cast.

And yet, the order of the acts has been schemed and plotted,
And nothing can avert the final curtain's fall.
I stand alone. All else is swamped by pharisaism.
To live life to the end is not a childish task.[37]

If Granin's novel gives expression to Pasternak's neo-Kantian view of art as the moment of relation between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, it also gives a more 'primitively' animist interpretation to the organic view of the artistic work. Astakhov's painting has the qualities of a demanding and vital organism, a 'mysterious living warmth', and lives 'the independent life of a living being'.[38] It is vested with a soul which needs a special environment, a community — a collection — in which to survive.[39]

The warning which Astakhov's widow, Ol'ga Serafimovna, gives to Losev as he departs with the painting has a lugubrious and sinister quality: 'Don't be drawn in [...]. You won't endure it. [...] Why paintings? They demand ... they tore my soul ...'[40] There is a strong Gogolian resonance here. The work of art has a capacity, a demonic power even, to direct personal fate and take the human soul.

In its Idealist aspect, Astakhov's painting is the link between temporal and transcendent, but its 'object-soul' possesses an ambiguous quality. Granin's representation of the nature of beauty loosely parallels Dostoevskii's. It does not shirk the moral tensions which the aesthetic experience can rouse. Prince Myshkin maintains that beauty will save the world; Dmitrii Karamazov observes that it is the ground on which God and the devil fight their timeless battle in the human heart: '*Tut d'iavol s bogom boretsia, a pole bitvy — serdtsa liudei.*'[41] In a further Dostoevskian touch, the redemptive qualities of beauty are associated not only with cognition, but with memory. The initial impact Astakhov's painting has on Losev is determined by familiarity: it reminds him of his childhood. A similar process takes place when, later in the novel, Losev bathes in the creek depicted in the picture. The memory of boyhood awakens his perception of the fullness of life around him. That in turn prompts memories of his father's pantheist theories:

The mist was rising, the water came to life [...]. The old boulder sparkled and glittered cunningly. The long-nosed snipe hopped onto it and glanced seriously at Losev. [...] Wherever Losev looked, his eye detected a fine, hidden form of life within the cruder life. And every object became more beautiful because of this. [...]

The river looked at him with clear, brown eyes [...].

Perhaps there really was a soul in this river? And in the creek, and the stone?[42]

The response to beauty is a key to awakening levels of consciousness which have a liberating or, in Dostoevskian terms, redemptive quality. It recalls Alesha's monologue to the group of children in the closing pages of *Brat'ia Karamazovy*:

> Sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man stores up many such memories to take into life, then he is saved for his whole life. And even if only one good memory remains with us in our hearts, that alone may serve some day for our salvation.[43]

In a scene where Losev and his newly acquired girlfriend, Tania Tuchkova, witness an Orthodox Church Service, Losev's apprehension of religious rite as something beautiful is entwined with an inexplicable sense of its familiarity.

The ambivalence of Granin's depiction of the Liturgy has been discussed in another article.[44] It will suffice here to point out that — in the religious context at least — just as beauty may have a redemptive quality, so it may also awaken forces of evil. The church, a haven of peace and aesthetic harmony, also shelters a shadowy server named Il'ia Samsonovich. His appearance suggests a dark angel: gnome-like features, flapping elbows, blazing eyes. He cringes at the sight of the altar, and proposes to invert heaven and hell to test the disinterested nature of the good that men do. In addition he declares that his life has been an expression of that greatest of sins in the Karamazovan catalogue — doubt.[45] Il'ia Samsonovich seems a pale reflection of Dostoevskii's devil, immanent in human nature: an aspect of personality isolated from its source, torn from 'living life', and trapped in a metaphysical vacuum.[46]

If doubt takes an existential form in the novel, so does guilt. Losev is haunted by the death of a colleague, Shiparev, which he might, perhaps, have prevented. Twice he hears a ghostly knock on the door; twice he finds nobody there. Like Raskol'nikov, he feels unable to confess, even after listening to the drunk Matvei (derived, doubtless, from Marmeladov) expressing his own sense of responsibility for the death of his wife.

Peppered as it is with echoes of Dostoevskii, Gogol', Pasternak, Kant, and Belinskii, *Kartina* impresses as a collage of ideas and literary devices, written to encourage aesthetic appreciation in a social environment which had long chosen to ignore it. The novel's own aesthetic integration may legitimately be questioned, given the weight of derivative ideas it bears in a relatively unsophisticated plot. It is tempting to fall back on Voronskii's remark regarding Leonid Leonov's novella *Konets melkogo cheloveka* ('The End of a Petty Man', 1924), which is strongly reminiscent of Dostoevskii: 'That which comes from the artist, from his intuition, is almost always strong, realistic, vital, simple, true. That which comes from the mind, from reflection, is often artificial, unconvincing, confused and incomplete.'[47]

Kartina is less an original piece of literature than an essay in novel form with references, quotations and an unlisted bibliography. It is an expansion of

thoughts Granin had put forward in the essay 'Obratnyi bilet' ('Return Ticket', 1976), which discusses the effect of art and memory on individual growth with direct reference to Dostoevskii. It also anticipates some of the arguments on the moral value of art to be found in a series of articles published under the title *Dva kryla* ('Two Wings', 1983), and particularly in the much publicized article 'O miloserdii' ('On Charity', 1987). The latter refers to the traditional connection between art and social morality in Russian literature, and to the disappearance of the notion of charity from the Soviet lexicon and Soviet life.[48]

Given the publicistic qualities of *Kartina*, its resuscitation of ideas and moral conceptions which might have lain buried under the ideological rubble gathered by the Brezhnev regime is all the more significant. Chiefly through intertextual reference, and in a form which appears innocuously to reflect Marxist aesthetics and ecological concerns, it raises issues relating to conscience, morality, aesthetics and religion. And it proposes answers which, though they may not seriously threaten the ideological nexus, do encourage its expansion and the incorporation of greater freedoms within it.

NOTES

1. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 5th edn, I, 498.
2. Ibid., p. 499.
3. In a retrospective glance at Granin's output, Andrei Vasilevskii remarks critically on the publicistic character of his fiction. Andrei Vasilevskii, 'Odno proshlo, drugoe izmenilos'', *Literaturnoe obozrenie* (1988: 5), 73.
4. I. Grekova, 'Tvoriashchee vnimanie: O romane D. Granina "Kartina"', *Zvezda* (1981: 1), 146.
5. *Materialy XXV s'ezda KPSS* (Moscow: [n. pub.]. 1976), p. 79, quoted in L. Fink, *Neobkhodimost' Don Kikhota: Kniga o Daniile Granine* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988), p. 286.
6. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7 June 1978, quoted in Fink, *Neobkhodimost'*, p. 289.
7. See for example M. Kagan, *Lektsii po marksistsko-leninskoi estetike*, 3 vols (Leningrad: [n. pub.], 1963–66); Iu. B. Borev, *Vvedenie v estetiku* (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1965); V. V. Vanslov, *Estetika romantizma* (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1966), cited in Victor Terras, *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism: The Heritage of Organic Aesthetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), p. 4.
8. V. G. Belinskii, 'Nichto o nichem, ili otchet g. izdateliu "Teleskopa" za poslednee polugodie (1835) russkoi literatury', *Sobranie sochinenii v 3-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1948), I, 220.
9. Terras, *Belinskij*, p. 4.
10. Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 190, 263.
11. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 264 C, quoted in Terras, *Belinskij*, p. 10 (Note 18).
12. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245 A, in Terras, *Belinskij*, pp. 10–11.
13. V. G. Belinskii, 'Stikhotvoreniia M. Lermontova (1840)', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 13–ti tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1954), IV, 499.
14. V. G. Belinskii, 'O kritike i literaturnykh mneniiakh "Moskovskogo nabliudatelia" (1836)', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 13–ti tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1953), II, 152.
15. Terras, *Belinskij*, pp. 158, 83.
16. Belinskii, 'Stikhotvoreniia M. Lermontova', pp. 493–94, 489.
17. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil*, p. viii.
18. Voronskii writes: 'Above all, art is the cognition of life [. . .]. The true poet, the true artist can *see* ideas.' A. Voronskii, 'Iskusstvo, kak poznanie zhizni i sovremennost'. (K voprosu o nashikh literturnykh raznoglasiiakh)', *Krasnaia nov'* (1923: 5), 349; Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil*, pp. 193–94.

19. Ibid., p. 201; Voronskii, 'Iskusstvo', p. 350. The effect of Voronskii's reading of Tolstoi is also likely to be important. Belaia writes: '"The revelation of life" which Tolstoy had achieved became an aesthetic point of orientation for Voronskii. The notion of the particular, "childlike" spiritual make-up of the writer, of the vividness and purity of his direct experience determined the course of discussions on the nature of the artist for many years to come.' G. Belaia, *Don Kikhoty 20–kh godov: 'Pereval' i sud'ba ego idei* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1989), p. 210.
20. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil*, pp. 201, 217; Terras, *Belinskij*, p. 282.
21. A. Voronskii, 'Iskusstvo videt' mir: (O novom realizme)', in *Iskusstvo videt' mir* (Moscow, [n. pub.], 1928), p. 84.
22. Granin, *Kartina*, p. 615.
23. L. Fink, 'Neobkhodimost' Don Kikhota', *Literaturnoe obozrenie* (1985: 2), 55. See also Vasilevskii, 'Odno proshlo', p. 73.
24. Daniil Granin, *Dva kryla* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1983), pp. 15, 201.
25. Granin, *Dva kryla*, as quoted in Fink, 'Neobkhodimost'', p. 55.
26. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Pis'ma 1860–1868, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30–ti tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1985), XXVIII (2), 251. Granin has written on Dostoevskii's influence on contemporary Soviet prose, and recognizes that Dostoevskii has directly affected his own work, particularly the story *Kto-to dolzhen*. Fink, *Neobkhodimost'*, pp. 152–53. Also see D. Granin, 'Nerazgadannost' cheloveka', *Sobesednik* (1982: 3), 269, and D. Granin, 'V dome na Kuznechnom', *Novyi mir* (1981: 10), 194.
27. Leafing through a book of Kant's works, Losev reads the following: 'Man is an end in himself and, therefore, may never be used merely as a means, even by God.' Granin, *Kartina*, p. 431.
28. W. Charlton, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), p. 78. In a summary of Kant's thought, Roger Scruton writes: 'Our pleasure in beauty has its origin in a capacity, due to the free play of imagination, first to experience the harmonious working of our own rational faculties, and secondly to project that harmony outwards on to the empirical world. We see in objects the formal unity that we discover in ourselves. This is the origin of our pleasure, and the basis of our "common sense" of beauty.' Roger Scruton, *Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 86–87.
29. Ibid., p. 88.
30. Granin, *Kartina*, p. 362.
31. Ibid., p. 363.
32. Ibid., pp. 362–63.
33. Ibid., p. 365.
34. The passage from Kant reads: 'man and generally any rational being *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* to be arbitrarily used by this or that will'. See Immanuel Kant, 'Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals', in *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, trans. by T. K. Abbott (London: Longmans, 1879), p. 65; Scruton, *Kant*, p. 70.
35. Granin, *Kartina*, p. 431. See note 27 above.
36. Ibid., p. 470.
37. Pasternak, *Zhivago*, p. 523.
38. Granin, *Kartina*, p. 618.
39. Ibid., pp. 290–91.
40. Ibid., p. 288.
41. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Brat'ia Karamazovy, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30–ti tomakh*, XIV, 100; 'Here the devil is struggling with God, and the battlefield is the human heart.' Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 108.
42. Granin, *Kartina*, pp. 379–80.
43. Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 774.
44. Irena Maryniak, 'Truthseekers, Godbuilders or Culture Vultures: Some Supplementary Remarks on Religous Perspectives in Modern Soviet Literature', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 16, No. 3 (1988), pp. 227–36.
45. Granin, *Kartina*, pp. 484–90. Doubt, or alienation from the transcendent, Dostoevskii demonstrates in *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, is a recipe for madness and for life's destruction, as Ivan Karamazov's descent into mental illness and Smerdiakov's suicide following Fedor Pavlovich's murder confirm.
46. Compare with the way Ivan Karamazov's devil explains his own nature: 'I am x in an indeterminate equation. I am some sort of ghost of life who has lost all ends and beginnings and I've finally even forgotten what to call myself.' Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 642.
47. A. Voronskii, 'Literaturnye siluety. Leonid Leonov', *Krasnaia nov'* (1924: 3), 304.
48. Daniil Granin, 'O miloserdii', *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 18 March 1987.

PART III

PSYCHOLOGY OR SOCIOLOGY?

CHAPTER 6

CHINGIZ AITMATOV

Whether expressed in its 'simplest' or more 'developed' form, the animist perception of things comprehends a model of reality in which spirits, or a Spirit, independent of the self live and move. Its essence is a constant creation and variation of relationships between the self and other beings: God or gods, spirits, demons, angels, or saints. The totemic vision, on the other hand, is concerned with the accommodation of the individual and his creative powers within the social organism. The world does not consist of multiple realities, but of a dual reality: self and society. If the self is to survive within society, it must consent to be moulded and ruled. Society must be God, and the self must dissolve within it.

The tension between these two systems of understanding can probably be identified at the psychological level within any personality or community. It is likely also to exist within more sophisticated religious models. Is the world best seen in terms of a constant stream of fluctuating relationships and dialogues between independent forms of consciousness? Or is it more readily understood in terms of a split between the self and the exterior — the environment, the social unit — which defines 'me' and to which 'I' must adapt? The works discussed in this section show how this common human dilemma is treated by Soviet writers in terms of the animist/totemist dichotomy. Within religious systems, which carry the burden of defining the relationship between self and exterior, it finds what is, perhaps, its most vivid expression.

Just as the mythological foundations of Rasputin's or Amiredzhibi's writing can be traced to the ancient religious traditions of their localities, so the work of Chingiz Aitmatov — the former Soviet Union's most celebrated Kirghiz writer — gains perspective when analysed with reference to religious forms once prevalent in Central Asian culture: shamanism and polytheistic cults. Aitmatov shows little interest in Islamic themes, even though Islam has been the dominant Great Religion in Kirghizia since the eighteenth century. But he incorporates more ancient religious culture into his narrative to remarkable effect.

Through the analysis of two works — *Belyi parokhod* ('The White Steamship', 1970)[1] and *I dol'she veka dlitsia den'* ('The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years', 1980)[2] — it becomes possible to see a significant shift in

Aitmatov's thinking. The emphasis seems to pass from a sympathetic preoccupation with individualism of spirit and the values associated with it, to a growing concern about collective integration between man, the social unit, and the environment. As will be shown in Chapter 10, in his later novel *Plakha* ('The Executioner's Block', 1986)[3] this seems to develop into a positive affirmation of social and moral collectivism as the highest value.

Shamanistic practice has been described by Mircea Eliade as 'one of the archaic techniques of ecstasy — at once mysticism, magic and "religion" in the broadest sense of the term'.[4] It is a religious system which was widespread in Central and Northern Asia until as late as the nineteenth century, despite pressures to convert to Islam. The shaman is a medicine man and a healer; but he is also magician, priest, and mystic who, as a consequence of overcoming a violent physical and psychological crisis, has gained power over nature which he can use to benefit or harm his fellow men. In the shamanistic trance he communicates with spirits, has mastery over fire, and can take different animal forms to span the three cosmic zones: the sky, the earth, and the underworld. He is much more than a quack. Rather, he is one of the elect, a man who can see further into the nature of things and into men because he is directly in touch with the sacred. He is no less than the prophet of God.[5]

The amalgam of monotheism and polytheism among primitive peoples has been widely debated by anthropologists; but, Jean-Paul Roux has argued, among Turkic and Mongolian tribes in pre-Islamic times, a belief in the existence of a Supreme God, the God of the Sky (*Tengri*), was prevalent.[6] In addition, gods and spirits of earth and water, object and place were venerated to a greater or lesser degree in different areas.

References and images drawn from pre-Muslim and pre-Christian traditions, and their treatment in the two works to be discussed here, reflect assumptions about the nature of the world, and man's relationship with it, important for a fuller understanding of Aitmatov's writing. They are the means by which his attitudes towards religious experience are codified. Further, they may reflect tension between a personal animist impulse and the demands of the collective — with its emphasis on the preservation of group cohesion. The personal religious urge is closely associated with the use of images drawn from polytheistic and shamanist cults (which express individual experiences of the numinous). The call of society is associated with totemism.[7]

Belyi parokhod tells the story of a kindly but ineffectual old man, Ded Momun, and his seven-year-old, orphaned grandson. It is about the incompatibility of their ways of seeing the world, and about the tragic consequences this clash of perception brings. Ded Momun's greatest concerns in life are his tribal identity and the preservation of the ancient tradition of his once powerful clan, the Bugu of northern Kirghizia. In order to comfort and reassure his grandson, he tells the

boy a version of the traditional myth of origin of the Bugu tribe. It describes how in years gone by, on the banks of the River Enisei, where the Kirghiz are said originally to have had their settlements, two children survived the massacre of their tribe. They were rescued and nurtured by a deer which led them to the banks of Issyk Kul', where they were able safely to settle and multiply.

The deer became the surrogate mother of the Bugu tribe and was venerated until the day when younger members of the clan began to glorify their dead by killing deer and crowning the graves of ancestors with their horns.[8] The totemic ancestor of the Bugu, *Rogataia mat' olenikha* (the Horned Deer Mother), was thus debased into an object of thriving trade, to be hunted and possessed as a mark of social status. Because of this, she departed from Issyk Kul' never to return.

The boy takes the myth literally, because his understanding is coloured by an animist perception of things. To him, animals, plants and objects are in any case personalized beings, and he naturally applies Ded Momun's story to the world as he has experienced it. Later, deer are sighted in the surrounding area. Momun's family go hunting; they kill a deer and feast on it, with Ded Momun taking part in the sacrilege. Seeing this, the boy withdraws into a personal fantasy of transforming himself into a merman, and swimming out into the waters of Issyk Kul' to meet the white steamship he has watched pass by from the shore. There, he believes, he will find his rightful father and the resolution to the puzzle of his existence. But, alas, he drowns.

Aitmatov's novella reveals the tension between the two forms of perception: totemic and animist. To Ded Momun, the myth of the Deer Mother is a point of reference for his identity and his relationship with the collective environment. His view of things is totemic not just in that he likes to associate his experiences with a myth about the ancestral origins of his tribe, but because for him the clan and the preservation of its rites and traditions are of prime importance. His perspective on life conforms to Durkheim's interpretation of the totemic tradition as one which looks less to the understanding of transcendent realities than to collective survival.

The story carries a number of further implications. It suggests that the totemic principle, the clan, fails in practice to satisfy the personalist religious urge inherent in the unspoilt human psyche. Ded Momun's Absolute proves to be in conflict with the animist impulse which, Aitmatov shows, is a part of childlike experience of reality. The little boy takes his grandfather's myth as 'a reality to be lived' and as knowledge to satisfy his religious and moral cravings.[9] It becomes a prescriptive codification of his spiritual needs and, therefore, a source of motivation and action. It also inspires his final act of disengagement from the ways of the world. At the temporal level this is tragic because he must die; at the moral level — as Aitmatov indicates in the closing lines of the story — it is a triumph:

You rejected what your child's heart could not reconcile itself to. And that's my consolation. You lived like a bolt of lightning which once — and only once — flashed and expired. But lightning strikes from the sky, and the sky is eternal. That too is my consolation. And that a child's conscience in a person is like an embryo in a particle of grain: the grain won't grow without the embryo. That whatever awaits us on earth, truth will endure forever as long as people are born and die.[10]

If the brief life of Aitmatov's nameless little boy is like a flash of lightning born of the eternal sky, then, in terms of the Kirghiz tradition, he is a child of the Supreme God, *Tengri*. He has a particularly close *rapport* with clouds. He shares with them his secret desire to flee the world, be transformed into a fish-like creature, and take to the water so that he may reach his unknown, omniscient father.[11] His greatest aspiration is a metamorphosis which will take him on a shamanistic journey into another sphere of existence.

There are a number of features in *Belyi parokhod* which suggest that the boy is not only a personification of the innocent soul, but an unrecognized shaman or prophet whose experiences may be related to initiation rites performed towards the fulfilment of his vocation.[12] He has been abandoned by his father, just as the shaman is abandoned in some traditions.[13] He takes the mythical stag to be his mother, as the shaman is said to have an animal mother often pictured in the form of an elk embodying the prophetic gift and visionary power.[14] Above all, however, he strives to communicate with another world. He regularly climbs a hill overlooking Issyk Kul', contemplates the white steamship and holds imaginary conversations with his father — rather like the shaman climbing the Cosmic Mountain to reach the higher cosmic zone. He also keeps company with a stray dog; the dog is traditionally the shaman's companion during his descent into the underworld.[15] Finally, the boy seeks to take on another form which will allow him to make the transition into another sphere of life.

The shamans of western and central Siberia are generally recognized by exceptional traits shown during adolescence (nervousness and epilepsy are typical), but the vocation may be revealed also through attitude rather than bodily sickness.[16] Like Aitmatov's hero, the shaman as a child may be meditative, solitary, apparently absent-minded, with a tendency to dream. His vocation is confirmed by a 'crisis', a form of mental illness or breakdown, during the course of which he experiences a shift of reference from the family or clan to the universe as a whole. This leads, Joseph Campbell writes, to 'the realisation of "something far more deeply interfused" inhabiting both the earth and one's own interior which gives the world a sacred character.'[17] The shaman emerges from his ordeal delivered, as it were, from the human condition, ready to take up his role as mediator between the worlds.

The little boy in *Belyi parokhod* likewise has a crisis, diagnosed by the uninitiated as a feverish cold. During his illness he converses with the Horned

Deer Mother, bathes in hot water (Eliade makes reference to the function of heat in the process of the shaman's mutation from body to body), and performs superhuman feats.[18] He fights monsters in a blizzard, leaps from mountain to mountain, and rescues people from burning and drowning — ever watched and protected by the white deer. But he returns to the world of men to witness the savage dismemberment of his personal, incarnate Godhead (the deer) and to see her devoured by members of his clan. Only then does he perform the transmutation which confirms his vocation as a shaman, taking on an animal body to cross over into a new dimension.

However tragic the consequences of this may be in temporal terms, Aitmatov makes it clear that the child's animist experience — a personal religious urge and shaman-like vocation — all motivate him positively. Ded Momun's totemic beliefs lead only to his capitulation before the will of the clan. The one provides scope for total consistency in action, even when the cost is disengagement from life itself. The other does not, and the price is the debasement of human stature. Because Ded Momun worships the principle of the clan, and not a personalized deity, he is forced in the end to follow the ways of the clan. He sacrifices his God to the pragmatic necessity to conform, sharing in the feast which celebrates the killing of the deer out of fear of his ambitious, autocratic and violent son-in-law, Ozorkul. God is dead; tyranny prevails. If there is any comfort here, it lies only in the child's capacity to disengage himself from that state of things and to act consistently according to his faith in the possibility of a better way of living in another form.

When *Belyi parokhod* was published in *Novyi mir* (1970), the Soviet press reacted critically. The work was declared 'pessimistic' and disappointment was expressed that the novella did not, like earlier works for which Aitmatov received the Lenin Prize in 1963, 'illuminate the social significance of events' and inspire the reader with 'hopes and dreams'. The author was charged with deviating from 'historical and social roots' and from 'reality'.[19]

In a fuller critical assessment of Aitmatov's work, published in 1982, however, G. Gachev treats *Belyi parokhod* as a landmark in Aitmatov's literary development, and gives the novella the deserved acknowledgement it was initially denied.[20] Devoting considerable attention to the mythological associations in the story, he comments on its Christian imagery: associating the boy's lost father with God, the Deer Mother with the Virgin, and the boy with Christ. Momun, he writes, acts like Judas in betraying his Deity.[21] The Christian features of the story are, Gachev argues, part of its mythological structure and essential to its meaning. In fact, the remark demands a stretch of the imagination to be of any help. As in Rasputin's case, it is less Christianity than the imaginative application of local religious archetypes which gives Aitmatov's story its impetus and spontaneous quality.

I dol'she veka dlitsia den', published ten years on, might more justifiably be labelled 'pessimistic'. The novel exposes the dangers of losing touch with memory, tradition and cult. It also shows ways in which modern man has come to stunt or maim his personality, his mind and his potential, implying that he is continuing to do so by refusing to acknowledge the possibility of reaching beyond the knowable, as well as the known.

In Boranly-Burannyi, a settlement in the Sarozek steppes of Kazakhstan, an old and honoured member of the village community, Kazangap, has died. His long-standing friend, Edigei, takes it upon himself to ensure that he receives a proper rite of burial, despite the inconvenience and reluctance of younger members of the family to cooperate. Edigei insists that the body should be transported to the ancient cemetery of Ana-Beiit, thirty kilometres away, where the ancestors of the steppe peoples lie. The bulk of the novel describes Edigei's experience of the funeral procession across the steppe, which he leads by camel, with a tractor bearing the body and a dog following behind. The journey appears to draw together in his mind the most important impressions of his life. At sixty, he looks back. It is a period of reflection and recollection.

Interwoven with this is a curious and apparently unconnected science-fiction story. As Edigei arranges the burial of his friend, two space rockets — one Soviet, the other American — take off to unravel a problem which has arisen aboard their jointly-owned space station. The astronauts based there have discovered the existence of another planet populated by anthropomorphic, intelligent beings who are concerned about the long-term effects of dehydration on their environment. They are seeking to make contact with Earth in the hope of working jointly on a problem which in the long run must affect the human race as well. The authorities on Earth, however, cannot accept the implications of extra-terrestrial life. When the astronauts leave the space station to explore their discovery further, they are forbidden to return. Steps are taken to ensure that no further contact with the other planet can take place. The Earth is cordoned off with circling defence rockets to protect or isolate it from the rest of the cosmos.

As Edigei and his tiny funeral convoy approach Ana-Beiit, they find that it has been fenced off with barbed wire. The cemetery is to be destroyed to make space for a new township. The past is about to disappear. Meanwhile, the Earth itself is being cut off from the very external impulse or influence which might save its future. It appears that modern man is determined to sever links not only with his past and his roots, but also with any existing potential for evolution and development. Edigei finally buries his friend outside the grounds of the cemetery and, as the book concludes, sets off to plead with the authorities for the preservation of Ana-Beiit and the memory of his people.

I dol'she veka dlitsia den' warns of an imminent danger: should the human race lose both past and future, it could remain in a limbo where it must

eventually dry and wither away. From the mythological angle the novel's particular interest lies in the references and imagery drawn from the pre-Islamic Central Asian tradition which add a further dimension to its themes.

The Soviet anthropologist S. M. Abramzon has commented on the eclectic quality of the Kirghiz tradition and on the range of cults reflected in it.[22] He mentions particularly the cult of the earth and sky, the mother cult and the totemic animal cult — all of which feature in Aitmatov's novel. The rite of burial, which is thematically at the centre of the work, forms part of a traditional ancestor cult. The spirits of the dead continue to affect the lives of the living and demand constant attention. Burial must take place on land where the ancestor was born and where he lived. Until as late as the nineteenth century it was common practice for the leader of a Kirghiz tribe to be carried a great distance for such burial to be possible — much as Aitmatov describes.[23]

Edigei's motivation in arranging his friend's burial reaches beyond a tendency to cling to what is customary and familiar. In religious tradition, he sees a way to improved psychological balance, a fuller life, and the enhancement of personal potential. Death must be given its due if life itself is not to be devalued.[24] Its ritual acknowledgement must be enacted at least for the benefit of the living.[25] Religious rite and prayer — whether Islamic or more ancient — are a means of bridging the conceptual gap between life and death. They elevate the mind to a state in which the acceptance of transience becomes possible.[26] To prepare himself for the burial, Edigei repeats half-forgotten prayers. They help to organize his thoughts and his emotions. For only God, 'the unknown and unseen, could reconcile the unreconcilable in a man's consciousness of the beginning of life and of death'.[27]

Prayer is a technique by which a balanced psychological stance towards the rationally inexplicable may be achieved. It is also the means by which man may reach the essence of his personality which is the Deity:

> I want to believe that You exist and that You are in my thoughts. And when I turn to You in my prayers, in fact I turn through You to myself, and then I am given the gift of thinking as the Creator Himself would think. In that lies the heart of the matter! [. . .] If a man cannot imagine himself in secret as a god fighting for others, as you would have to fight for people, then You, God, would also cease to exist.[28]

Unless man touches the quality within himself which he calls God, and unless he has learned the technique by which to do so, the Deity will cease to be.

Edigei's interpretation of religion is expressed in an idiosyncratic cult of remembrance evolved from a combination of earth cult, ancestor cult, mother cult, and totemism. The earth is the very stuff of memory; it is the only remaining tangible bond with lives which have made unwritten history. As Elizarov, a geologist, tells Edigei: '"The Sarozek land is a forgotten history book".'[29] The ritual act of burial which gives recognition to the earth as man's linkage with the past is, in Edigei's view, an expression of nature. To deny this

is a gesture against the innate urge to recollect and reaffirm human bondage.[30] Remembrance is expressed in the form of traditions passed from generation to generation, in ritual, song, or legend which recall the links between man and man, and let past, present, future meet.[31] The spirit of those who have died can be resurrected through the songs they sang and the stories they told; these are their heritage and teaching. As Edigei's friend, Abutalip Kuttybaev, believes, the song is one way in which the experience of one can be shared by many:

> He said that there were certain happenings, events, certain stories which became the property of many because their value was so great; that the story contained in itself so much that although it was experienced by one person originally, it could as it were be distributed to and shared by all living at that time, even those who came long afterwards.[32]

Through song and legend the memory of the people is preserved to function as the quality of the mind which makes men human, allows for growth and also, perhaps, for a kind of immortality.

The thematic centrepoint of the novel is the legendary history of the ancient cemetery Ana-Beiit (meaning 'the resting place of the mother'). According to this, Ana-Beiit is the burial place of Naiman-Ana, who in times of old went out in search of her son, enslaved by a nomadic Mongolian tribe, the Zhuan'zhuan. Naiman-Ana found her son — only to be killed by him, because he had been transformed into a '*mankurt*', a slave whose absolute loyalty was guaranteed since he had been nefariously deprived of both memory and identity: 'The nomadic Zhuan'zhuan encroached on the sacred being of man. For they had discovered the means of removing from slaves their living memory, in this way causing to a human being the most dreadful of all imaginable or unimaginable evils.'[33] Yet, the legend continues, as Naiman-Ana fell dying from the arrow shot by her son, the kerchief from her head dropped and was transformed into a white bird which henceforth haunted the area, crying the name of the *mankurt*'s father.

According to Abramzon, the mother cult was widely practised in ancient Turkic, Uzbek and Kirghiz tradition as the cult of Umai-Ana (the mother Umai). The Kirghiz word '*umai*' refers to a fantastic bird which nests in the air. Abramzon traces its etymology to the Persian word '*humā*', the great eagle-like bird of good omen which inhabits the World-Tree.[34] He demonstrates further that, in Kirghizia, the Mother Umai was often associated with the bird motif widespread in many ancient cultures. In one Khorezmic legend, he writes, Ambar-ona, a mother in search of her son, is also represented as a bird.[35]

The story of Naiman-Ana evidently has its roots in a legend deeply embedded in the Central Asian tradition, and may also be associated with the totemic cult of the bird. In the Turko-Mongolian religious system, the bird is the mediator between earth and sky, as well as the form taken by the souls of the dead.[36] In Kirghizia it is also the emblem ('*tamga*') of a number of tribes.

Indeed, Iu. A. Zuev has argued that the ethnonym *Kirgiz* should be understood as the 'gryphon people', from the Indo-Iranian '*karkasa*', '*kärkäs*', meaning eagle.[37] In Aitmatov's legend of Naiman-Ana, the death of the mother striving to save her son's memory and identity releases the bird image, associated specifically with the Kirghiz tribe. Through her death, the mother figure is transformed into a totem of the people — the symbol of a common ancestry.

The bird image in fact recurs a number of times in the novel. The burial of Kazangap is watched over by a white-tailed kite circling overhead; in his prayer over the grave, Edigei expresses a desire to be reincarnated in that form.[38] Later, as he runs from the noise of the defence rocket taking off to orbit the Earth and isolate it from the rest of the universe, he senses a white bird beside him and knows that it is the one which had once been formed from Naiman-Ana's white kerchief. He hears it cry: '"Whose son are you? What is your name? Remember your name!"'[39]

Edigei is associated, therefore, with the bird symbol: an emblem of tribal and national consciousness appropriate to his function as the preserver of the memory of his people. In addition to this, he appears often in the company of two other animals which possess specific cult associations for the Kirghiz: the camel and the dog. In some areas, Abramzon observes, the white camel is venerated as a spirit of holy places and is also the protector spirit of shamans.[40] Edigei's prize camel, Karanar, is born of the stock of Naiman-Ana's white camel, Akmaia. Karanar and Edigei are like brothers with a shared totemic ancestry since both were nourished by the milk of Karanar's mother.[41]

The introduction of the dog image also has its significance, since the red dog (here it is '*ryzhii*' — 'rusty coloured') is an animal ancestor in a legend of the creation of the Kirghiz people.[42] So Edigei is accompanied in the fulfilment of his task, which, like Naiman-Ana's, is to restore lost memory and identity, by two mythical beasts: a 'brother' camel of almost supernatural strength (descended from the camel which bore Naiman-Ana herself), and his ancient ancestor, the dog.[43]

Finally, a brief comment on the sky cult: in the Turko-Mongolian religious tradition a correct relationship between earth and sky was essential to the maintenance of the cosmic order. Tragedy or disaster on earth was seen as the result of a tip in the balance between the two.[44] The sky was, of course, identified with the High God, *Tengri*. Soviet anthropologists have noted that as Kirghizia was Islamized, so the notions of Sky God and Allah fused.[45] This is worth bearing in mind as one reads in *I dol'she veka dlitsia den'* that, just as man has learned to break his links with memory, the past, and the earth, so he now seeks to sever his links with the sky. By cordoning off the planet, humanity performs an act which must precipitate the apocalyptic destruction of the universe; in Central Asian texts this was foretold in terms of a shattered

relationship between earth and sky.[46] According to the oldest of traditions, the enforced separation must be an act of supreme sacrilege. And there is nothing in Aitmatov's profoundly gloomy work to suggest that Edigei's valiant efforts to preserve his ties with the earth can do anything to persuade the human race to re-establish its bond with the sky.

If *Belyi parokhod* demonstrates the incompatibility of the child's animist perception with a totemic understanding which puts the survival and glory of the group first, *I dol'she veka dlitsia den'* emphasizes the need to look to a real collective tradition in acknowledgement of the interdependence between man, his physical environment and his historical roots. Indeed, the later novel suggests that collectivism in the broadest sense — incorporating the environment and the past — is essential to the maintenance of a full and healthy personality. It is interesting to observe, therefore, that the first work by Aitmatov published under *perestroika*, *Plakha*, appears to give the totemic tradition unprecedented prescriptive weight, at the same time tentatively advancing a neo-religious, collectivist solution to the ills of the modern world. It proposes the veneration of the collective future and may reflect the God-building theories of Gor'kii and Lunacharskii. *Plakha* will be discussed in Chapter 10. It is worth noting, however, that during the sixteen years between the publication of *Belyi parokhod* and *Plakha*, the thrust of Aitmatov's writing appears to shift from interest in the spontaneous, unspoilt experience of life's variety towards the promotion of group consolidation as a solution to the intractable social problems faced by the Soviet Union on the eve of its demise.

NOTES

1. Chingiz Aitmatov, *Belyi parokhod, Novyi mir* (1970: 1), 31–100. Subsequent references are to : Aitmatov, *Belyi parokhod. (Posle skazki). Sobranie sochinenii v 3-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1983), II. English translation: Chingiz Aitmatov, *The White Steamship*, trans. by Tatyana and George Feifer (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972).
2. Chingiz Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka dlitsia den', Novyi mir* (1980: 11), 3–185. Subsequent references are to: Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka dlitsia den'. (Burannyi polustanok), Sobranie sochinenii v 3-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1983), II. English translation: Chingiz Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years,* trans. by John French (London: Futura, 1984).
3. Chingiz Aitmatov, *Plakha, Novyi mir* (1986: 6), 7–69; (1986: 8), 90–148; (1986: 9), 6–64.
4. Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. xix.
5. Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, pp. 231, 242–43, 251–54; Roux, *Religion des Turcs*, pp. 64–65.
6. Roux, *Religion des Turcs*, pp. 123–24.
7. Campbell emphasizes that shamanistic practice fosters the 'individualist' impulse. Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, pp. 240–42.
8. The word '*bugu*' is Kirghiz for 'deer'. It is also the name given to the Kirghiz as a tribe, said to be descended from a deer. K. K. Iudakhin, ed., *Kirgizsko-russkii slovar'* (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1965), p. 154.
9. Malinowski, *Magic*, p. 100.
10. Aitmatov, *Belyi parokhod*, p. 114; Aitmatov, *White Steamship*, p. 164.
11. As noted earlier (see Chapter 3), in the Central Asian tradition water is purity made manifest, reflecting the sky and the Sky God. Roux, *Religion des Turcs*, pp. 137, 141.

12. Ded Momun remarks that any stranger may be a prophet: '"the prophet himself does not know that he is a prophet. He is a simple man. Only a thug knows himself to be what he is".' Aitmatov, *Belyi parokhod*, p. 31.
13. Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, p. 230.
14. Ksenofontov, *Legendy i rasskazy*, p. 39, quoted in Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, p. 266.
15. Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 466.
16. Ibid., pp. 15, 16, 19–20.
17. Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, pp. 252–53.
18. Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 474–77.
19. Tatyana and George Feifer, 'Afterword', in Aitmatov, *The White Steamship*, pp. 178–79.
20. G. Gachev, *Chingiz Aitmatov i mirovaia literatura* (Frunze: Kyrgyzstan, 1982), pp. 203–32.
21. Ibid., p. 218.
22. S. M. Abramzon, *Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul'turnye sviazi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1971), p. 273.
23. Ibid., pp. 319, 325–26.
24. '"If death is nothing [. . .] then it follows that life also has no value".' Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 221; Aitmatov, *Day Lasts More than Hundred Years*, p. 34.
25. Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 211.
26. The rite of burial Edigei performs appears to be Islamic in form, although the emphasis on place reflects pre-Islamic beliefs, as do some of his philosophical ideas. Ibid., p. 479.
27. Ibid., pp. 274–75; Aitmatov, *Day Lasts More than Hundred Years*, p. 97.
28. Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 480; Aitmatov, *Day Lasts More than Hundred Years*, p. 342.
29. Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 233.
30. '"Don't go against man's customs, don't go against nature!"' Ibid., p. 474; Aitmatov, *Day Lasts More than Hundred Years*, p. 335.
31. Abramzon emphasizes the special importance of the the oral tradition for the Kirghiz. Abramzon, *Kirgizy*, p. 340.
32. Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 416; Aitmatov, *Day Lasts More than Hundred Years*, p. 265.
33. Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 302; Aitmatov, *Day Lasts More than Hundred Years*, p. 127.
34. In the shamanistic system of cosmic order, the World Tree or Cosmic Tree unites the three cosmic zones. Its roots are in the underworld, its trunk is the axis of the universe, and its branches touch the firmament (see Chapter 3). Abramzon, *Kirgizy*, pp. 277–78.
35. Ibid., p. 278.
36. Roux, *Religion des Turcs*, pp. 105–06, 158.
37. Iu. A. Zuev, *Drevnetiurkskie genealogicheskie predaniia kak istochnik po rannei istorii tiurkov*, Avtoreferat kandidatskoi dissertatsii (Alma-Ata, 1967), p. 14: cited in Abramzon, *Kirgizy*, p. 289.
38. Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 480.
39. Ibid., p. 488; Aitmatov, *Day Lasts More than Hundred Years*, p. 351.
40. Abramzon, *Kirgizy*, pp. 310, 315.
41. Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka*, p. 265.
42. Ibid., p. 273.
43. The narrator refers to the camel, Karanar, as '*verbliud syrttan*', a 'wonder camel'. Ibid., p. 268.
44. Roux, *Religion des Turcs*, p. 103.
45. Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 5-ti tomakh* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, 1961), I, 370, 480; cited in Abramzon, *Kirgizy*, p. 291.
46. Roux, *Religion des Turcs*, p. 109.

CHAPTER 7

SERGEI ZALYGIN

If Aitmatov's *Belyi parokhod* portrays the psychological disruption wrought by tensions between the animist and totemic aspects of the religious impulse, Zalygin's *Komissiia* ('The Commission', 1975) raises some of the social dilemmas which the animist-totemist dichotomy can provoke.[1] Zalygin's novel considers how the urge to think, act, and create in response to personal spiritual insight may be reconciled with demands made by the community. It asks how the spontaneous expression of feeling can be accommodated in social law; how individual spiritual and creative needs are to be satisfied within a system of behavioural and economic order.

Komissiia depicts the life of a Siberian peasant community in 1918, during the Civil War. It is a time when all traditional notions of authority and law have been destroyed. To preserve their community amid the chaos, the villagers of Lebiazhka set up a forestry commission. Initially it functions simply to protect the local woodland area from abuse by individual woodcutters. But as events take their course, it comes to represent a new system of cooperative justice which aims to reflect Revolutionary changes occurring in the country as a whole. More controversially, it also stands for the principle of autonomous local government. The commission is finally dissolved by the arrival of Kolchak's forces and their refusal to acknowledge its legal status. All its members are condemned to be flogged.

The Soviet critic A. Bocharov has commented that *Komissiia* is a '*roman-disput*', a novel in which the significance of issues discussed by characters overrides the importance of the action.[2] The observation reflects a more general critical response which Zalygin had to face regarding the 'intellectual' aspect of his literary characterization.[3] Topics debated by the peasants in *Komissiia* include political, social and religious questions; and the strength with which the various ideas challenge one another suggests that no single idea or ideology can resolve them. As Zalygin has written elsewhere, since there are no perfect human beings, there can be no consummate ideas. We should not expect from ideas that which we cannot expect from people. Thoughts should be treated with the same respect, understanding, indulgence even, as the minds which formulate them.[4]

For Zalygin, ideas may not be divorced from experience or psychology. It follows that in his fiction, debate is a meeting of personalities, or 'types' of personality. In *Komissiia* the focus is directed at Nikolai Ustinov and Deriabin — figures representing two opposing postures on ethics, politics, and the environment: one personalist, the other ideological.

Ustinov is something of a natural philosopher. His notion of collectivism reaches beyond political affiliation to a sense of the need to acknowledge and support the order in nature. He is politically cautious and personally loyal: the epitome, Andrei Nuikin suggests, of the peasant householder.[5] In addition, he is hard-working, quick-witted, educated, with experience in a wide variety of jobs associated with environmental planning.[6] But he shrinks from total commitment to the commission. Deriabin, on the other hand, is a contender for its control. He emerges as dogmatic, intolerant, ambitious, and loyal only to his Revolutionary idea. If Ustinov shows a capacity to be sensitive to other forms of consciousness present and active in the world, Deriabin is defined by obsessive single-mindedness in pursuing a political end which involves complete identification with the social unit as he understands it.

The evaluation of the contrast between the two figures proved a matter of disagreement among Soviet critics. Galina Kolesnikova nods in the direction of Ustinov's thoughts about the universe, friendship, freedom, and equality, but laments his lack of discrimination and inability to grasp the socio-political position in which he has been placed:

> The words of the Bolshevik, Vania Pankratov, failed to penetrate his consciousness. [. . .] Nor did Ustinov listen to the perceptive Deriabin; he failed to grasp the essential quality of the society in which he lived: its class structure. He could not differentiate between friend and foe.[7]

F. Chapchakhov regards him as a fanciful, passive figure, in contrast to the politically mature Deriabin.[8] Andrei Nuikin, while dismissing these criticisms as *passé* (*'ustarevshie'*), sees the contrast between Ustinov and Deriabin as an extension of conflicts between men of reason and men enslaved by an idea, depicted in Zalygin's earlier works: *Na Irtyshe* ('On the Irtysh', 1964) and *Solenaia pad'* ('Salt Valley', 1967).[9]

Na Irtyshe tells of a struggle between Stepan Chauzov, a *seredniak* or middle peasant, and Koriakin, a despotic chairman of the *troika* dealing with the removal of kulaks. Chauzov refuses to give his grain to the *kolkhoz* sowing fund because he feels his first responsibility is to his family. As a result, he is exiled from his native village. In *Solenaia pad'* a similar tension arises between two commanders of the partisans in the Civil War: Meshcheriakov, a leader genuinely dedicated to his people, and Brusenkov, a petty tyrant for whom the Revolution is synonymous with his own authority. Nuikin writes: 'Deriabin represents the force which — in all parts of Zalygin's trilogy — directly and

dangerously challenges such people as Chauzov, Meshcheriakov and Ustinov in the struggle for truth.'[10]

This is a view shared by L. Terakopian and the Canadian critic N. N. Shneidman.[11] The fact remains, however, that the main plot suggests Deriabin's assessments are correct, Ustinov's naïve. It is only at the level of the *disput*, which Bocharov regards as central to the work, that this interpretation fails. Ustinov's reasoning is the more convincing and attractive. He seeks balance and stability in the surrounding chaos, while Deriabin seems ready to exploit disorder in pursuit of personal power. And it is Ustinov's vision which harmonizes with the language and imagery of Zalygin's narrative.

The preservation of order in chaos is shown to be the prerogative of nature and of the community closest to it: the peasantry, epitomized in Ustinov. The novel sets their attempts to establish ways of protecting the environment and the community against the backcloth of an immutable natural order which man may either complement or subvert. It is manifest in the unhurried passage of the seasons, and in the balanced variety of forms in nature.[12] It is reflected in the interaction between different forms of life in the Siberian forest, which not only reshapes the earth, but gives a moral example to man and a 'rule' by which to live.[13] If men are capricious, anarchic, cunning, and suspicious of one another, the forest is benevolent and disinterested and never fails to remember them:

> The inhabitants of Lebiazhka were a wilful, insubordinate and cunning people, suspicious of anything even slightly foreign, and they treated the forest with respect. [. . .]
>
> They respected and loved the forest for its goodness, its generosity. For the fact that, even though it belonged to the Tsar, it never, not on any occasion, forgot the peasants. [. . .]
>
> There is not much goodness of this kind in the world. Anyone who does not understand its value, is worth nothing himself.
>
> The peasants of Lebiazhka understood this.[14]

In nature all things know their function and their relationship to the rest. As Ustinov reflects, only man has the capacity to deny his vocation and destroy the habitat which supports him.[15]

The human mind also has the power to perceive the structures in nature, however, and to express them rationally or creatively: in a carefully drawn map of the village, for instance, or in an elaborate woodcarving.[16] Man can reproduce and affirm natural law in craft — as Kirill Pankratov does — or through the quality of his individual life: 'For Ustinov believed that if one could discern the way in which the whole world is ordered, then it would be possible to live in an orderly, decent way.'[17]

An appreciation of biological law can draw the mind into wider reflections on the order by which the world is structured. It is a logic which may anticipate

Vladimir Soloukhin's widely publicized remark in the literary notes *Kameshki na ladoni* ('Pebbles in the Hand', 1981) — for which he was condemned outright by the Party magazine *Kommunist*[18]:

In this twentieth century, no sensible man can possibly have any doubt that there exists in this world, in the Universe, in the variety of life on earth, a higher, reasonable element. For if no such element exists, then we would have to suppose that such complex and accurate organizations as a flower (or plant), a bird, a man, a human brain, had each of them appeared as a result of some happy coincidence, some blind unprogrammed fusion of various chemical elements, molecules and atoms. But exact and complex instruments like the kidneys, the heart, the thyroid gland, the ear-drum, the eye, not to mention the chromosomes, could not have arisen blindly, on their own. All these organs work according to the reasoned laws of mathematics, chemistry, physics. The main question today is not does a higher form of reason exist? but — does this higher reason know about me, and does it care about me at all?[19]

In *Komissiia*, reflections on the problem of a supreme mind and its relationship to the world particularly absorb Ustinov, though discussions among the villagers on the nature of God and sanctity appear at intervals throughout the novel. Because man lives in an ecological system, and can recognize it, he must have the capacity to create a social environment complementary to nature's law. Ustinov reflects:

If you look at how much has already been accomplished in nature — at the sun, the earth, the rivers on the earth, the meadows and forests and fields, and at people, at ourselves — then it will become clear that not so very much work remains to be done to bring justice to mankind, to complete what is already begun![20]

Ustinov turns, therefore, to more Tolstoyan occupations — ploughing and animal rearing — to gain a better insight into the workings of nature, settle the mind and thereby, perhaps, improve himself and the world.[21] His thinking slips easily from the philosophical to the religious, suggesting a natural tendency for the mind which ponders the eternal questions to rest on the problem of Creator and creation. For Ustinov, the image of God is associated — though not identified — with the sun: the giver and taker of life (as is Anna's experience of the numinous in Rasputin's *Poslednii srok*).[22] But his Deity is also a projection of his own image of himself as the peasant and the supporter of life on earth. God is not a superior (*'nachal'nik'*) but an equal (*'muzhik'*).[23] Ustinov's thoughts also turn to the sky, in a way which brings to mind Eliade's observation that the contemplation of the vault of heaven in itself produces a religious experience: 'Even before any religious values have been set upon the sky it reveals its transcendence. The sky "symbolises" transcendence, power and changelessness simply by being there.'[24] Ustinov sees figures in the sky and senses its breath:

Today [. . .] there was every colour and hue in the sky, all kinds of nebulous figures and someone's barely audible breath.

And Ustinov could not believe that there was nobody out there, that this boundless space was empty, uninhabited [. . .].

The work of a mind that was not human, but quite different and unknown, was being completed there.[25]

The religious sense here is animist and anthropomorphic. Ustinov seeks a relationship with a presence in the sky or with his animals. He looks to be a participant in nature, and prefers to think of life as an offering to be accepted rather than a system to be controlled:

There is no joy in doing everything in the world alone and receiving nothing from others. There should be a sense of gift in life, or all that will remain will be human trade — workshop or factory — where people will start to pare and bake their lives away day and night, with no rest for food or sleep. And there will be no time for them to live.[26]

But Ustinov's insights into the patterns and relationships within nature are — the plot suggests — his failing and ultimately his death. By seeking a solitude in which to reflect, he lays himself open to advances from Kirill Pankratov's spouse, Zinaida. He remains faithful to his own wife, Domna, but a tinge of disloyalty niggles. Because he takes pleasure in animals, he puts himself in the position of a small-time informer to acquire a new gelding. Through his mistrust of factual information and other people's instructions, he exposes himself to injury and death. Ignoring the warning to take up arms from the novel's one militant Revolutionary, Venia, he remains true to the principle that only nature (*'prirodnyi rezon'*) should be man's guide. For that he is brutally murdered.

Ustinov is caught between his personal numen, his fondness for the heritage, values, and memories of the past, and his position as representative of a Revolutionary cooperative. There are even indications that he has a 'double', Grishka, a reactionary kulak living on the edge of Lebiazhka's community. Grishka offers Ustinov his friendship, which Ustinov declines. But the two remain linked by their individualism and by a triangular relationship with the same woman, Zinaida Pankratova.

Komissiia gives the animist cast of mind a fair hearing in a shifting narrative voice which slips from character to character but rests most conspicuously on the thinking of Ustinov. In a more conventional manner, however, the plot structure condemns his ineffectual personality. A philosophy such as his may create heroes, not survivors. And a threatened community needs survivors.

There is no life outside the group, Lebiazhka's tradition teaches: any rift within the community will provoke its destruction. The source of this wisdom lies in a series of traditional folk tales which affirm the origin and structure of the community. The stories, interspersed at intervals throughout the novel, do not contain the prescriptive qualities of myth, nor do they express a sense of

supernatural intervention in human life as myths do. Their structure is loose and open to variation: their purpose is largely to entertain. Folk tales, according to the preliminary definition G. S. Kirk offers, 'are traditional tales, of no firmly established form, in which supernatural elements are subsidiary; they are not primarily concerned with "serious" subjects or the reflexion of deep problems and preoccupations; and their first appeal lies in their narrative interest.'[27] Nevertheless, the tales of Lebiazhka — like children's fairy tales — direct their listeners to discover their identity and calling as members of a society.[28]

The stories tell of a community of nomadic Old Believers, *kerzhaki*. They describe how part of the group broke away from their ascetic elder, *starets* Lavrentii, who was leading them East beyond Lake Baikal, to follow a more pragmatic leader, *starets* Samsonii Krivoi, and settle in a pleasanter, more fertile land than Lavrentii had chosen. This initial division of the group may have been the community's 'original sin', as the village idiot (or Holy Fool), Kudeiar, later suggests.[29] Claiming their new, chosen home, Samsonii's followers were persuaded by another group of settlers, already living in the area, to integrate the communities by allowing *kerzhak* sons to marry six of their daughters. The girls are now remembered and revered as the ancestral mothers of the community. Their stories are told as the lives of saints who sacrificed themselves for the good of the group. All the women of Lebiazhka are named after them.[30]

The collective experience which these stories affirm is brought home particularly in the final story, which has a more mythic, apocalyptic character. It describes how *starets* Samsonii, fearing potential divisions within his community, called upon the stars of the Great Bear to send a sign to the Belyi Bor Forest when any such thing occurred. A blind seven-headed bear would then emerge from the forest and destroy the entire village, sparing neither the righteous nor the guilty.[31]

The folk tales which give the people of Lebiazhka a sense of common tradition and history (and perhaps common guilt) are notably more popular among the villagers than Saints' Lives, which also form part of their cultural tradition. The community is notionally Old Believer, but religious values are shown to leave the villagers baffled rather than satisfied. Ustinov's telling of the 'Life of Aleksei, Man of God', in which the saint's decision to take up extreme asceticism is shown to induce misery among members of his family, prompts a heated debate on the value of sanctity. Kalashnikov sees the saints as pointers to the things a good man may do, and the just society good men might create. Ustinov perceives them as personified reference points for moral qualities, and Kirill Pankratov as examples of spiritual achievement.[32]

Formal religion plays only a minor part in the lives of Lebiazhka's people. The local priest is subordinate to the laws of the community.[33] The village

elder, Ivan Ivanovich Samorukov, displays firm allegiance to religious custom, but his moral categories are determined only by the good of the community unit. Christian ethics cease to apply in the world outside the village.[34] The head of the commission, Kalashnikov, sees religious ritual — which deeply affected him in his youth — as an externalization of the urge to cleanse life through new undertakings and act consistently according to one's ideas: 'I came to love the incarnation of the word in human action. [. . .] Perhaps this is possible in life as well? Perhaps we could get by without senseless, meaningless actions, and unite word and deed?'[35] The reconciliation of thought and action is something he tries to achieve in the cooperative. For him, as Zinaida Pankratova remarks, the community represents a surrogate religion.[36]

The totemic aspect of established religious forms is directly identified with communal life. For Kalashnikov, religious rite is a symbolic externalization of the individual's drive to act, and the cooperative an improved way of creating the very brotherhood and equality Christianity teaches. For Ustinov, the system of religious signs is a way of affirming the order in nature which he would like to see reflected in the community. Samorukov sees religion as the symbol of social unity and its moral code as an adaptable way of benefiting the group.

> Ivan Ivanovich turned everything to Lebiazhka's advantage. He had the requisite know-how. And although he was a fervent believer, he regarded any opportunity to swindle the authorities or the entire *volost'* as a God-given gift. He would do his swindling, then go off to Lebiazhka's simple little church, and spend a long time giving thanks before a holy image.[37]

But the elusive problem of the individual and personal aspect of religion remains open. The identification of the social unit or its further abstraction, 'the mass of the people', with any kind of absolute truth is associated with unbending, autocratic, even sinister qualities. The chief spokesman for this attitude — Deriabin — is abrasive and ruthless. Ustinov remains unconvinced and worried by his declarations and his refusal to recognize the individual's right to go his own way.[38] Moreover, Deriabin's rejection of a proposal to undertake an investigation into Ustinov's murder does little to enhance his moral credibility.[39]

Yet the totemic posture is strong, the animist is shaky. It gives Kalashnikov the force of character to resist Deriabin's challenge, though he is by nature retiring and childlike. Loyalty to the community prompts Samorukov's demand to share punishment at the hands of the Whites with his fellows — even though flogging must mean certain death for an old man.[40] Commitment to the collective cause and Revolution gives Deriabin an evident advantage in terms of authority, decisiveness and speed of action.[41]

The coherent social unit is the individual's strength, the broken society his downfall, avers the main plot, as do the folkloric texts within the narrative. It is

also, perhaps, the thought implicit in the novel's closing image. The stars of the Great Bear seem to flash a signal to the earth in the way *starets* Samsonii once called upon them to do if ever the community became divided. This was to herald the annihilation of the village. And the arrival of Kolchak's officers indicates that that is exactly what must occur.

With Ustinov's mysterious death, the community is broken and destroyed. If that death is the work of Deriabin (and it may be, given the subtextual aspect of his characterization), then it is an overwhelming indictment of Deriabin's leadership and of his role as representative of the Revolutionary idea. Despite his social 'flaws', the narrative gives Ustinov — not Deriabin — 'heroic' status as a man who lives and dies by convictions that are entirely his own. It also leaves an unborn heir to continue his work. Finally, it consistently suggests, against the thrust of a conventional main plot, that there is a flavour to living which may be appreciated only in solitude, and a higher order in which the community is subsumed and which — to be a good society — it must imitate.

NOTES

1. Sergei Zalygin, *Komissiia, Nash sovremennik* (1975: 9), 11–111; (1975: 10), 44–121; (1975: 11), 13–105. Subsequent references are to: Zalygin, *Komissiia*, in *Komissiia — Iuzhnoamerikanskii variant* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1978).
2. A. Bocharov, 'Vremia kristallizatsii', *Voprosy literatury* (1976: 3), 37.
3. Andrei Nuikin, *Zrelost' khudozhnika: Ocherk tvorchestva Sergeia Zalygina* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1984), pp. 243, 254.
4. S. Zalygin, 'Ot nauki — k literature', in *Literaturnye zaboty* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1972), p. 12.
5. Nuikin, *Zrelost' khudozhnika*, p. 270.
6. Zalygin, *Komissiia*, p. 49.
7. Galina Kolesnikova, 'Ballada o zashchitnikakh Belogo Bora', *Moskva* (1976: 8), 206.
8. F. Chapchakhov, 'Osen'iu vosemnadtsatogo', *Literaturnoe obozrenie* (1975: 12), 33, 35.
9. Nuikin, *Zrelost' khudozhnika*, p. 266.
10. Ibid.
11. L. Terakopian, 'Na perelome epokh', *Molodaia gvardiia* (1976: 5), 294; N. N. Shneidman, *Soviet Literature in the 1970s: Artistic Diversity and Ideological Conformity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 71.
12. Zalygin, *Komissiia*, p. 114.
13. Ibid., p. 9.
14. Ibid., pp. 60–61.
15. Ibid., p. 233.
16. Ibid., pp. 37–38, 51.
17. Ibid., p. 318.
18. 'Pochta zhurnala: iul'–dekabr' 1981 goda', *Kommunist* (1982: 2), 127–28; (1982: 8), 128.
19. Vladimir Soloukhin, *Kameshki na ladoni, Nash sovremennik* (1981: 3), 39; Mary Seton-Watson, *Scenes from Soviet Life* (London: Ariel Books, 1986), p. 142.
20. Zalygin, *Komissiia*, p. 149.
21. Ibid., p. 111.
22. Ibid., p. 117.
23. Ibid., pp. 117–18.
24. Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, pp. 38–39.
25. Zalygin, *Komissiia*, pp. 141–42.
26. Ibid., p. 143.
27. Kirk, *Myth*, p. 37.
28. Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 24.
29. Zalygin, *Komissiia*, p. 254.

30. Ibid., p. 86.
31. Ibid., p. 426.
32. Ibid., pp. 149, 151.
33. Ibid., p. 11.
34. Ibid., pp. 231, 352.
35. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
36. Ibid., p. 149
37. Ibid., p. 352.
38. Ibid., p. 186
39. Ibid., p. 420.
40. Ibid., pp. 435–36.
41. Ibid., pp. 437–38.

CHAPTER 8

VLADIMIR TENDRIAKOV

The paradoxical idea of man as a free agent operating in a biologically and socially determined universe is central to the theory of dialectical materialism. It is also a pivotal philosophical dilemma in the fiction of Vladimir Tendriakov. The capacity of Tendriakov's heroes freely to accept or challenge the natural and social order, and to make independent ethical judgements despite the causal nature of reality, leaves the impression of a literary vision torn (like Aitmatov's and Zalygin's) between the 'psychological' and 'sociological'.

Causal connection, *The Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* tells us, 'is universal in character and applies to all the phenomena of nature and society. [. . .] Causeless phenomena do not and cannot exist.'[1] According to the theory of dialectical materialism, it is through the recognition and exploration of universal causal conditioning that man comes to understand the laws by which nature and society operate. By the discovery, knowledge and application of these laws he affirms his freedom.[2]

In asserting the existence of immutable laws and man's ability to enlist them in the pursuit of set ends, the Marxist-Leninist model has parallels with the system of thought which, James G. Frazer argues, underlies the earliest form of religious cult — magic. According to Frazer, it is by establishing a satisfactory relationship with mechanisms which govern the universe (through magical practices) that primitive man looks to formulate a system by which to live. Within it, as within the scientific system, nature is controlled not by conscious personalities but by absolute laws. It is this which defines the discrepancy between magic, its successor science, and religion:

> In so far as religion assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion, it stands in fundamental antagonism to magic as well as to science, both of which take for granted that the course of nature is determined, not by the passions or caprice of personal beings, but by the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically. In magic, indeed, the assumption is only implicit, but in science it is explicit.[3]

The freedom of the man living in a universe ruled by magical powers rather than personal ones consists in his knowledge of the systems or laws by which they operate. In like manner, the freedom promised by Marxism was grounded

in man's growing scientific knowledge and his consequent increasing ability to exercise control over nature.

Vladimir Tendriakov's examination of ways in which man endeavours to project his will onto the world has a superficially Marxist outline. However, his exploration of causal law operating in human lives also suggests (in a way which brings to mind Dostoevskii's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*) that causality may have its limitations and be answerable to another, personal force active in the world. Of all the writers examined in this study, Tendriakov presents the most direct challenge to religion as an institution. He infers, like Tylor, that the urge to create animist representations, though it may take social proportions, is a psychological condition. Religion is a reaction of the solitary, thinking being to the unknown.

In an early story, *Chudotvornaia* ('The Miraculous Icon', 1958), the hero is a small boy named Rod'ka who accidentally finds an ancient lost icon.[4] Thereafter, he is subjected to harassment and humiliation by an over-zealous grandmother who insists on persuading him, and other villagers, that he is God's chosen instrument. The only genuine religious tremor Rod'ka senses comes during a night he spends out in the open to test for himself rumours that the church bell is rung nightly by evil spirits. The resonances he hears are, as the village schoolmistress later reveals, caused by passing trains.

Similarly, in *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* ('On Apostolic Business', 1969), the religious quest of a disgruntled scientific journalist is motivated by his need to find some kind of answer to questions about death and life's purpose which rational thought and modern science are unable to resolve.[5]

In a social context, the stories also suggest, the religious response may reflect the urge to express group solidarity in a ritual form. But the collective aspect of religion puts the believer in a position of intellectual and psychological dependence on doctrine, thereby limiting his thinking and his liberty. That, Tendriakov repeatedly argues, is religion's greatest flaw. His series of articles on religion and morality, *Nravstvennost' i religiia* ('Morality and Religion', 1987), is critical of any kind of faith which closes the mind to life's complexities. 'Devotion or submissiveness to faith is a deficiency', he declares:

> There is merit, however, in the sensitive perception of one's surroundings, of the treacherous reality in which we live, in the understanding of the complicated relationships in this world. [. . .] Including that of complex human relations.
>
> Do not reject the opinion of another, but do not be his slave — that is the law on which the personality is built. Religion imposes the same dogmas on everyone and demands one kind of behaviour, according to facile clichés. It has destroyed the individual personality.[6]

It is probably the most interesting aspect of Tendriakov's thought that by challenging institutionalized religion he came to formulate an argument against any form of collective belief. His condemnation of religious faith translates into

a backhanded drive against absolutist ideologies and implicitly introduces a case for individualism. The impassioned atheist and the fanatical believer, he writes on more than one occasion, fall into the same psychological category: 'He who rages trying to prove that there is no God is no different from the fanatical believer, who zealously maintains that God exists. Both believe blindly in something which cannot be proved. Both are religious in spirit'.[7]

It may be for this reason that Tendriakov's characters so frequently find themselves in irreconcilable confrontation with their social environment. Rod'ka in *Chudotvornaia*, Leshka the lumberjack in *Troika, semerka, tuz* ('Three, Seven, Ace', 1961), or Iurii Ryl'nikov in *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* are all so forcefully challenged by their immediate surroundings that even as they gain awareness of their potential stature as individuals and their capacity for free moral choice, they withdraw, psychologically or physically, from the group.[8]

In terms of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic, such a withdrawal may be seen as the expression of a character's social immaturity, a surge of individualistic *stikhiinost'*. His growth thereafter would be a passage towards *soznatel'nost'*, crowned by his return to the group with increased, better controlled energies and greater willingness to be answerable to the social unit. All in confirmation of the development of his essentially social, as opposed to biological, nature; that, Marxism teaches, is the human spiritual vocation.

The Soviet critic Feliks Kuznetsov highlights this in an article on the materialist understanding of 'spirituality' (*'dukhovnost''*) which includes comments on *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*:

> The social nature of man creatively transforms the world. [. . .] It singles him out in the natural, biological environment; it makes him into a spiritual being, endowed with reason and conscience, capable of creating the world according to the laws of goodness, truth, and beauty. In our view, it is from here that the spiritual wealth of the personality grows.[9]

In Tendriakov's work, the development of individual characters to 'spiritual' social maturity is ritually signalled but not explored. The growth of the positive hero is not the main focus of attention. Instead, the conflict between 'spontaneous' psychological instinct and 'conscious' social answerability remains open. The dialectic does not find its way to a synthesis where the personality is integrated and dissolved in the collective. Tendriakov shows ways in which the self-sufficient individual is pressed, by encounter and circumstance, to come to terms with demands made by the outside world on his emotions, intellect, and independent moral persona. The hero learns at best to be reconciled to the world rather than to resist it, but his 'separateness' remains intact.

In the story *Vesennie perevertyshi* ('Spring Somersaults', 1963), thirteen-year-old Diushka Tiagunov finds that his understanding of things is drastically

overturned when he perceives that beauty — an ideal he had previously identified with a picture in his schoolbook of Pushkin's wife, Natal'ia Goncharova — is actually embodied in his slightly senior schoolmate, Rimka. With this awareness, he discovers a new relationship with his exterior surroundings. It is marked by an increased sensitivity of response to others and their qualities as individuals. The uniqueness of every person takes on the importance of a world in itself.[10]

The natural environment, too, becomes enlivened and animated by the presence of personality. Nature and matter take on a quality of 'otherness', of anthropomorphic sensibility and spirit:

> The sky wasn't simply blue, it beckoned and drew you in; it was as though you only had to get up on tip-toe and you'd stay like that for ever. The sun was suddenly shaggy, unkempt, roguishly cheerful. The street, barely released from the weight of the snow and crushed by lorries, shimmered with puddles. It seemed to hesitate, and breathe. [...] And under your feet something breathed heavily, snapped, and moved. It was as if you were standing not on the earth but on a living thing which could hardly bear your weight. Sparrows — dry, fluffy, and warm — were hopping on the living earth, quarrelling furiously, cheerfully; you could almost understand them.[11]

The development of Tendriakov's characters is frequently conditioned by the recognition of an extraneous aspect to their lives which is neither comprehensible nor anticipated. It may take the form of an encounter with unrequited love — as in *Vesennie perevertyshi* and the later, bitterly pessimistic novella *Zatmenie* ('Eclipse', 1977).[12] Alternatively, in a more Dostoevskian vein, it may be associated with unprovoked violence, arbitrary evil and death — as in *Troika, semerka, tuz, Rasplata* ('Settlement', 1979), or *Shest'desiat svechei* ('Sixty Candles', 1980).[13] Finally, it may appear in the challenge presented to the individual by deeply ingrained and irrational patterns of belief — whether religious or ideological — as in *Chudotvornaia* and *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*.

In Tendriakov's world, man is not only formed by biological nature and social integration. The Marxist dictum 'being determines consciousness' (a frequent refrain in Georgii Plekhanov) is called into question by the notion that consciousness is an independent entity, free to determine the quality of its own existence.[14] It is affected, but not defined, by the character of the social environment. Far more significant to its growth is the apparently arbitrary web of events and relationships to which the personality is exposed: those head-on encounters with the impenetrable worlds which are other personalities, met, loved, and hated. Is it really possible for one individual ever to 'understand, respect and love another'?, the narrator of *Zatmenie* asks at the conclusion of a story which has revealed the baffling unpredictability of human emotional behaviour: 'People are mutally interwoven. They have grown into one

another. [. . .] Try to understand and acknowledge just a single human being, the one chosen to share your path in life. Only try! No, it's much too hard.'[15]

There may be a hint here of Pasternak's vision of the unfathomable interweaving of existence with the mystery of chance encounters which shape human perceptions and fortunes. Writing on *Vesennie perevertyshi*, N. Podzorova remarks that in the world as Diushka sees it in his state of heightened sensibility, the interconnections are everywhere:

All things depend on one another. The fate of the frog, hanging head down from Sanka's hand, rests on the extent of his cruelty. The life of the sick Grinchenko — on the competence and selflessness of the doctor, Diushka's mother. Mother's state of mind — on father's attention. Diushka's happiness — on Rimka's glance, and Rimka's sadness — on Levka Gaizer's indifference.[16]

A presentation of interlocking relationships where causality may only be assessed with reference to the effect of free personalities each on each, calls into question the legitimacy of any judgement made according to the law of cause and effect. And yet, dialectical materialism tells us, 'all phenomena in the world are causally conditioned'.[17] If, as Tendriakov appears to suggest, causality cannot be fully traced, then the historical purpose cannot be rationally defined and the world ceases to be determinate. The assumption of a strict rule of law in nature and society ('a lawful and necessary connection of all events and phenomena, and of their causal determination') is thereby challenged.[18] What moves life is something outside cause and effect, an 'x-factor' which drives it to an end outside the limitations of the known. What then is the nature of the law which determines 'life' and man's relationship to it? How is it to be expressed in a way that is rationally acceptable?

To the Marxist, the questions which Ryl'nikov puts in *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* ('What is the final purpose?'; 'What is the meaning of life?') are meaningless.[19] Cause can be traced because man is limited to his dual biological-cum-social nature. Effects or ends may be set because there is nothing beyond the biological and the social to interfere in the progress of history. The notion of an 'ultimate' purpose would be like looking into the distance for an end to a chain which is dangling about your feet. Life is there to be lived. Echoing the response of Ryl'nikov's wife ('"[The question] is incorrect. [. . .] Move, change, live in order to live"'), the Marxist critic F. Levin observes that the very question presupposes the intrusion of a Supreme Being[20]:

Causality — the chain of cause and effect, links and connections — is one thing. Only conscious beings set themselves purposeful tasks. As soon as you raise the question of final purpose, predetermined from on high, you come to a higher being, God, irrespective of the name you subsequently give him. [. . .] But the meaning of life lies in the fact of life itself.[21]

Yet the leap of the mind from causal questions to the eternal questions is integral to the development of Tendriakov's heroes. If the universe is infinite,

will I live again after death?, Diushka's friend Levka asks in *Vesennie perevertyshi*.[22] Will the arbitrary collection of atoms which is the individual re-form at some unspecified time in the future? Or, in an absurd inversion of evolutionary law, is a spark of consciousness containing the entire universe bound, in the end, to dissolve into nothingness? Is the existence of personality to be crowned with just a little mound of earth?

The progress of thought through the uncharted waters of the eternal questions is mapped within the uncomfortable frame of an ideology reshaping itself to enfold ideas which leap outside its confines. The conflict between Tendriakov's preoccupation with philosophical issues underlying the work of Russian writers of the animist school, and his loyalty to the dialectical-materialist model, marks him out as one of the most representative authors of the pre-*glasnost'* generation.[23]

In *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, Tendriakov explored the impulse to act on religious teaching more directly than in any other of his fictional writings. Although he touches upon the same theme in works such as *Chudotvornaia, Zatmenie*, and the posthumously published novel *Pokushenie na mirazhi* ('An Attack on Mirages', 1987), none of these examines, with the same degree of ambivalence, the conflict between the impulse to withdraw from society into an animist spirituality and the urge to be integrated into the group, thereby complying with its ethical and ideological stance.[24]

In a round-table discussion on the novella *Noch' posle vypuska* ('The Night after Graduation', 1974), published in *Literaturnoe obozrenie* in 1975, the critic V. Vainberg observed that Tendriakov's characters are of interest less as personalities than as 'embodiments of a particular concept, a point of view'.[25] *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* tends to confirm the aptness of the remark. The novella does indeed read as a slightly laboured polemic, narrated in the first person. Its hero, Iurii Ryl'nikov, is an intellectual torn between the positivist teachings he has recognized since childhood and a newfound attraction towards religion as a means of expressing life's purpose and its moral formula. The plot is dialectically constructed. The first section focuses on arguments against the supremacy of rationality and for the existence of a supernatural, animist reality which gives life direction. The argument then turns in favour of reason and against the religious impulse, as Ryl'nikov's thoughts are countered by the ideas of the *kolkhoz* chairman, Gusterin. The resolution comes in a synthesis which suggests that man's spirit is made immortal by his labours. It is through the creative application of reason that man discovers and asserts his individual spiritual powers.

Iurii Ryl'nikov's dilemma emerges as a confrontation between second-hand ideas drawn from the animist tradition in Russian literature (Dostoevskii, Tolstoi, and the Christian existentialists) and from positivism, materialism,

and Marxism-Leninism. It is apparently resolved in a teaching which echoes selected ideas of the nineteenth-century neo-Christian philosopher Nikolai Fedorov, as a later part of this chapter will show.

Events in *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* develop in the following way. Ryl'nikov leaves a comfortable, and not unhappy, existence as a Muscovite scientific journalist to give himself the freedom to explore life's meaning and find God. He buys a train ticket to a random destination and ends his journey in Krasnoglinka, an obscure rural backwater six days' travel out of Moscow. There he finds lodging with a Christian peasant woman and takes a manual job on a *kolkhoz*. However, in the new environment he finds himself once again alienated by society's expectations. Education and a capacity to doubt isolate him as much as his newfound religious beliefs. He is rejected by believers and non-believers alike. Following a humiliating public interrogation initiated by a local Party hardliner, and a formative encounter with the independently minded *kolkhoz* chairman, Gusterin, Ryl'nikov abandons his search for God and returns to Moscow prepared to take up his old responsibilities.

As a dialectical work, the novel's 'thesis' takes shape up to Ryl'nikov's first meeting with Gusterin. Until then, Iurii is seen grappling with ideas reminiscent of the animist tradition of Russian thought. Like Dostoevskii's anti-hero from *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* ('Notes from the Underground', 1864), he tells his story in uneven, exclamatory, at times ironic language, explaining his rejection of reason, science, and material comforts. They do no more, he says, than open up a smooth passage to the grave. As Feliks Kuznetsov also points out, Ryl'nikov's thoughts on science and material prosperity closely parallel a view expressed in Dostoevskii's *Podrostok* ('A Raw Youth', 1875):

> I will know all the discoveries of science and through them I will acquire a mass of things to make my life comfortable. [. . .] Now I am sitting on a bit of woollen rag, and then we will all be sitting on velvet. And what of it? With all this comfort and velvet, what will we be living for?[26]

Ryl'nikov is similarly overcome by his perception of the ephemeral nature of pleasure and the failure of material wealth to satisfy desire or necessity. He questions the entire notion of prosperity ('*blagopoluchie*') and implicitly draws attention to the idea Dostoevskii illustrated most persuasively, perhaps, in *Bednye liudi* ('Poor Folk', 1846): that poverty and riches may be conditions which are less economic than psychological. In a manner similar to Dostoevskii's Underground Man, Ryl'nikov identifies his condition as a sickness which has forced him to reject society in order to live more truthfully, freely and fully.[27] Like the Underground Man, he becomes trapped by the insularity of his thinking.[28]

There is a level at which the structure of *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* allows for the Soviet interpretation that Iurii falls victim to religious fantasy because of an essentially bourgeois psychology and morality. Despite his Soviet education,

his abilities and his position, Kuznetsov argues, 'spiritually' he is not a citizen.[29] It is true that the main plot pattern suggests the 'spontaneous' disengagement of an immature character from the social unit, his gradual development towards 'consciousness' and, finally, his return to the fold. But it also indicates that Ryl'nikov's departure is partially motivated by a new sense of the inaccessibility and separateness of every human being. The suicide of his neighbour, Ritochka, shocks him into awareness that every individual consciousness is an independent interpreter and creator of reality. Like Diushka, he suddenly recognizes every human mind as a universe in itself:

'I' am the starting point for all things. If it were not for me and my powers of reasoning, the world could not be said to exist. 'I' am necessary to the very notion of existence.

A flash of reason — and a whole universe is ablaze. To kill one human life is to destroy a boundless world.[30]

Ryl'nikov turns to Christianity to break out of intellectual isolation and to express his baffling intuition that personality is as limitless as it is unfathomable. By acknowledging an intelligent Deity, he believes, he will create a channel for his consciousness to escape the concentric circles in which it is caught:

If I acknowledge the existence of God [. . .] is it so important, then, for me to know when the world began and when it will end? [. . .]

He knows all this; I cannot. If you believe in Him, then trust that He will not permit absurdity.[31]

Iurii falls back, for a time, on the 'primitive' psychological urge to personify his need to know life's purpose and cast off the burden of anxiety and responsibility onto an infallible and superhuman guide. It is in his immature and intemperate nature, we are told, to associate the experience of calm and reassurance with a personified spirit.[32] In his youth, it seemed to him that a doorhandle touched by his wife-to-be, Inga, took on a soul.[33] It follows that in later life his need for spiritual peace comes to be 'animated' into a notion of God. As Bergson once argued, religious representations offered by the imagination can help to release a mind caught in the consciousness of its own extinction.[34] Ryl'nikov is less concerned with the objective existence of a Deity than with the positive effects faith might have on his own frame of mind:

Is there a God? . .

Whether he exists or not, one thing is certain, I need him. [. . .]

One must persuade oneself to believe; the imagined God will become a reality.[35]

Ryl'nikov creates a real image from an idea; an abstract notion becomes for him a visible form. His rationale parallels exactly that of the primitive philosopher depicted by Tylor.[36] Ryl'nikov substitutes God for the Marxist 'Purpose' which, in its abstract form, carries no weight for him. Just as doorhandles take

on souls, so do ideas. History, Ryl'nikov declares, is a series of battles, not between the possessors and the producers, but between different qualities of deity.[37]

Although the defence mechanism which is the religious impulse may be, intitially, a reaction against distress induced by the knowledge of death, it has, Bergson also argued, a sociological aspect. It presents a counterweight to the egoism intrinsic to intelligence and appeals to the gregarious quality in human nature.[38] A representation created by the individual imagination is inadequate, Ryl'nikov feels; it is necessary to accept some form of communal religious expression.[39] Christianity offers an archetype, formed in the collective mind, to satisfy man's yearning to be more fully human: 'The Christ, whom generations marvelled at and worshipped, was not created by nature, but by time and by the people who concentrated in a single image and person that which they sought in themselves and others.'[40] The issue of the literal, historical nature of Christ's image is as irrelevant as his supposed divinity and the miracles he is said to have performed. It reflects an evolution from the adulation of physical strength, power, and heroism, to a veneration of images of vulnerability and kindness.[41]

In Krasnoglinka, Iurii tries to live the story of the Passion and, while digging a dung-pit, discovers a more harmonious relationship with his exterior and with others. As Tolstoi also liked to show, physical activity and fresh air can do a great deal to ease the tormented spirit.[42] But the appreciation of the present and of others which the story of Christ offers, develops into a desire to restructure the world according to the New Testament pattern. Iurii's experience of the Gospel narrative proves to be not just imaginative but, in Bronislaw Malinowski's use of the term, 'mythical'. It is 'not merely a story told but a reality lived'.[43] And, being a reality, it takes on a social dimension. Seeing himself as Christ and his fellow diggers as the apostles, Iurii is moved to herald the myth which unites the faithful with all mankind.[44]

The religious myth is not, we are shown, just a creation of the imagination in response to thoughts about death. It is also a reflection of the totemic urge to group cohesion and a weapon against social disorder. The ethical code which ensures that social bonds hold is beyond the scope of rational persuasion, Iurii argues. An absolute authority is required to implement moral law and to counteract the acquisitive instinct along with all the other egotistical drives which disrupt the community. By recognizing that authority, the group protects itself from individual excesses and anarchy.[45]

The psychological reaction which creates animist images in response to the anxiety of unknowing, as identified by Bergson, meets the totemic sociological concern to ensure the stability of the communal environment. Iurii is not only concerned with the psychological benefits of religion or with 'Godseeking'. He also shows symptoms of being a 'Godbuilder' *manqué*. Here his thinking looks

ahead to ideas Tendriakov puts forward in *Pokushenie na mirazhi*, which will be examined in Chapter 10. Caught in a no-man's-land between sociology and mysticism, Ryl'nikov sees the Godhead as a shared meaning in life, the recognition of which will help the organic growth of society towards the final purpose:

> If people do not live in peace and pull in different directions, then some of them are bound to be straining against the will of God and the meaning of life. The meaning is unknowable, but human unity, solidarity, and concord correspond to the higher purpose, as the shadow of a tree corresponds to the tree itself.[46]

The encounter between Ryl'nikov and Gusterin, however, creates an antithetical argument which challenges the credibility of both animist and totemic aspects of religious faith, re-establishing the supremacy of reason, scepticism, and resistance to the notion of divine authority.[47] The idea of paradise, Joseph Brodsky remarked in his Biddle Memorial Lecture (New York, 1984):

> is the logical end of human thought in the sense that [. . .] thought goes no further; for beyond paradise there is nothing. [. . .] It can safely be said, therefore, that paradise is a dead end; it's the last vision of space, the end of things, the summit of the mountain, the peak from where there is nowhere to step.[48]

Gusterin's argument, like Brodsky's, is that belief in a God-given purpose is faith in a dead end. It is to ignore life and those constant practical choices which actually determine its quality.[49]

Gusterin also regards the argument that religion can help to maintain social morality as unethical if it plays on human fear without maturing the personality.[50] He suggests, instead, that the division of collective profit among workers may act as a catalyst by which people might learn to gauge each other better, develop their faculties, and so evolve individually, economically and socially.[51] In consequence, Iurii comes to doubt both the psychological and social value of two key Christian teachings: the doctrines of 'poverty of spirit' and 'sufficiency unto the day'.[52] To insist that people abandon all responsibility for their fate is to offer scope for tyrants to flourish and to turn wise men into fools. Religion, Iurii concludes, subdues the creative spirit and encourages the triumph of mediocrity over talent.[53]

This stage of the polemic closely reflects the idea Tendriakov expresses in the article 'Nravstvennost' i religiia', and Paraskov'ia Petrovna's argument in *Chudotvornaia* that religion is a system by which man's creative spirit is kept in check. If all that occurs is seen to be the will of God, life becomes slavery: 'Blindness and ignorance inspire a purely animal fear of life. Fear of God's anger, fear of the boss, of unseasonal rain, of a cat running across the road. [. . .] Submissiveness, a lazy mind, and fear are enough to make a person into a spiritual slave.'[54]

But — unusually and provocatively for its time — *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* concludes not on the condemnation of all religious forms, but with the

thought that man is indeed immortal through the achievements of his creative spirit. Lame though it may be to read of Iurii's return to Moscow on a train consisting of 'combinations of metal, wood and the undying soul of Stephenson', the idea that life goes on in poetry or in technical design carries muted echoes of Pasternak's vision which should not be ignored.[55] Though less mystical in character and supported, Ryl'nikov tells us, by the philosophy of a scientist named Bekhterev, it hazily reflects the notion expressed in *Doktor Zhivago* that the creative spirit immortalizes the mortal by bearing witness to the spirit of life, even after physical death has occurred. History, as Zhivago's uncle, Nikolai Nikolaevich Vedeniapin, writes in his books, is 'another universe, made by man with the help of time and memory in answer to the challenge of death'.[56]

The idea that man has the capacity to overcome death by his own creative efforts most readily recalls the thinking of the philosopher Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov (1828–1907), whose influence on Pasternak, Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, and Platonov, among others, has been observed by a number of Western scholars.[57] The connection between Fedorov's theories and Tendriakov's ideas may not be direct. It may, rather, have come via Dostoevskii, whose influence is more clearly discernible. Some observations on similarities may nonetheless prove valuable.

Ryl'nikov's thoughts and experiences in some ways reflect ideas expressed in Fedorov's *Filosofiia obshchego dela* ('The Philosophy of the Common Cause', 1906; 1913).[58] The parallels are particularly noticeable if Fedorov's social views are considered. He found much that was objectionable in the urban environment and consumerism, for example. He also put forward the idea that society is formed of two classes: the 'learned' and the 'unlearned'.

One of the main criticisms Fedorov made of urbanization was that it encouraged isolation and the loss of 'brotherly' relations between people.[59] It also turned attention away from the important to the trivial. The important was the promotion of life and the eventual conquest of death by science; the unimportant was the gratification of the senses and the acquisition of material wealth. The development of urban society also led to a division of the population into two classes: those who live by manual labour alone, and those who live by the pursuit of knowledge or ideas and who are, in consequence, cut off from nature and reality.[60]

Iurii Ryl'nikov's dilemma in the opening pages of *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* has a thoroughly Fedorovan quality. He lives in a city where overcrowding has encouraged the loss of any sense of the value of companionship. As a scientific journalist with a family, he is caught between a life of intellectual abstraction and the pragmatic 'necessity' to pursue material interests.

Fedorov's solution to the problems of urban isolation and social division was to promote a proper understanding of life's meaning and to act upon it. Human

life is, or should be, an act of aesthetic creativity directed at restoring order to a universe which has been distorted by the sin of knowledge or abstract thought without action.[61] It is only by action that man can help to intercept the movement of the universe towards destruction and chaos and, by doing so, follow the divine plan for universal salvation. Man's vocation is to create order and, ultimately, to overcome death by his own powers, and this is fully within his capacity. Redemption is not just the end for which he has been created by God, but the task which he has been set to perform. It is the purpose for which humanity has evolved.[62]

To overcome death, however, man must first be aware of its impending reality. It was the consciousness of death, Fedorov wrote, which first developed man's creative ability to act:

> Naked and exposed to cold, hunger, sickness, man sensed the closeness of death at every step. And so he became creative *despite himself*, the builder of his own body. He was forced to expand his influence in the outer world which threatened to defeat him with hunger, plague and death. Man is helpless in nature, but he is made mighty by toil.[63]

In 'Apostol'skaia komandirovka', Iurii Ryl'nikov's consciousness of impending death induces him to take action where he had earlier been paralysed. Abandoning wife and child, he breaks the pattern of his inactive existence as an intellectual 'deprived of feeling and will'.[64] By wronging his family he puts right his position with the world. Later he returns with a greater sensitivity to the plight of others and a new philosophy which points, like Fedorov's, to creative action as the key by which the life/death pattern may be restructured into the immortality for which humanity craves. As the novel concludes, Ryl'nikov visualizes the creative spirit as a cloud of smoke, spreading and encircling the planet, to be breathed by future generations when the artist has burned himself out.[65] Man's potential immortality is realized by action — the form in which he casts his thoughts and offers them to the world — or, in other words, by the nature of a choice which can liberate him from the tyranny of biological law.

From the point of view of Marxist ideology this idea is subversive at two levels. First, it challenges Engels's statement that there can be no freedom outside natural law because nothing beyond that law exists. Second, it carries an underlying suggestion that professed maxims — ideological or religious — have considerably less practical relevance than posture towards other people, something which remains reflected in the work one leaves behind after death. In *Apostol'skaia komandirovka* this is emphasized by the parallel drawn between Anna, Krasnoglinka's most militant believer, and Ushatkov, the hard-line chairman of the village council. Both see Ryl'nikov as a demon. If he is a *bes* (devil) to Anna, to Ushatkov he is a symptom of the unclean spirit which grips society when it does not have a strong hand to guide it.[66] For both, the

image of the lawgiver — whether God or *generalissimo* — is the totemic symbol which maintains social unity. It is the means by which the social environment is controlled and personal power achieved. During his interview with Ushatkov, Iurii observes: 'How can you fail to become a hero, if you take them all in hand? They'll venerate you; they'll pray to you. They'll transform you into a God before you've even noticed.'[67] It is an insight into the cult of personality which confirms Ryl'nikov's status as Krasnoglinka's dissident, targeted for public exposure and removal.

At their polarities, where commitment is total, the believer and the ideologue are two sides of the same coin. Neither will allow for the meeting of minds, nor for the common affirmation of a shared human condition which is to be found in doubt:

> Faith does not preclude unbelief. Non-belief is merely a negative form of faith; they are two sides of the same coin. [...]
>
> Only those who are capable of submitting their own views, as well as those of others, to examination can ever understand one another.[68]

Ryl'nikov's experience as a dissenter — a believer among unbelievers and an unbeliever among believers — seems to earn him the dignity of a personal vision no longer dominated by extrinsic factors, whether psychological (based on fear and the desire for immortality) or social (resting on collective pressure). Beyond the animist impulse to create imaginative representations and shape the ultimate authority into an image of God, or the totemic urge to weld humanity into a monolithic unit, Ryl'nikov seems to find a better-defined identity and the courage to face the social environment with greater honesty. He returns to Moscow a freer man not because he knows more, but because he is more fully himself and in a frame of mind unconstricted by religious or ideological models.

NOTES

1. *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*, 2nd revised edn (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1963), p. 63, quoted in Gustav A. Wetter, *Soviet Ideology Today: Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, trans. by Peter Heath (London: Heinemann, 1966), p. 65.
2. Ibid., pp. 75–76.
3. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, I, 63; Evans-Pritchard, *Anthropological Thought*, p. 137.
4. Vladimir Tendriakov, *Chudotvornaia Znamia* (1958: 5), 3–55. Subsequent references are to: Tendriakov, *Chudotvornaia, Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), I.
5. Vladimir Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka, Nauka i religiia* (1969: 8), 69–87; (1969: 9), 53–69; (1969: 10), 77–95. Subsequent references are to Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka, Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), IV.
6. V. Tendriakov, *Nravstvennost' i religiia, Nauka i religiia* (1987: 7), 11.
7. Ibid., *Nauka i religiia* (1987: 4), 52–53. See also Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, pp. 382, 383, 388.
8. Vladimir Tendriakov, *Troika, semerka tuz, Novyi mir* (1960: 3), 3–32.
9. Feliks Kuznetsov, 'Dukhovnye tsennosti: Mify i deistvitel'nost'', *Novyi mir* (1974: 1), p. 229.
10. Tendriakov, *Vesennie perevertyshi, Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh*, IV, p. 583.
11. Ibid., p. 542.

12. *Zatmenie* tells of the break up of a promising marriage when the wife, Maiia, falls in love with a trendy young Christian, Gosha Chugunov. Vladimir Tendriakov, *Zatmenie, Druzhba narodov* (1977: 5), 15–150.
13. *Rasplata* considers the problem of common guilt, focusing on parricide committed by a fifteen-year-old boy. Vladimir Tendriakov, *Rasplata, Novyi mir* (1979: 3), 6–99. *Shest'desiat svechei* depicts the inner life of a schoolteacher who receives a death threat on his sixtieth birthday, prompting him to examine his past and to question the ethics of conformism. Vladimir Tendriakov, *Shest'desiat svechei, Druzhba narodov* (1980: 9), 91–165.
14. Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, pp. 339–40, 377.
15. Tendriakov, *Zatmenie*, p. 150.
16. N. Podzorova, 'Dar chelovechnosti', *Oktiabr'* (1974: 10), 213.
17. *Grundlagen der marxistischen Philosophie* (Berlin: [n. pub.], 1960), p. 209, quoted in Wetter, *Soviet Ideology*, p. 65.
18. *Kratkii filosofskii slovar'*, 4th edn (Moscow: [n. pub.], 1955), p. 109, quoted in Wetter, *Soviet Ideology*, p. 71.
19. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, p. 242.
20. Ibid., p. 270.
21. Quoted in L. Antopol'skii, 'Prichashchenie v Krasnoglinke', *Druzhba narodov* (1971: 1), 275.
22. Tendriakov, *Vesennie perevertyshi*, pp. 577–78.
23. For an analysis of Dostoevskian features in Tendriakov's mature work (*Zatmenie, Rasplata* and *Shest'desiat svechei*) see Ark. El'iashevich, 'Uchitelia i ucheniki', *Novyi mir* (1982: 7), 237–49.
24. Vladimir Tendriakov, *Pokushenie na mirazhi, Novyi mir* (1987: 4), 59–116; (1987: 5), 89–164.
25. 'Spor v povesti i spor o povesti', *Literaturnoe obozrenie* (1975: 1), 39.
26. As quoted in Kuznetsov, 'Dukhovnye tsennosti', p. 212: Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, pp. 234–35.
27. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, pp. 249, 290.
28. 'I am proud of my sickness; I pity healthy people who do not know of my ailment.' Ibid., p. 231.
29. Kuznetsov, 'Dukhovnye tsennosti', p. 230.
30. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, p. 254.
31. Ibid., pp. 265–66.
32. Ibid., pp. 243–44.
33. Ibid., p. 244.
34. Bergson writes, 'Religion is a defensive reaction of nature against the representation, by intelligence, of the inevitability of death.' Bergson, *Morality and Religion*, p. 109.
35. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, pp. 268–69.
36. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 5th edn, I, 497–501.
37. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, p. 351.
38. Bergson, *Morality and Religion*, pp. 100–02.
39. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, p. 275.
40. Ibid., p. 277.
41. Ibid., p. 278.
42. In *Anna Karenina*, Levin, for example, finds the answers to his 'accursed questions' ('What am I? and where am I? and why am I here?') during the harvest season on his country estate. L. N. Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1978), pp. 682–87. And, in *Voina i mir*, Natasha discovers a new, innate essence to her personality after a day's hunting, and expresses it in the spontaneous Russian folk dance she performs in *diadiushka*'s house in Mikhailovka. L. N. Tolstoi, *Voina i mir* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955), I–II, 654.
43. Malinowski, *Magic*, p. 100.
44. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, pp. 327, 341.
45. Ibid., pp. 319–20.
46. Ibid., p. 272.
47. Geoffrey Hosking remarks that Ryl'nikov's need for a 'commander-in-chief' to rule his life parallels the relationship between Soviet society and the authorities, 'in which the entire burden of seeking meaning and purpose is assumed by the latter, and with it, the prerogative of deciding men's fates'. Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism*, p. 96.
48. Joseph Brodsky, 'Catastrophes in the Air', in *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), p. 286.
49. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, pp. 350–52.

50. Ibid., p. 414.
51. Ibid., pp. 414–15.
52. Ibid., p. 365.
53. Ibid., p. 388.
54. Tendriakov, *Chudotvornaia*, p. 224.
55. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, p. 420; Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism*, p. 97.
56. Pasternak, *Zhivago*, p. 66.
57. Ayleen Teskey, *Platonov and Fyodorov: The Influence of Christian Philosophy on a Soviet Writer* (Amersham: Avebury, 1982), p. 5; Stephen Lukashevich, *N. F. Fedorov (1823–1903): A Study in Eupsychian and Utopian Thought* (Newark and London: University of Delaware Press, 1977), pp. 20–26.
58. N. F. Fedorov, *Filosofiia obshchego dela*, 2 vols (Vernyi: [n. pub.], 1906; Moscow: [n. pub.], 1913).
59. V. V. Zenkovskii, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii* (Paris: YMCA, 1950), II, 137–38.
60. Teskey, *Platonov*, pp. 9–10.
61. Zenkovskii, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii*, II, 134–36.
62. Fedorov writes: 'In essence, Christianity is not only a teaching about redemption, but the act of redemption itself.' Ibid., p. 141; Fedorov, *Filosofiia*, I, 112.
63. Ibid., p. 456.
64. According to Fedorov, the division in the consciousness of each individual in the 'learned' class is, Teskey writes: 'the inner discord [. . .] caused by an intellect deprived of feeling and will. [. . .] The intellect separated from feeling leads only to knowledge of causes in general, whilst intellect separated from will leads only to knowledge of evil, without the desire to eradicate it.' Teskey, *Platonov*, p. 10.
65. Tendriakov, *Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, p. 419.
66. Ibid., pp. 336, 397.
67. Ibid., p. 337.
68. Ibid., pp. 382–83. See also p. 388.

PART IV

TOTEMIC GODS

CHAPTER 9

RELIGION AND THE RIGHT

One aspect of the religious fallacy, Vladimir Tendriakov writes in his essay 'Nravstvennost' i religiia', is its tendency to encourage unquestioning faith in ideas or dogmas. In the political arena, he suggests, fascism displays all the trappings of a religion without Deity. The national ideal is projected onto symbols representing it and these come to be seen as sacred objects. In that sense it is religious. On the other hand, extreme nationalism does not recognize any supreme value to encompass what is known of the world outside itself. In that sense it is godless:

> The nationalist makes a fetish of history, his way of life and traditions. Even oblique signs of nationality are translated into fetishes: birch trees growing in the fields, the rowan ripening in the forests of the land, ancient cemeteries, ancient traditions, clothes, forms of expression, etc. Such is the nature of the pantheism which can develop within the framework of national culture.[1]

Émile Durkheim, however, does not recognize any kind of difference between the nationalist and the religious vision, as Tendriakov does. All religion is pre-eminently social, he argues:

> Religious *réprésentations* are collective *réprésentations* which are the expression of collective realities. Rites are ways of behaving which only come into being at the heart of assembled groups and whose function is to create, maintain and to re-establish certain mental states within these groups.[2]

If the 'sacred' is the symbol of a society or its flag, there can be no qualitative difference between a crowd hailing the image of its chosen leader and a group of religious believers in a service of worship:

> There is no doubt that a society contains all that is necessary to arouse in people's minds the feeling of the divine by the very influence it exercises over them; for a society is to its members what a god is to the faithful. A god, indeed, is above all a being whom man imagines to be superior to himself in some way and on whom he believes himself to be dependent. Whether it be a question of a conscious personality, like Zeus or Jahveh, or abstract forces like those which are called into play in totemism, in each case the believer thinks himself bound to behave in a certain way, which is imposed on him by the very nature of the sacred principle with which he feels himself to be in communication. [. . .]
>
> If society happens to take to some man, and if it believes that it has found in him the main aspirations which preoccupy it, together with the means of satisfying

them, we may be sure that such a man will be set above his fellows and virtually deified. Opinion will bestow on him a majesty completely analogous to that which protects the gods.[3]

It is true, of course, that the ritual or social aspect of religious tradition and collective expressions of group cohesion have enough in common to appear at times indistinguishable. Both seem to affirm group identity; both confer on group members the knowledge that they are elect, and so reinforce their individual and collective powers. Durkheim explains that no group or clan can exist without a name or emblem which contains its collective identity. It is therefore to the emblem, or totemic god, that society's sentiments are directed. Men are forced to imagine the collective force whose influence they experience in the form of a thing which serves as the flag of the group.[4] The binding energy which gives society its shape is conceived of as an unassailable, sacred image.

In official Soviet prose from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, the notion of such binding energy was frequently expressed in terms drawn from the Russian Orthodox Christian tradition. Totemic attitudes ranged from an exclusively Russian orientation, which gave the Russian people the status of a hypostasis of the sacred, to a less nationally or tribally orientated vision of Soviet society seeking a new emblem or sacred image to unify it. In either case it was frequently combined with denunciations by writers of excessive industrialization, urbanization and the loss of traditional values and family loyalties.

The nationalist and conservationist voice which made itself heard in Soviet cultural politics after Khrushchev's retirement in 1964 encompassed a wide range of views and loyalties already examined by Western scholars.[5] John Dunlop's deservedly respected analysis shows that there existed a graduation from a group he calls '*gosudarstvenniki*' (or 'National Bolsheviks') at one extremity to '*vozrozhdentsy*' (or 'revivalists') on the other. *Gosudarstvenniki* — some of whom may have cherished Stalinist sympathies — believed in the establishment and maintenance of a strong Russian state capable of world leadership. *Vozrozhdentsy* sought rather to promote a cultural rebirth based on Orthodox Christianity, and held views comparable to those of nineteenth-century Slavophiles. Dunlop's characterization of the two camps indicates that both tendencies were preservationist and conservationist, seeking to safeguard Russian historical monuments and the environment. Both deplored demographic and social trends unfavourable to the well-being of the Russian people. Both claimed to support the cultural development of all nationalities. There was also a keen interest among both groups in Russian conservative and patriotic thought, although *vozrozhdentsy* tended to align themselves with the Early Slavophiles, Dostoevskii, and the *Vekhi* authors, while the National Bolsheviks looked to 'realistic' thinkers such as Danilevskii and Leont'ev. The difference between the two groups lay primarily in their attitude towards

Russian Orthodoxy and their willingness to make allowances for a *modus vivendi* with Marxism-Leninism. Orthodoxy was central to the thought of most *vozrozhdentsy*, while the National Bolsheviks inclined towards a 'quasi-deification' of the Russian people. The *vozrozhdentsy* would not consider accommodation with Marxism-Leninism, its atheism, 'internationalism', and Russophobia. But National Bolsheviks were willing to make tactical compromises with it.[6]

In other words, if *vozrozhdentsy* incorporated the animist tradition into politics, through their association with Russian Orthodoxy, the National Bolsheviks promulgated the totemic stance in abstracting the idea of the Russian people (*narod*) into a symbol of the unity and ancestry of the state collective. The state was the Absolute, and its strength the main criterion for morality.

In another analysis, Dimitry Pospielovsky notes a similar division, stressing that National Bolsheviks or 'Etatists' looked to the ideas of Nikolai Danilevskii. Danilevskii's theory of non-Christian Russian nationalism — with its emphasis on struggle between peoples rather than classes and its character analysis of different nations — could justify state aggression, imperialism, and racism. His latter-day descendants, Pospielovsky writes, were also prepared to exploit the Orthodox Church 'as an ideological instrument [...] for mass mobilization of the state'.[7]

Differences in nationalist thought during the 'thaw' were frequently resolved in the face of clampdowns and purges conducted, first, by Khrushchev's regime, later Brezhnev's, and to a lesser degree Andropov's. The anti-religious campaign launched by Khrushchev in 1959 helped to unite dissenting Christian believers and *vozrozhdentsy* over the massive destruction of Church buildings and of the Russian Orthodox cultural heritage. From the mid-1960s, after the fall of Khrushchev, writing with a nationalist flavour mushroomed. Complaints about the neglect and destruction of Russian treasures and monuments (especially churches and monasteries) grew following the publication of Vladimir Soloukhin's *Pis'ma iz russogo muzeia* ('Letters from a Russian Museum', 1966) in *Molodaia gvardiia*, the official publication of the Central Committee of the Komsomol.[8] From 1964, the journal became, as Pospielovsky writes, the precursor of an 'apparently secular Russian nationalism of a "Neo-Danilevskian" type'.[9]

In his series of 'letters' from Leningrad to Moscow, Soloukhin drew attention to the wealth of history and culture in Russia's cities and villages, and to the role of religious tradition and art in preserving them. He attracted interest in this fresh, because previously forbidden, theme and, as Michael Meerson-Aksenov remarks, doubtless stimulated a growth of interest in religion among young people and the intelligentsia.[10] Soloukhin also paved the way for a series of controversial articles which appeared in *Molodaia gvardiia* between 1968

and 1970. Their authors included M. P. Lobanov, Iurii Ivanov, S. N. Semanov, and — most memorably — Viktor Chalmaev.

In his two articles 'Velikie iskaniia' ('Great Explorations', 1968) and 'Neizbezhnost'' ('Inevitability', 1968), Chalmaev put forward the view that the essence of conflict in the world lay in a struggle between the idealism expressed in the character and history of the Russian people, and mercenary values reflected in the American ethic. It is a conflict which, in 'Velikie iskaniia' (written in celebration of the centenary of Gor'kii's birth), Chalmaev traces back to the nineteenth century, and sees reflected in the writings of Dostoevskii and Tolstoi, as well as Gor'kii:

> The Russian people could not, like the West, easily exchange their former shrines for cheque books, parliamentary 'cauldrons' full of empty words and the ideals of a comfortable 'Iron Mirgorod'. The process of Russia's passage onto the rails of bourgeois development was not as simple as that.[11]

A non-religious idealism, an 'aristocracy of spirit' should be cultivated in the nation, he suggests: 'Not every form of "idealism" is religious, not every inclination to spiritual exploration or diffident, harmonious personality is necessarily Christian. Nobility and complexity of spirit need not mean lordliness. The nation is impoverished by losing this kind of nobility.'[12]

It is spiritual supremacy which sets the Russian nation apart and makes it the historical defender of higher, aesthetic, and humanistic values in a world which has sold out to bourgeois mercantilism. Gor'kii's great service to his country was to have shown that the urge to break free of the shackles of capitalist morality was a virtue of the Russian character as much as of communist ideology.

The publication of Chalmaev's second and more explicit contribution, 'Neizbezhnost'', was preceded by an article by Lobanov entitled 'Prosveshchennoe meshchanstvo' ('Educated Shopkeepers', 1968). It appeared in the issue of *Molodaia gvardiia* following 'Velikie iskaniia' and attacked — not imperialism — but 'the spiritual degeneracy of the "educated" person, the decay of his humanity [...] in the glare of a synthetic intellectualism'.[13] Lobanov also spoke of the dangers of 'Americanism of spirit' (*'amerikanizm dukha'*) and suggested that Soviet society's concern over the acquisition of comforts and material wealth was subverting the best in the Russian character.[14]

In 'Neizbezhnost'', Chalmaev addressed the struggle between Russian 'spirituality' and American materialism as an historical continuum, reinforced — not broken — by the October Revolution. He visualized history as a spiritual progression with mankind now in an 'upper circle' (*'verkhnii "iarus"'*) looking down at the cultural expression of that spirit in the past, and building higher levels for the future.[15]

The Russian people, he went on, have — through historical experience and the complexity of their collective personality — built up a strength which is expressed, periodically, in apogees of spiritual achievement. These peaks have been individual and collective, demonstrating resistance to the recurring, corrupting, even satanic temptations of the materialist ethos.[16] Religious energy, Chalmaev suggests, has been and can be a useful and creative force when directed in defence of the unique spirit of the national collective:

> Nikon and Avvakum [...] and Razin, in his way, represent a swiftly moving spiritual culture in Russia. [...] The body of the people 'stores' these spiritual powers, these fiery impulses and dreams cultivated by Avvakum and Nikon. From them it smelts the foundations for its collective achievement. The Russian people go out to fight the battle of Poltava or Stalingrad once in a hundred years, but it takes centuries to prepare them for this. It is wrong to be frivolous in one's attitude to the homeland. A spirit, made vacuous by lack of faith, will not become a Donskoi in a single day, or a Bagration, or a Matrosov. The religious energy of a Russian was quite frequently, if not always, channelled into military exploits or creative inspiration: it was turned to wholly non-religious purposes.[17]

In each case, the individual or the collective is directly expressing the national spirit, allowing it to flow like sacred energy or *mana* (see Chapter 1). Avvakum, Chalmaev writes, not only sought to save his people from themselves and to unify them. He sensed that the authorities of the time, and the canons of state and Church, failed to reflect 'the spirit of the people'.[18]

As Apollon Grigor'ev once suggested, this spirit continues to express itself through whatever framework is placed upon it, whether religious or administrative.[19] The religious schismatics were in a naïve, primitive way striving to create the ideal Russia. They sought to express the Russian spirit in all its purity, Chalmaev writes, and to free it from the bond of ideologies — feudal and later capitalist — which could not carry its vast and ancient body: 'Both feudalism and capitalism are but chips floating in the ocean. The people's Rus', constantly renewed in its thousand-year history, could never find the space to settle there!'[20]

The reference to thousand-year-old Rus', and the Russian people as a millennial nation, put history in a new perspective. That which made the nation a single body was not the communist collective, but a shared religious tradition. The Millennium of Christianity in Rus' was a bare twenty years away when Chalmaev published the article and proposed, more directly perhaps than ever before, that the identity, unity, and strength of modern Russia should be sought in a history and culture that stretched back to the conversion under Prince Vladimir.

Chalmaev, therefore, challenged Marxist dogmatists on two main counts. First, he suggested that the history of Russia had not been interrupted and transfigured by the October Revolution, but that it was an expression of a continuing flow of the national spirit. Second, he stated that this spirit was

capable, historically, of breaking through constricting social systems — feudal and capitalist — and must, by implication, also overflow a system which allowed itself to be corrupted by 'Americanism of spirit'. As Solzhenitsyn later commented in *Bodalsia telenok s dubom* ('The Oak and the Calf', 1975), 'in the 1920s and 1930s, the authors of such articles would have been taken directly to the GPU and promptly shot'.[21]

Where Chalmaev's nationalism differs from that of other authors of the neo-Slavophile school, and of *derevenshchiki* aiming to revive an awareness of their country's past, is in its militarist stance. His use of imagery and language is more reminiscent of Serafimovich's belligerent Revolutionary romanticism than of the lyrical and nostalgic tone of rural prose. 'Neizbezhnost'' opens with the thought that universal happiness is an ideal which demands a fight (*'bor'ba za vseobshchee schast'e'*). Chalmaev writes of the 'battle' taking place over the bourgeois notions of 'crowd' (*'tolpa'*) or 'public' (*'publika'*), and the Russian notion of 'the nation' (*'narod'*). Genuine intellectualism and progress in art, he maintains, is measured by its contribution to the battle against ideological opponents of the Communist Party and the Soviet state.[22] Scenes of war, such as Kulikovo Field where Dmitrii Donskoi defeated the Tatars, or Poltava where Peter I routed the Swedes, or the Battle of Stalingrad, are climactic expressions of the force of the collective spirit.[23] War unites the energies of its participants in a glorious festival which affirms the supremacy of society over its individual members by demanding their life as well as their labour.[24]

After the appearance of 'Neizbezhnost'' in 1968, *Molodaia gvardiia* continued to publish material in line with the Chalmaevan manifesto. The position of the nationalist camp was additionally strengthened from 1969 by support from the journal *Nash sovremennik*, under the editorship of Sergei Vikulov. *Novyi mir* (then the bastion of enlightened Marxism-Leninism) sought to counter the Chalmaevan offensive with an article by A. Dement'ev which spoke of not exaggerating the significance of 'alien ideological influence'. In response, a group of influential nationalists published in *Ogonek* a now legendary letter which formally established their position and affirmed that 'the penetration of bourgeois ideology into Soviet society was and remains a very serious threat'.[25]

The publication of this letter toppled the editor of *Novyi mir*, Aleksandr Tvardovskii, from his post. The rout of the journal was, Alexander Yanov has observed, 'the first action in the post-Stalin era by the *united* Establishment Right — a kind of historical experiment which demonstrated its unusual political potential'.[26] However, in November 1970 a special meeting was convened to discuss the nationalist challenge, at which Leonid Brezhnev himself made a statement critical of religious elements creeping into the Soviet media. Within three months, Anatolii Nikonov, the chief editor of *Molodaia gvardiia*, had been dismissed, together with the journal's editorial board.[27]

In response to the pressures and difficulties of the time, a number of nationalist writers resorted to *samizdat*. But the mid-1970s saw a marked deterioration in their relations with the authorities. In 1974, the *samizdat* 'Russian patriotic journal' *Veche* was disbanded and its editor arrested.[28] At about the same time, Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Union for views which were evidently shared, at least in part, by writers from *Molodaia gvardiia*.[29] In 1976, Valentin Rasputin — a one-time *protégé* of the influential nationalist Vladimir Chivilikhin — published *Proshchanie s Materoi*, and was severely criticized by the Soviet press. In 1977 he was reportedly beaten up in Irkutsk.[30]

Throughout the 1970s, and until as late as 1984, the right, and particularly *vozrozhdentsy* with religious affiliations, were time and again exposed to attacks from the press, purges at work, and in some cases persecution. It was not until about the middle of 1984, under Chernenko, that their position seemed to improve. In that year Petr Proskurin, Vasilii Belov, and Valentin Rasputin were all awarded the Order of Lenin. However, according to Radio Liberty's research, as the pressure lifted so the differences between *gosudarstvenniki* and *vozrozhdentsy* became more evident. The former turned increasingly to the state; *vozrozhdentsy* looked rather to liberalization.[31] After the introduction of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* policy, however, this ceased to be the case. From the mid-1980s, writers never previously associated with the National Bolsheviks, such as Astaf'ev, Belov, and Rasputin, became apparently firmly wedged in the statist camp — threatened, as they saw it, by the bogey of Western cultural infiltration.

The religious perspective in later works by establishment nationalists of the Brezhnev era maintained a Chalmaevan character. Their writing remained keenly anti-American, anti-bourgeois, and/or anti-'cosmopolitan' (meaning anti-semitic). They upheld the vision of a Western demon seeking to corrupt, divide and destroy the national unit, which must marshal its energies to defend itself from the aggressor. Their heroes tended to be less the simple folk of the Russian village than educated and qualified inhabitants of the city, conscious that their lives have been subverted by a force intent on alienating them from their people, their history, their land, themselves. This is true of work by Iurii Bondarev — known in the 1960s as a successful war novelist, but regarded from the mid-1980s as a champion of conservatism in the Writers' Union.[32] It is also true of writing by his younger counterpart, Sergei Alekseev, promoted by *Nash sovremennik* in the mid- and late 1980s, and, more surprisingly, of Vasilii Belov's highly controversial novel *Vse vperedi* ('The Best is yet to come', 1986).[33]

Bondarev's novel *Igra* ('The Game', 1985)[34] and Alekseev's *Slovo* ('The Word', 1985)[35] suggest that the 'spiritual culture' which could offer meaning

and consistency to Soviet Russian life will only be recovered once external cultural influences have been sifted out and rejected. 'Pure' Russian culture is something Bondarev and Alekseev trace back to the Old Believer schism of 1666. David Bethea has written:

> It would be no exaggeration to say that the Schism and the Petrine reforms (which the Old Believers led the reaction against) were *the* moment in Russian history when the oppositions of old/new and east/west entered into a particularly fateful alignment with the Russians' myths about themselves and the governance of their state. The very facts of broad popular appeal and interpenetration of the political, social, and theological realms suggest that this time was perceived as a 'turning point' not only for the Avvakumians but for all those coming later who, with the emergence of 'historical consciousness' in the early nineteenth century, would wrestle with their country's identity as 'Eastern' and 'Western', as a renovation of a golden past or a radical thrust into an enlightened future.[36]

In looking to the Old Believers, Bondarev and Alekseev reinforce the vision of a sinful world which, under Patriarch Nikon, sold out to foreign influence and the Greek Church, abandoned the Orthodox faith, and fell prey to the powers of evil. In the eyes of the Old Believers, all events since then have been a consequence of that parting of the ways. Bondarev and Alekseev, as much as Chalmaev, suggest by reference to the Old Believer tradition that modern 'Americanization' may be another expression of that disastrous proclivity to absorb what is foreign, corrupt and demonic: '*chuzhebesie*'.[37]

Mary Seton-Watson has put forward the suggestion that the fashion for Old Believer culture in the literature of the early and mid-1980s may have been encouraged by the fact that this was a group which had found ways of successfully withstanding the state for over three hundred years.[38] It is worth noting, however, that the attitude of the Soviet authorities to the Old Believers — a sect living in a permanent, self-inflicted exile, but not actively opposed to the régime — has tended frequently towards ambiguity. In the 1920s and early 1930s the historian M. N. Pokrovskii — a personal friend of Lenin's — referred to them as 'the people's Church', essentially 'democratic' in character, unlike the official Church which exploited the *narod*.[39] Avvakum, the saint and martyr most venerated by the Old Believers, was never subjected to Leninist or even Stalinist iconoclasm. His autobiography and comments on the Bible were available (with a not unfavourable introduction) even in 1934, when no other religious literature was published in the Soviet Union.[40]

The theme of the Old Believers in literature of the 1980s was less controversial than it might appear. They represented a group which had long resisted the monopoly of state power, but they equally served as evidence of a continuing, purely Russian, form of religious life which had successfully withstood the pressures of Western influence. Their strength — Bondarev and Alekseev suggest — lies in a refusal to compromise with the authorities over their beliefs and their way of life. As Bondarev's hero, a successful film director named

Krymov, contemplates the statue of the Archpriest Avvakum, he muses on the world today:

> And Krymov thought that if the energy and spirit of the irrepressible Archpriest Avvakum could no longer be found, then civilization would end with someone flying over an empty earth, a spherical desert, seeing only black patches marking the cooling vestiges of human life.[41]

The threat to civilization, Bondarev suggests in a manner reminiscent of Lobanov or Chalmaev, comes largely from invading Western consumerism and from short-sighted policies directed exclusively to technological progress. But, Krymov believes, hope may lie in his own country:

> Russia is the most unpredictable country. There is none other like it in the whole of Nature. And if anyone is to save a civilization which has gone astray, it will again be Russia. As it was during the Second World War. [...] Perhaps Russia has been programmed with the conscience of the whole world. Perhaps [...] this is something which America has not been granted. There depravity of spirit has triumphed. A pact with the devil has been signed.[42]

Bondarev was one of the most unreservedly nationalistic authors writing under *perestroika*: the reputed 'godfather' of the literary reactionaries. His work continued to be published in large print-runs in the late 1980s, and his novels were dramatized and staged in Moscow.[43] In December 1990 he declared that contemporary Russian literature was 'approaching a tragic state' with a 'diabolical confusion of ideas, styles, heroes and moral doctrines'.[44] He referred to *perestroika* as an 'invasion of rats' and warned that it would bring 'a triumph of the exultant rule of deception and the dictatorship of banality'.[45] A few months later, in July 1991, as a well-placed member of the Writers' Union Secretariat, he signed an open letter published in *Sovetskaia Rossiia* and *Moskovskaia pravda* under the heading 'A Word to the People', which deplored the increasing moral and cultural degeneracy wrought by Gorbachev's reforms.[46] The letter's co-signatories included the writers Valentin Rasputin and Aleksandr Prokhanov, as well as Vasilii Starodubtsev and Aleksandr Tiziakov — two members of the Emergency Committee which attempted to take power in the failed Moscow putsch the following month.

Though less notorious and successfully established than Bondarev, Sergei Alekseev is a younger member of the same ideological school. His novel *Slovo* introduced another feature into a map of world history very similar to Bondarev's. In *Slovo*, Alekseev's Old Believers are a group of eccentric and, at times, fanatical custodians of the treasures of Russia's past. They have in their possession a hoard of ancient and invaluable books, but are naïve enough to be exploited by émigré Russians in an internationally coordinated campaign to deprive the Soviet Union of its cultural heritage. The books are regularly smuggled out to the West, and it falls to Alekseev's heroes (Anna, a young archivist, and Zarodov, a junior museum assistant) to help save them.

There is evidence in the novel of the existence of a lost text written in an unknown script but entitled in Cyrillic: 'Drevlee pis'mo, pisannoe startsem Diveem, iazychnikom' ('An Ancient Letter Written by Starets Divei, the Pagan').[47] It confirms that literacy was well developed long before the Christianization of Rus' in the tenth century. In a series of historical flashbacks it becomes clear that Prince Vladimir's conversion and the enforced baptism of his people was by no means the dawn of Russian civilization. Rather, it was the first of several cultural invasions which destroyed, or corrupted, a language and culture which had been truly indigenous to the Russian land. Another of these incursions was Nikon's adaptation of Church Liturgy in the seventeenth century. Since then, Alekseev suggests, the Church, as an arm of the state, has been rich, powerful, and a threat to the moral well-being of its followers. '"Religion teaches people to be beggars"', one of his characters remarks.[48]

Belov's 'city' novel, *Vse vperedi* — a new departure for a predominantly rural writer — draws a similar picture while also exposing social ills in the manner characteristic of literature published in the early years of *glasnost'* (consider Rasputin's *Pozhar* or Astaf'ev's *Pechal'nyi detektiv*, for instance).[49] But the plot of *Vse vperedi* is supported chiefly by the idea that an invasion of Russian cultural sovereignty is at hand. The novel shows a disintegrating society, invaded by a demonic force which divides marriages, families, friends, and the community as a whole. Women have lost their maternal instinct, loyalty, modesty and concern for others. They have been infected with the desire to live by aesthetic values and the pleasure principle cultivated by their Western counterparts.

The demon responsible is embodied in the figure of the sophisticated 'cosmopolitan', Misha Brish. He breaks up Liuba and Dmitrii Medvedev's marriage, and displaces Medvedev in his profession. On the basis of his bitter experience, Medvedev concludes that the nature of evil lies in the subversion of any existing form of unity:

> Evil in the world is contained in artificially constructed oppositions: economic, cultural and national. The principle 'divide and rule' never fails. It is indispensable to us, not only as regards people, but in relation to time as well. We have even divided time into past and future! It is as though the present did not exist; and this allows [...] the devil to invent and inculcate any theories or methods he pleases. [...] Take the destruction of consistency, for example. It can take place with impunity because its consequences become apparent much later. [...] Once consistency is gone, rhythm disappears, and with it — beauty.[50]

Belov's demon has struck in all quarters: in the environment, in society, and in the human mind. He has infected humanity with a desire to create an artificial, model universe.[51] He has made of Moscow a city cut off from the unifying qualities of nature, existing by its own laws and untouched by nature's kindness or, indeed, her wrath. In surrounding areas nature's fury appears to

be growing to apocalyptic proportions.[52] One of Medvedev's workers is reported seriously wounded in the Ivanovskaia *oblast'* during a cataclysmically violent hurricane (*'smerch'*):

A force of some kind lifted the loaded van off the road — about five metres into the air — before their very eyes. It wrung it, like a piece of linen, and let it drop. The driver says he saw naked corpses flying through the air. People seemed to be torn apart. Houses, roofs, cars flew by, along with the dead.[53]

The integration between man and the natural environment, and between man and man — the Slavophile ideal of *'tsel'nost''* (wholeness or integrity) — has been lost; the world, with the elements, is all out of joint. But if the 'demonic' divides and subverts the integrity of the collective, then 'good' and the Godhead must be associated with a coherent society and the totemic emblem. Belov here implies what has been more explicitly stated in works to be discussed in the next chapter: that the Deity should be envisaged as a representation of the unity and energy of the integrated national collective.

NOTES

1. Tendriakov, 'Nravstvennost' i religiia', *Nauka i religiia* (1987: 6), 23.
2. Durkheim, 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life', in *Durkheim on Religion*, p. 111.
3. Ibid., pp. 125, 131.
4. Ibid., p. 139.
5. John B. Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); John B. Dunlop, *The New Russian Nationalism* (New York: Praeger, 1985); Alexander Yanov, *The Russian New Right: Right-Wing Ideologies in the Contemporary USSR* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1978); Alexander Yanov, *The Russian Challenge and the Year 2000*, trans. by Iden J. Rosenthal (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Peter J. S. Duncan, 'Russian Messianism: A Historical and Political Analysis' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1989).
6. Dunlop, *Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, pp. 263–64.
7. Pospielovsky, 'Neo-Slavophilism', p. 329.
8. Vladimir Soloukhin, *Pis'ma iz russkogo muzeia, Molodaia gvardiia* (1966: 9), 236–78; (1966: 10), 245–87.
9. Pospielovsky, 'Neo-Slavophilism', p. 330.
10. *The Political, Social and Religious Thought of Russian 'Samizdat'*, ed. by Michael Meerson-Aksenov and Boris Skragin (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1977), p. 346, quoted in Dunlop, *Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, p. 39.
11. V. Chalmaev, 'Velikie iskaniia', *Molodaia gvardiia* (1968: 3), 274.
12. Ibid., p. 287.
13. M. Lobanov, 'Prosveshchennoe meshchanstvo', *Molodaia gvardiia* (1968: 4), 297.
14. Ibid., p. 304.
15. V. Chalmaev, 'Neizbezhnost'', *Molodaia gvardiia* (1968: 9), 259.
16. In the seventeenth century Iurii Krizhanich called the demonic attraction of things foreign. *'chuzhebesie'*. Pushkin, Chalmaev suggests, referred to it in his poem 'Besy': 'V pole bes nas vodit, vidno / Da kruzhit po storonam'. More recently, Anna Akhmatova also heard the call of the siren and expressed it in the poem 'Mne golos byl . . .'. Ibid., pp. 263, 288–89.
17. Ibid., pp. 267–68.
18. Ibid., p. 268.
19. Ibid., pp. 268–69.
20. Ibid., p. 270.
21. A. Solzhenitsyn, *Bodalsia telenok s dubom: Ocherki literaturnoi zhizni* (Paris: YMCA, 1975), p. 269; Dunlop, *Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, p. 39.
22. Chalmaev, 'Neizbezhnost'', p. 262.
23. Ibid., pp. 267–68.

24. Roger Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, trans. by Meyer Barash (Glencoe, IL: Free Press of Glencoe, 1959) pp. 165–66.
25. A. Demen'tev, 'O traditsiiakh i narodnosti. (Literaturnye zametki)', *Novyi mir* (1969: 4), 215–35; 'Protiv chego vystupaet "Novyi mir"?', *Ogonek* (1969: 30), 29.
26. Yanov, *Russian New Right*, p. 51.
27. R. A. Medvedev, *All Stalin's Men*, trans. by H. Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 80.
28. Vladimir Osipov, the editor of *Veche*, was arrested in 1974 and sentenced to eight years in a labour camp. Peter J. Duncan, 'Russian Nationalism in the USSR: From Brezhnev to Gorbachev', paper presented to the IIIrd World Congress of Soviet and East European Studies, Washington DC, 30 October–4 November 1985, p. 14. Published as 'The party and Russian nationalism in the USSR: from Brezhnev to Gorbachev' in *Soviet Union: Party and Society*, ed. by Peter J. Potichnyj (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 229–44.
29. See Solzhenitsyn, *Bodalsia telenok*, pp. 266–78.
30. Rasputin, 'Byt' samim soboi', p. 144; Irena Maryniak, 'Valentin Rasputin, die neue Rechte und das Religiöse', *Osteuropa*, No. 3 (1990), p. 213; Dunlop, *Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, p. 121; Anthony Austin, 'Soviet writer, beaten year ago, still can't work', *The New York Times*, 3 May 1981.
31. See Sergei Yurenen's Radio Liberty reports: RL 190/84 (14 May 1984); 299/84 (7 August 1984); 7/85 (9 December 1984); 59/85 (22 February 1985); 84/85 (18 March 1985); 106/85 (4 April 1985); RS 188/84 (4 September 1984). Reference to these is made in Duncan, 'Russian Nationalism', pp. 31, 44 (note 121).
32. John and Carol Garrard, *Inside the Soviet Writers' Union* (New York and London: Tauris, 1990), pp. 213, 216–17.
33. Irena Jeziorska, 'Report on Trip to Moscow (September–November 1987)', unpublished paper delivered at Conference for Graduate Students, St Antony's College, Oxford, February 1988, p. 16; Vasilii Belov, *Vse vperedi, Nash sovremennik* (1986: 7), 29–106; (1986: 8), 59–110. Subsequent references are to: Belov, *Vse vperedi* (Moscow, 1987).
34. Iu. Bondarev, *Igra, Novyi mir* (1985: 1), 6–73; (1985: 2), 80–155.
35. Sergei Alekseev, *Slovo, Nash sovremennik* (1985: 2), 11–104; (1985: 3), 10–96; (1985: 4), 27–115.
36. Bethea, *Shape of Apocalypse*, pp. 18–19.
37. Chalmaev, 'Neizbezhnost'', p. 263.
38. Mary Seton-Watson, 'Religious Themes in Recent Soviet Literature', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 16, No. 2 (1988), pp. 117–25.
39. Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 129; M. N. Pokrovsky, *Brief History of Russia*, trans. by D. S. Mirsky, 2 vols (London: Martin Lawrence, 1933), I, 95–96.
40. *Zhitie Protopopa Avvakuma im samim napisannoe i drugie ego sochineniia* (Moscow: Akademia, 1935). See Kolarz, *Religion*, p. 130.
41. Bondarev, *Igra, Novyi mir* (1985: 1), 57.
42. Ibid., p. 72.
43. Garrard, *Soviet Writers' Union*, p. 193.
44. Iu. Bondarev, *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, 14 December 1990, pp. 2–4; Marsh, 'The Death of Soviet Literature', p. 115.
45. Ibid., p. 118.
46. See Chapter 3, note 133.
47. Alekseev, *Slovo, Nash sovremennik* (1985: 2), 61–62.
48. Ibid., *Nash sovremennik* (1985: 3), 33.
49. Valentin Rasputin, *Pozhar, Nash sovremennik* (1985: 7), 3–38; Viktor Astaf'ev, *Pechal'nyi detektiv, Oktiabr'*, No. 1 (1986), pp. 8–74. See also Pavlyshyn, *Glasnost'*, p. 3; Hosking and Graffy, *Culture and the Media*, p. 111.
50. Belov, *Vse vperedi*, p. 190.
51. Ibid., p. 222.
52. Ibid., p. 103.
53. Ibid., p. 187.

CHAPTER 10

THE NEW GOD-BUILDERS

In the years following the widespread but unsuccessful Revolutionary action of 1905–07, some of Russia's leading socialist intellectuals toyed with the notion of promoting their ideology in the form of religious faith. By this, they hoped to encourage an atmosphere of shared purpose, excitement, union and self-denial in an increasingly uncertain and divided Revolutionary movement. The God-building theory ('*bogostroitel'stvo*'), as it was known, received only limited support among Russian social democrats, and was stifled within less than ten years largely as a result of Lenin's personal intervention. But between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s a new kind of God-building found its way into novels by three well-established writers associated with the rural prose school: Petr Proskurin, Chingiz Aitmatov, and Vladimir Tendriakov. Within the context of familiar themes such as the protection of the environment, cultural tradition, and family ties, some examples of their work also emphasize specially the need to protect and preserve as Supreme Absolute the principle of the strong, undivided social collective.

The tendency to give the group or its projections sacred status, Durkheim remarks, was historically most in evidence during the early years of the French revolution:

> At that particular time, under the influence of general enthusiasm, things that were purely secular in nature were transformed into sacred things by public opinion, for example, the Motherland, Liberty, Reason. A religion was established which had its dogmas, its symbols, its altars, and its holy days. [...] The fact is that in one specific case, we saw society and its essential ideas become the object of genuine cult, directly and without any kind of transfiguration.[1]

Elsewhere, Durkheim called this mood a 'general effervescence characteristic of revolutionary or creative periods'.[2]

It is a curious parallel that some Russian revolutionaries appear to have anticipated, and sought to exploit, the 'religious' quality of revolutionary psychology which Durkheim identifies. The idea that religion could propagate the cohesion and dynamism necessary for a successful revolutionary coup was given its fullest airing in early twentieth-century Russia by Anatolii Lunacharskii and Maksim Gor'kii.

Lunacharskii presents his God-building theory most extensively in *Religiia i sotsializm*, where he argues that religion has the capacity to stimulate hidden resources of energy and 'enthusiasm', and can tap the creative powers of the social group. He points out that, at their best, socialism and religion share a desire for justice and equality, and implies that the socialist idea might be effectively propagated among the Russian people as a religion because their cultural tradition was for so long dominated by Orthodox Christianity.[3]

Gor'kii's novel *Ispoved'* ('The Confession', 1907) is a considerably more popularized promotional venture which sets out to thrill and convert.[4] It is narrated in drawn-out, neo-liturgical prose as the personal record of a man whose search for a place in the world is rewarded by the achievement of a mystical fusion between his individual persona and the greater collective — the mass of the people. In later years, Gor'kii denounced the novel as a literary aberration and blamed his error on reactionary influences active at this difficult time for the Revolutionary movement. This was due partly, no doubt, to Lenin's unequivocal reaction to any kind of religious or neo-religious thinking. A letter to Gor'kii written in November 1913 shows that he viewed God-building as an extension of a tendency among many Russian intellectuals of the time towards idealism, mysticism, and God-*seeking* (*'bogoiskatel'stvo'*). God-building differed no more from God-seeking than a yellow devil from a blue one, Lenin remarked in the letter. Every religious idea, every bit of 'flirtation with dear little god', was utterly vile.[5]

The difference between the essentially idealistic and individualistic God-seekers and the God-builders, who were materialists and collectivists, was something which Lenin chose to ignore. In fact Gor'kii had made every effort to emphasize the distinction in *Ispoved'*. The novel describes the spiritual progress of a God-seeker who is converted into a God-builder. The hero, Matvei, is an individualist who finds fulfilment only in the union of his energies with those of the Revolutionary group.

Matvei learns as a child to pay lip-service to Christian dogma. Much of his childhood and youth are devoted to a surface piety which gives him support in moments of self doubt, but is readily twisted to justify egoism and corruption when survival is at stake. It takes the death of his young wife and son to show Matvei that superficial religiosity is of no help in facing life's deepest dilemmas. He retreats into the monastic life, but finds in it only iniquity and obsession. Thereupon he takes off into the world alone as a God-seeker, a pilgrim, to visit holy places.

That, too, offers limited enlightenment. Matvei's fellow God-seekers do little to recommend a life of religious devotion. They live in a state of fear; they make gods in their own image which fail them; and they are manipulated by self-styled prophets who are actually representatives of the ruling class. Matvei realizes that the world's God-seekers are a group that is oppressed and divided,

living in a 'chaos of estrangement' (*'khaos razobshcheniia'*). Because of their alienation from one another they are without strength and have lost the Deity they so fervently seek.[6] He senses also that the mass of the people nevertheless represents a concentration of suppressed energy, and a potential threat to the powers-that-be.

As if to confirm the truth of these perceptions, Matvei meets a wanderer named Iegudiil who teaches him the tenets of the God-building philosophy. Faith is a powerful creative force, Iegudiil explains. It is the by-product of man's unused potential, his vast stores of excess energy: *'izbytok v cheloveke zhiznennoi sily'*.[7] Faith, or the energy behind it, stimulates action. When external factors intervene to frustrate this, man endures spiritual turmoil. He has sought to resolve this in history by creating images of worship to help define his identity: little gods which reflect his deepest aspirations and fears. But the only 'real' God is in, and of, man himself. He is born of human creative potential, stunted and subordinated to the forces of social inequality and religious terror. He is in the working peoples of the world, Iegudiil says. They are the God-builders, waiting to unite in a single force and create the Deity:

> It is the people that creates gods, innumerable people of the world! Holy martyrs greater than those whom the Church honours. That is the god that works miracles [. . .] the working classes of the world. [. . .] Even now many are seeking the means of fusing all the forces on earth into one and creating out of it a splendid and beautiful god who shall embrace the universe![8]

Iegudiil offers an historical outline of ways in which the people discovered the God-building vocation. They began by identifying their shared achievement with leaders and heroes who best personified their creative powers. Later, however, the people understood that spiritual elevation was intended to be not the privilege of some, but the right of all. At that point in history, Christ appeared. He fully embodied the collective will and energy of the people. He was a Deity for all men, made by them in recognition of the ideal of social equality.[9]

After exposure to Iegudiil's teaching, Matvei goes on his way to be apprenticed in living the new faith. His first task is to learn how to work with others and to abandon his individuality. This will lead him to a state of primal bliss with unlimited resources for growth, and to certain knowledge of immortality — because 'the people' never dies. In a climactic scene, Matvei witnesses the miraculous cure of a paralysed girl whose health and strength are restored by collective will and faith during a religious procession.[10] At this point Matvei is fully converted and mystically unified with a glorious surge of human energy capable of regenerating the world:

> I stood on the summit of experience and beheld the world as a fiery stream of living forces that strove to unite all in a single force, the goal of which was hidden from my sight. Nevertheless, I joyfully recognized that ignorance of that goal was to me the

source of infinite spiritual development and vast earthly beauty, and that in this infinity lay unbounded bliss for the living soul of man.[11]

This is a particularly stirring evocation of the mood of the early God-builders, and of the sense of an imminent transformation of the human spirit peculiar to Gor'kii's interpretation of the God-building ethos. It is also a quality conspicuously lacking in the writing of the later 'God-builders' to be discussed here. They demonstrate little of the fervour and prophetic quality which gives *Ispoved'* its momentum. Nonetheless, examples of work by Proskurin, Aitmatov, and Tendriakov point to a series of ideas which parallel Gor'kii's to an astonishing degree:

1. The notion of faith, including religious faith, as a powerful creative force.
2. The idea that collective energy can and should be tapped and fused.
3. Collective energy selectively elevates individuals who most fully embody it, and charges them with an historical function. Christ is frequently cited as an example.
4. The conviction that a society formed of little selves unintegrated into the collective energy-flow cannot survive for long.
5. A form of nature mysticism bracketing historical determinism with the idea that a universal force permeates all things, including man, and drives them towards unification.

There is nothing to suggest, of course, that any of these three eminently 'Soviet' writers ever looked to provoke a revolution, as Gor'kii had. 'New God-building' was a system of thought designed to encourge social regeneration and moral rearmament. It arose, probably, in reaction to the loss of community spirit wrought by years of economic and cultural stagnation under Brezhnev.

To digress briefly: during a visit to Moscow in 1987 I had the opportunity to speak with Valentin Svininnikov, then deputy-chief-editor of *Nash sovremennik* (a journal identified with nationalistic and ideologically conservative views). In response to a question about the journal's attitude to religion, Svininnikov said that it was one of respect and understanding:

> The church (*'khram'*) is a material witness to the culture of the people. We have no wish to offend religious believers and we support faith: a faith in moral principles and in man. What is God after all but the ideal man? I am sure that there will be increased understanding towards religion. Life without faith is a terrible thing.[12]

Proskurin's novels *Sud'ba* ('Fate', 1972) and *Imia tvoe* ('Thy Name', 1977) form the first two parts of an epic series with a patriotic flavour, and seem to reflect views on religion similar to those expressed by Svininnikov.[13] The following lines, for instance, reveal the innermost thoughts of one of Proskurin's most positive characters, a successful Party official from *Imia tvoe*:

What is God and what is death? [. . .] There is no God and there can be none, but I need him so he exists for me. In order to go on living, every human being needs something permanent, eternal, something without end, and that feeling, that desire is and ever shall be God.[14]

Proskurin offers a solution to the problem of religious impulse by proposing a mystical union not, like Gor'kii, with the working peoples of the world, but with the Russian people. There, he suggests, the individual may find fulfilment by participating in his nation's historical destiny. And that must be to evolve into a people fully conscious of its identity and to lead the world, or at any rate Europe, along the path of social progress.[15]

Sud'ba and *Imia tvoe* span thirty years of Soviet history beginning in 1929. The characters range from elderly peasants living in the northern provinces, collective-farm workers, Party officials, atomic physicists, and astronauts, to Stalin himself. Together they experience war, its aftermath, Stalin's death, and the beginning of the nuclear age, the better *together* to understand life's purpose: that the self must be fused with the mass. Individual life presents two main obstacles to happiness, a character in *Imia tvoe* remarks: the struggle against the self and fear of annihilation. But once the self has been abandoned and a consciousness of the people as the objective Absolute achieved, immortality is within everyone's grasp. With that awareness, Proskurin shows, the individual comes to personify the energies of the collective.

The development of the central character in *Sud'ba*, Zakhar Deriugin, is neatly illustrative. Zakhar begins as a 'spontaneous' figure, in Clark's use of the word, with considerable potential but not enough self-restraint. He is married, with prospects ahead, but falls in love and abandons his family and career. His new life is broken up by war, however; and, after the harrowing experience it brings, Zakhar returns to his home village transfigured into an apparently invincible personification of the Russian nation. He is drawn, as Viktor Chalmaev wrote in a flattering monograph on Proskurin, rather like a hagiographic ideal.[16]

Zakhar's progress to this state takes him through a mystical revelation in the Lenin mausoleum, a growing realization of his bond with the Russian soil, and, above all, war. This releases in him (and in the nation as a whole) what one character calls 'an inviolable reserve of moral, physical, and biological strength'.[17] It is a hidden excess energy similar, perhaps, to what Gor'kii called 'the surplus of life's strength in man'. And it is also identified as the source of creative action stimulating that most powerful of forces — faith.[18]

Having overstepped the barrier of his lesser self, and discovered his potential as a particle of the nation's moral spirit, Zakhar becomes like a saint, a Father of the Church or *starets*. He is serene and wise, people flock to him for guidance, and no evil can touch him. He stands back watching his enemies fall by the wayside. One is crushed by a pile of wooden logs, another

goes mad, a third commits suicide — all because they challenged his moral authority.

Zakhar's enemies are figures who have refused to recognize the Russian nation as totem. They have defied God. One, Anisimov, is a Party man with liberal sympathies: the viper in the bosom of the state.

Anisimov is an opportunist who denies the principle of social equality. He believes that all of nature thrives on conflict, and that in society everyone should look after his own interests without intervention. His challenge is directed not only at the Russian people but at the state itself, and its personification, Stalin.

After Stalin's death and funeral, Anisimov is lost in a blizzard in central Moscow and finds himself face to face with Stalin's statue. It is a scene reminiscent of Evgenii's meeting with the Bronze Horseman at the end of Pushkin's poem *Mednyi vsadnik*. The statue seems alive and watching. Anisimov longs to break it up but his hands are paralysed. A moment later he is released, but his challenge to the supreme law carries another dreadful punishment:

> Instantly something threw him back, crushed him, blinded him [...] he was crushed, trampled, crucified, torn away from all foundation, forever cast out of the eternal waters of life, and the worst of it was that he still failed to understand and still refused to accept its laws.[19]

Anisimov has committed a crime against life itself and, like Lucifer, has been cast out of the sight of the Godhead.

In Proskurin's novels, Stalin's individual moral persona is not to the point. He is the man at the helm of the times, a manifestation of social and historical processes embodying the collective drive to cohesion. His historical role is to induce a sense of the nation as something existentially real. Stalin's funeral is depicted as a time of national self-realization, when the presence of the mass of the people gathered in proximity around his coffin gives characters a direct experience of collective energy and full union with it.[20]

Proskurin depicts 'collective spirit' in a manner very similar to Gor'kii, but his purpose is somewhat different. Gor'kii thought to build God in order to consolidate Revolutionary energy and overturn the social and political status quo. Proskurin aims to weld national forces in the name of progress, and to enhance the Soviet Russian state's role as defender of historical justice in the face of the Western nuclear threat.[21]

As a disciple of the '*edinyi potok*' school of history, Proskurin sees Russia's pre-Revolutionary past as the path leading to Revolution and socialism.[22] Both novels suggest that it was the Orthodox Church which historically contained the very pulse of Russian identity, its culture, its aspirations, and morally contributed to its defence when its existence and honour were at stake. *Imia tvoe* includes a flashback to the Russian victory over the Tatars at the battle of

Kulikovo Field, and shows Sergii Radonezhskii giving his blessing for military action to liberate the Russian land.[23] The Church, Proskurin suggests, was the one consistent representative of the Russian nation throughout its history.

Despite this important variation in historical interpretation, there are a number of points where Proskurin's ideas mirror Gor'kii's exactly. They share a similar view of the creative powers of faith and the collective spirit. Both see 'great' individuals as those who most fully personify the energies of the collective, and hold that individuals unintegrated into the social compound can neither survive nor create a society worth having. They have a similar sense of the link between social or historical forces and the forces of nature. Together they suggest that what is successfully achieved socially or historically is determined by absolute natural law.[24] Any attempt to defy it is doomed, as Hitler's policies were. Proskurin writes in *Sud'ba*:

> Hitler's plans [...] and the powers that acted upon them were deeply immoral, deeply repugnant to human nature. Social revolution does not forgive historical blindness, whether it is the blindness of individual figures or of whole nations and states which have been led astray by them.[25]

Proskurin's understanding of events is straightforwardly historicist.[26] He identifies the laws of historical development with a social and evolutionary order expressed through the Russian people, in their history and vocation as God-builders.

Aitmatov's early work, discussed in Chapter 6, introduces mythological models drawn from Central Asian tradition, to which he retains a close affinity. However, his novel *Plakha* brought new, Christian or neo-Christian, elements into his writing, which stimulated controversy in the Soviet press for months afterwards. The work features an idealistic young seminarian — arguably an 'intellectual' — who is martyred for his beliefs, and Christ in conversation with Pontius Pilate. In consequence, Aitmatov was criticized both by atheists, who accused him of 'flirting with dear little god', and supporters of the Orthodox tradition who felt that as a non-Russian and a non-Christian he was fumbling with a subject he had little business and no authority to touch.[27]

One important aspect of the novel was overlooked, however, and that was Aitmatov's suggestion that a rediscovery of religious culture and faith might be more than psychologically, morally, or aesthetically enriching. It could, he proposed, serve as a coordinating force in Soviet society today. Aitmatov was flirting less with God than with God-building; but there was, to my knowledge, only one reference to this in Soviet criticism. It came in an article by Evgenii Pazukhin in the *samizdat* journal *Biulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti*.[28] No wider public discussion of Aitmatov as God-builder appeared in the official Soviet press.

Aitmatov's own remarks on *Plakha* remain ambiguous, although in an interview published in *Druzhba narodov* he hinted that the introduction of the Christian myth was for him a way of reaching out to a European readership. Elsewhere, he indicated that Christianity's value was predominantly moral:

> I have tried to let religion lead me to man. Not to God but to man! [. . .]
> Christianity offers a very powerful example in the figure of Jesus Christ. The Islamic religion with which I am associated by origin does not have a similar figure. [. . .] Jesus Christ gives me reason to reveal a hidden truth to modern man. That is why I, an atheist, encountered him on my creative path.[29]

The structure of the novel is somewhat convoluted. It falls into three sections. The first and last focus on contemporary man's abuse of the natural environment, represented by a pair of wolves who later bring retribution on their human tormentors. The central section tells the story of a seminarian, Avdii Kallistratov, who leaves the Church in order to convert those who have lost their way in life to his own idiosyncratic religious views. He becomes involved with drug smugglers and hoodlums who leave him crucified on a tree when he will not abandon attempts to make them see the error of their ways.

The thematic connection between the two plots seems to lie in parallel depictions of the abuse of collective unity. In the first part this is shown in terms of man's attack on the natural collective: the environment. In Kallistratov's story it is brought out in terms of one man's battle against moral corruption and the abuse of the social collective — issues much in vogue under *perestroika*.

Avdii's religious ideas echo those of Gor'kii and Lunacharskii. He wants to resurrect the idea of God in modern society to improve the quality of living. He seeks to develop a notion of the Deity which will fall in line with man's historical development. God is a feature of human consciousness, he argues. He is a reflection of the best elements in the human personality as it aspires to affirm its liberation from social repression. Once this Deity has been acknowledged it will come to be reflected in human action and have a revolutionary effect on the world. Through it, social evils will be overcome.

The novel includes a scene between Christ and Pontius Pilate, evidently derived from Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita*.[30] Aitmatov's Christ puts forward the idea that as a result of his suffering, human consciousness will evolve towards its fullest potential, which is the Godhead. God and man are to be identified, he says. All men, collectively, are the image of God on earth, embracing the sum of human actions and aspirations. He calls this Godhead the 'God of Tomorrow' ('*Bog zavtra*'), and declares that his nature — whether he is to be fair or foul — depends exclusively on man.[31]

The notion that the Deity is a reflection of the quality of individual and collective consciousness bears comparison with Gor'kii's *Ispoved'*. The 'God of Tomorrow', a spirit of collective hope, aspiration and achievement is much in line with Iegudiil's vision. The force of physical energy generated by the

collective, which Gor'kii emphasizes, also comes over in *Plakha*. There is a rousing scene in which Avdii transcends himself as he listens to an Orthodox church choir. But, after the initial exhilaration of experiencing this harmoniously controlled group energy, he declares that religion is a 'vast delusion' (*'grandioznoe zabluzhdenie'*): 'How great is man's yearning to be heard above! [...] How painfully was man's humanity born within him.'[32] Avdii does not believe in a personal God. Like the early Lunacharskii, he seeks to give a Deity to the world to assist its historical development.[33]

In February 1987 the Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* published an interview with Aitmatov under the heading 'Veriu v cheloveka' ('I believe in Man'). In it, Aitmatov emphasized that Soviet society's greatest potential investment was its moral capital. It is in this area, he suggested, that work must be done to overcome social and economic problems. He spoke of the importance of conscience, emphasizing that a reawakening of moral instinct and social responsibility was the means by which to consolidate the collective. First it is necessary to build the individual, he said, by applying new, more sophisticated methods of ideological and moral education.[34]

After 1986, as a writer and a public figure Aitmatov became a spokesman for the new social conscience and the new moral rearmament which formed an integral part of the early promotion of *perestroika*. As he confirmed in an interview with *Soviet Weekly* in February 1988: 'It was right to put morals in the foreground in our *perestroika* drive. I think we realised at last that ethics are the most precious treasures a nation has.'[35] And to promote ethics effectively you may need to create God. That was perhaps *Plakha*'s most controversial message.

The final work to be examined is Tendriakov's novel *Pokushenie na mirazhi*. It was originally submitted for publication in 1982, but appeared in *Novyi mir* only posthumously. In the light of the religious dilemmas explored in Tendriakov's earlier writing (see Chapter 8), it would be inappropriate and misleading to brand him a fully-fledged God-builder. He does not, like Proskurin, aim to inspire the national spirit; nor does he, like Aitmatov, suggest that religious enthusiasm could be a valuable social or economic asset. Collective or mystical 'effervescence' was not something Tendriakov admired, despite his interest in the phenomenon of religion.[36] However, the original God-building theory tackled more than just the possibility of artificially stimulating mass religious fervour. It also sought to resolve problems such as lack of faith, social cohesion, or the need to find a pattern in social history. It promoted a moral mood in which the self was placed in a position secondary to the collective, and in which the collective good became the supreme value.

Pokushenie na mirazhi raises all these issues, and the apparent motivation behind the writing of the work seems like Gor'kii's: to offer an answer to the

breakdown of community spirit.[37] In his novel, Tendriakov — a self-declared rationalist and historicist — tries to establish what made Christianity such an important historical influence; how societies have tried to maintain their integrity over the centuries; why they have failed; and what is to be done. He presents Christianity as an historical example of the instinctive urge to social integration and unification — a thought central to God-building — while suggesting that Christianity's failings are symptomatic of the still unresolved problem of how a society may be successfully and humanely run. *Pokushenie na mirazhi* is an ambivalent piece of writing: it puts forward questions and ideas, but declines to offer final solutions.

The plot is far-fetched and a little awkward. It describes an experiment carried out by a senior physicist with an interest in history and a powerful computer at his disposal. The physicist, Grigorii Petrovich Grebin, sets himself the task of identifying the degree to which Christ's existence was significant for the subsequent development of Christianity. With the help of a group of enthusiastic young colleagues he feeds into the computer all available historical data from the Greeks up to and a little beyond the birth of Christianity — with one bluff: a piece of false information concerning Christ's death as a young prophet, before his name became widely known. This, Grebin believes, will force the computer to select or create a new leader for the social processes of which Christ became the historical representative. Grebin speculates that St Paul may be a likely candidate, but because of a small oversight in programming the impossible happens and the computer resurrects Christ so that the long-term history of Christianity remains unaffected. St Paul retains his secondary role as a moral teacher and theoretician, with an appeal for the educated and those in authority. Christ remains God for the mass of the downtrodden to whom he preached a poetic kind of liberation, and who rebuilt or resurrected him after his death to reflect the state of their developing revolutionary consciousness and the urge to unity.

Grebin's experiment raises vexed questions on historical determinism and evolutionary law. Tendriakov devotes a considerable amount of space to historicist arguments, on the basis of which Grebin and his assistants conclude that determinism — biological and historical — is a universal principle. There is no such thing as chance in history. Christ and St Paul were but a part of the historical model: like everyone else, they were formed by history. Their moral calibre was a reflection of their times:

> Christ and Paul, Caligula and Nero [. . .] are each and every one a product of his time. [. . .]
>
> History moulds all men, pygmies as well as giants, heroes and ordinary citizens. [. . .] We are not the creators of the all-embracing process of human development, merely its participants.[38]

Collective consciousness shapes individuals in its own image and determines their moral behaviour. Collective aggression in times of war can make a peaceful man a killer, and because this is so, Grebin thinks, it should be possible to create a social mechanism for building good people.[39] Grebin seeks a universally applicable, absolute formula by which the collective may be morally redirected; but he finds that he has to take account of facts about economic law and human character which seem to override all attempts to legislate for a social utopia. Give people everything they need and some will refuse to work, production will decline and you will end up with a society unable to feed itself and subjected to the tyranny of its own ideology of universal happiness. Legislate to increase productivity, and supply will stimulate demand; but the economic growth which should bring with it a better life will instead create stress and complications at the human level.[40]

As if by way of illustration, Grebin has to face the fact that the collective consciousness of the contemporary Soviet Union and its economic climate have moulded his son, Seva, into a man with little moral fibre and no respect for other people. Seva's philosophy smacks of classical liberalism, or at least of the way it is still sometimes understood in Central and Eastern Europe: as a philosophy of rationally justified selfishness. He believes that human character is by nature egotistical and ruled by the instinct of self-preservation. But he acknowledges that in the social context this must imply adaptability. 'Live and let live' is his motto; but its practical effects on the lives of Seva's relatives and friends fail to recommend it.

Grebin's thinking and experience lead him to a number of negative conclusions. The utopian principle is impracticable; rigid economic planning does not work; and the Marxist-Leninist ethos has failed because the young are self-centred and confused. The only positive principle Grebin sees which might help to restore the 'loss of community spirit' (*'razobshchennost'*) in modern society is philanthropy or disinterested kindness, the principle which Christ taught and which — according to Grebin — history has proved as the firmest and most permanent value.[41]

The other moral tenets which Tendriakov puts forward in the novel as prescriptions for social improvement are, appropriately, faith and hope: faith to sustain activity, hope in a brighter future for the next generation.[42] Faith, hope and charity — the principles taught by St Paul — form the foundation of Tendriakov's proposal for a pattern of moral values without reference to an objective Deity. Their purpose is to make a divided society whole again. It is God-building directed not at the masses who need emotional stimulation, but at the intelligentsia who require a more rational answer.

At a time when religious inferences could frequently be drawn from Soviet prose fiction, the above examples illustrate that religious themes were also

introduced to improve the moral climate and create a more efficient, stable and controlled collective.

If society and the sacred are identified in the way Durkheim suggests, then the group is protected and any attempt to question its authority is the infringement of a taboo. It must result in ostracism and, frequently, in death.[43] Within a totemic model, the separation between sacred and profane is complete. They are, as W. S. F. Pickering observes in his study of Durkheim, 'essentially worlds that are contained in watertight compartments'.[44] Sacred things, Durkheim writes, 'are those which are protected and isolated by prohibitions; profane things are those to which the prohibitions apply'.[45]

The suggestion by the 'new God-builders' that society remains a sacred thing, or the only absolute criterion for morality, reaffirmed the security and invulnerability of the state collective in relation to individual ambitions, needs or feelings. In that sense, the writers concerned were certainly appropriating religious tradition for ideological purposes. It could be argued more charitably, however, that this reflected a response to the spectre of chaos looming over a society and an empire with nothing but a shared past and the cracked shell of a common ideology to shield it from disintegration.

NOTES

1. Durkheim, 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life', in *Durkheim on Religion*, p. 132.
2. Ibid., p. 129.
3. A. Lunacharskii, *Religiia i sotsializm*. 2 vols (St Petersburg: [n. pub.], 1908; 1911). See Read, *Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia*, pp. 78–85.
4. M. Gor'kii, *Ispoved'* (St Petersburg: [n. pub.], 1907). Subsequent references are to: M. Gor'kii, *Ispoved'*, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 25-ti tomakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), IX.
5. Lenin's remark reads: 'To talk about Godseeking in order not to speak out against *any* devils and gods [. . .] but to give preference to a blue devil rather than a yellow one is a hundred times worse than not speaking at all. [. . .] Any religious idea, any idea about any little god, any flirtation with dear little god is unutterably vile.' V. I. Lenin, 'A. M. Gor'komu', *Sochineniia v 45-ti tomakh*, 4th edn. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1941–51), XXXV (1950), 89. See Wolfe, *Bridge and the Abyss*, pp. 43–53.
6. Gor'kii, *Ispoved'*, p. 322.
7. Ibid., p. 340.
8. Ibid., p. 342.
9. Ibid., pp. 347–48.
10. Ibid., pp. 385–89.
11. Ibid., p. 389.
12. Jeziorska, 'Report on Trip to Moscow', p. 16.
13. Petr Proskurin, *Sud'ba*, *Moskva* (1972: 8), pp. 11–117; (1972: 9), 12–145; (1972: 10), 11–114; (1972: 11), 12–126. Subsequent references are to: Proskurin, *Sud'ba*, *Sobranie sochinenii v 5-ti tomakh* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1983), IV. Petr Proskurin, *Imia tvoe*, *Moskva* (1977: 2), pp. 3–109; (1977: 3) 3–150; (1977: 4), 15–148; (1977: 5), 7–133. Subsequent references are to: Proskurin, *Imia tvoe*, *Sobranie sochinenii v 5-ti tomakh* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1983), V.
14. Proskurin, *Imia tvoe*, p. 630.
15. Proskurin, *Sud'ba*, p. 559.
16. Viktor Chalmaev, *Sotvorenie sud'by* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1983), pp. 272–73.
17. Proskurin, *Sud'ba*, p. 376.
18. Gor'kii, *Ispoved'*, p. 340.
19. Proskurin, *Imia tvoe*, p. 636.
20. Ibid., p. 649.
21. Ibid., pp. 582–83.

22. The 'single stream' (*'edinyi potok'*) interpretation of Russian history does not regard the Revolution as a leap into higher reality and tends to inflate the significance of pre-Revolutionary figures and events. It is well illustrated by Chalmaev's articles 'Velikie iskaniia' and 'Neizbezhnost'' (see Chapter 9). For controversies surrounding these, see Dunlop, *Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, p. 219–27.
23. Proskurin, *Imia tvoe*, pp. 267–83.
24. The artist Rostovtsev remarks: 'What a man can achieve in a single life is vast, incomprehensible; but it is also a part of nature. So she must be the way, she must be the purpose.' Proskurin, *Imia tvoe*, p. 40. Gor'kii, too, sees Nature as the all-embracing force that can and should rule men's lives. Gor'kii, *Ispoved'*, p. 389.
25. Proskurin, *Sud'ba*, p. 642.
26. According to Karl Popper's definition, 'historicism' is an approach which aims to discover the 'rhythms', 'patterns', 'laws', or 'trends' underlying the evolution of history. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, p. 3.
27. I. Kryvelev, 'Koketnichaia s bozhen'koi', *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 30 July 1986; V. Lakshin, 'Po pravde govoria', *Izvestiia*, 3–4 December 1986; E. Evtushenko, 'Istochnik nravstvennosti — kultura', *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 10 December 1986; 'Ne-kruglyi stol "LG": Paradoksy romana ili paradoksy vospriiatiia?', *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 15 October 1986.
28. Evgenii Pazukhin. 'Blagie namereniia', *Biulleten' khristianskoi obschchestvennosti*, No. 1–2 (1987) pp. 271–79 (Keston College Archive).
29. Chingiz Aitmatov, 'Tsena — zhizn'', *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 13 August 1986.
30. Compare Aitmatov, *Plakha, Novyi mir* (1986: 8), 104–19, with the conversation between Pilate and Ieshua Ga Notsri in M. Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita* (Frankfurt a.M.: Posev, 1969), p. 27–43.
31. Aitmatov, *Plakha, Novyi mir* (1986: 8), 114.
32. Ibid., *Novyi Mir* (1986: 6), 38.
33. O'Connor, *Politics of Soviet Culture*, p. 112.
34. Chingiz Aitmatov, 'Veriu v cheloveka: Nashi nravstvennye tsennosti', *Pravda*, 14 February 1987.
35. Chingiz Aitmatov, 'Learning to be Yourself', interview by Victoria Lavretskaya, *Soviet Weekly*, No. 2399, 6 February 1988.
36. Tendriakov touches on religious subject matter in a number of works, including *Chudotvornaia, Apostol'skaia komandirovka*, and *Zatmenie*. See Chapter 8.
37. Tendriakov writes of *'narushenie obshchnosti'* and *'razobshchennost''*. Tendriakov, *Pokushenie, Novyi mir* (1987: 4), 61. Gor'kii uses the term *'razobshchenie'*. Gor'kii, *Ispoved'*, p. 322.
38. Tendriakov, *Pokushenie, Novyi mir* (1987: 5), 121.
39. Ibid., p. 128.
40. Ibid., pp. 136–38.
41. Ibid., *Novyi mir* (1987: 4), 78–79; (1987: 5), 162–63. The novel culminates in Grebin's realization of the practical value which *'dobrota'* represents in society, through his observation of the moral instinct of his younger colleague, Misha.
42. Ibid., *Novyi mir* (1987: 5), 149, 164.
43. Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, p. 21.
44. W. S. F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 148.
45. Durkheim, 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life', in *Durkheim on Religion*, pp. 115, 117.

CHAPTER 11

A POLITICAL DICHOTOMY

The year of the Millennium of Christianity in Rus', 1988, began with the publication in *Novyi mir* of Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago*.[1] Within months, Varlam Shalamov, Andrei Siniavskii, Joseph Brodsky, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn were officially recognized as major contributors to the development of Soviet literature.[2] *Glasnost'* brought with it an explosion of multifarious voices and non-conformist views expressed in literature, the media, and in a new range of alternative religions and philosophies which began to make their appearance through informal groups (*'kruzhki'*) and on university campuses.[3] In the autumn, extracts from the New Testament were serialized in the journal *V mire knig*, along with the songs of the guitar poets, the diaries of Catherine the Great, and a who's who of Western rock music.[4] The Church was likewise enriched. The Millennium saw the return to the Russian Orthodox Church of the Optina Pustyn' Monastery, which had once so decisively affected the work of Dostoevskii and Tolstoi, and of part of the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev.[5] The restoration of religious monuments began in earnest and the presence of the Church hierarchy came to be felt increasingly at the cultural and, later, at the political level.

Speaking in London to commemorate the Millennium in July 1988, Archbishop Kirill of Smolensk and Viazma outlined the traditional and continuing penetration of religious ideas in Russian literature:

> The search of the sense and law of life, the aspiration to understand the eternal issues of [. . .] existence preoccupy the best artists of our time. These eminent prose-writers [. . .] and not [. . .] professional philosophers, raise deep philosophical issues, and today we feel very sharply the urgent need to solve them. [. . .]
>
> Russian literature has been always fed from Christian roots, and [. . .] contemporary literature is fed from the same roots.[6]

Archbishop Kirill's remarks are important less as literary analysis than for the association they make between Russian literature and Russian Christianity. This was perhaps the first public statement from a member of the Orthodox Church hierarchy drawing attention to the religious elements in contemporary as well as pre-Revolutionary Russian prose.

The lecture was not, and could not be, designed to take into account the many complexities of the subject. It ignored, for example, the questionable

theology of Aitmatov's use of Christian themes, and the more general problem of the political purpose to which religious, and particularly Christian, elements in recent Soviet writing had been put. It made no mention of non-Christian religious elements in contemporary fiction, and treated Aitmatov and Rasputin as descendants of the Russian literary tradition, which they are only in part. It did not refer to non-Russian writers who have also introduced Christian imagery or ideas into their work: the Armenian, Grant Matevosian, for instance; the Georgian, Otar Chiladze; or the Ukrainian, Oles' Honchar.[7]

Between the mid-1960s and 1988, religious motifs in Soviet fiction reflected a profound awareness of Russia's millennial past, and gave evidence of the persistence of traditional Christian values in the Soviet consciousness. Frequently these were combined with ideas descended from nineteenth-century Slavophilism. This is true, for example, of the notion of '*sobornost''*, which Sergei Bulgakov defined as 'the liberty in love which united believers'. The view that communality, or collectivity, is central to the character of Russian culture remained widespread among Orthodox Christians as among Marxists.[8]

As Soviet writers set themselves to 'dig' into personal and collective memory, they found a form of Christianity that was imbibed from literature and philosophy more often than from the Gospel scriptures.[9] Beyond that, they discovered the need to express a new kind of order that was less historical than metaphysical and political. Consider a remark made by Ernest Gellner in his introduction to Evans-Pritchard's *History of Anthropological Thought*:

> Two topics are very pervasive and conspicuous in modern thought in general, in the attempts of contemporary man to understand himself and his own situation: rationality and the state, our orderly thought and our orderly society. Rule-bound thought and a rule-bound polity, the overcoming of anarchy in ideas and in institutions: are they connected? [. . .] As we see ourselves so closely identified with reason and with political order, present or latent, it is also natural to look at the savage for enlightenment about the state of ignorance which prevailed when both reason and order were lacking, and as the clue to the acquisition or loss of legitimacy.[10]

There are several points worth comment here. One is the inherent human need to rationalize. 'If we look at all the intellectual undertakings of mankind, as far as they have been recorded all over the world,' Claude Lévi-Strauss writes, 'the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order.'[11] The religious urge is no different. Religion is a system of cosmic order: it gives shape to the world, to human experience and hopes. In so doing it may at times deform all three, as Rudolf Otto knew, for rationality itself is subject to psychological deviation. Vision can be distorted.[12] But where there is no order at all, or where that order does not stand up to the test of experience, the mind may be left with neither ballast nor substance.

The Soviet experiment of rationalizing the world in terms of class, history and the future had shown itself — by the 1960s — to be an unacknowledged

fiasco. When circumstances and censorship allowed, order had to be re-examined, new systems considered, new visions put forward. The process of re-ordering, re-rationalization, which prose of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s illustrates, cannot be divorced from politics. Religious themes in the literature of the period are to a significant degree aspects of political statements. The system of order which each of the writers examined proposes, touches upon geographical environment and society. It pertains to the condition of the state. This is true of Rasputin's view of the natural world as a conscious, living being abused by technology; Granin's suggestion that art should be taken into account as an independent, active, spiritual and social force; Tendriakov's statement that all dogma is socially destructive; and Proskurin's insistence that the national collective is the supreme value.

It was no coincidence that so many of the figures discussed in this study enjoyed high-ranking public positions under the Gorbachev administration. The Soviet leader had turned to the professional and creative intelligentsia for support in his transformation of a uniform political culture into something more diverse and Western in style.[13] In the late 1980s writers became the overt political figures they had been tacitly in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1986 Zalygin took up the post of editor at the influential literary journal *Novyi mir*.[14] Proskurin, in 1987, became chairman of the RSFSR Branch of the Soviet Cultural Foundation.[15] Rasputin was, in April 1990, appointed to Mikhail Gorbachev's inner cabinet, the Presidential Council (*'prezidentskii sovet'*).[16] Aitmatov, in 1990, took up the post of Ambassador to Luxemburg.[17]

It is also significant, returning to Gellner's remark, that in seeking to sketch out new systems of order, the writers of the period did so by looking away from the metropolis to the countryside and the 'simple' life, the unspoilt 'primitive' condition. Here they could more freely explore the experiences, cosmic systems and community relations of 'authentic' man. One might cite, for example, Viktor Astaf'ev's description in *Tsar'-ryba* ('King Fish', 1976) of a night by the open fire in the taiga. The narrator, mimetically drawn as a man from the city, has intimations of a primal and liberating link with the natural world:

> This is the freedom you experienced when your mind was not yet burdened by memory and you were scarcely even aware of yourself, sensing the world through your skin, familiarizing yourself with it through your eyes, clinging to the tree of life by the stem of that leaf which, at this rare moment of spiritual peace, you know yourself to be.[18]

Despite the greater polyphony which rural prose contributed to the Soviet novel, it also reflected yearning for a tranquil, harmonious, 'pastoral' existence. The significance of this, for the purposes of argument, is that idealization of the 'primitive' in the style of Rousseau and his descendants makes rural writing the more suitable for comparison with nineteenth-century anthropological theory.

Tylor's view of the primitive human being as an intelligent, rational, sensitive creature who made sense of the world by personalizing its various manifestations is close to Rasputin's, Belov's, Astaf'ev's, or Aitmatov's.

Similarly, the sociological view of a humanity formed by the beliefs and identity of the group, developed by Durkheim, has been traced back to Fustel de Coulanges's mid-nineteenth-century study of the effect of religious beliefs on the social structures of the ancient world (*The Ancient City*, 1864).[19] Fustel's view of religion as a determinant social factor underpinned the Western ideas which entered Russia in the late nineteenth century and would have made Durkheim a natural source for Soviet anthropologists and intellectuals. Parallels between Durkheim's views and those of latter-day collectivists need not surprise us.

Furthermore, Georgii Plekhanov's approach to religion — his extensive use of anthropological data; his references to Tylor's work and to totemism; his discourse with Sergei Bulgakov, Bogdanov, Tolstoi, Lunacharskii, Gor'kii and Frazer — would have given a revival of their ideas an acceptable credibility in the eyes of even the most conservative Soviet reader. The political and conceptual restructuring reflected in the fiction discussed here is couched in a tradition of Marxist-Leninist thought. It was a cautious intellectual revolution: a gradual expansion of the boundaries of dialectical materialism anticipating the political reform which followed in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Tylor's theory and Durkheim's were conditioned, of course, by European culture and a conceptual language which was traditionally ethnocentric. Like many Western interpretations of non-Western cultures, they may have little in common with the way economically undeveloped peoples understand the cosmos, as Wole Soyinka would be the first to point out.[20] They are likely to be more illustrative of our own cultural prejudice than of the nature of early religious cult. That, however, is less to the point. The way later Soviet writers depicted their own rural peoples was likewise coloured by a degree of culture, education, and, above all, urban experience. They, too, were 'outside' the primitive environment. They were 'civilized' people watching 'primitive' people, conscious of looking to their roots.

Parallels between the Soviet writer examining his more primitive counterpart to discover himself and define his politics, and the twentieth-century Latin American exploring his indigenous culture are also worth noting. The publication in Russian of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967; Russian edition, 1970) may have had considerable impact on the Soviet writing of the 1970s.[21] Márquez's introduction of folkloric 'magic' into a 'realistic' narrative came from an attitude to the supernatural ingrained in traditional Latin American culture. It is seen there as part and parcel of daily life. This may have encouraged the incorporation into literature of mythical or

ritual elements from indigenous sources. In the prose of Rasputin or Aitmatov, the 'marvellous' also became the 'ordinary'.

That said, the political motivation for change in the Latin American novel remains considerably bolder. Márquez is a radical social reformer. Alejo Carpentier — regarded as the initiator of 'magical realism' — was a committed revolutionary. Beside them, Soviet writing seems timid and conservative. Rasputin does not, like Márquez, through his literary method 'challenge the rules by which reality [...] [and] social existence is established and controlled'.[22] Nor do the other writers discussed here. It is still possible to read their work as a variation on the existing historicist model.

The animist-totemist dichotomy may offer a formula by which to draw a distinction between what is old and what is new in Soviet fiction published during the two decades before *glasnost'*. The socialist realist novel was essentially totemic in creating images of figures expressing the Revolutionary collective. Post-thaw prose challenged the totem by incorporating personalist, animist elements into its structure. But it also redefined the totem itself. God became less Revolutionary than national (consider Bondarev, Alekseev, Belov, Proskurin). Alternatively, he became a representation of a less militant, if still collectivist, society (as in some work by Aitmatov or Tendriakov).

In either case the change had bearing on the image of *homo sapiens* as a purely material or historical entity, on his role in nature and in the world community. But it also affected the novel as a *genre*. From being ideologically and stylistically homogeneous — 'monologic' in Bakhtin's language — it began to show signs of polyphonic range. This is true both of characterization and of the introduction of philosophical and religious models incompatible with Marxism-Leninism. The challenge was most boldly expressed in animist imagery, since the animist mode of thought has an inherently non-ideological and dialogic quality. It is multi-voiced in that it assumes from the start a dialogue between the self and at least one other (soul, spirit, God...). Totemism presupposes only a relationship between self and a determinant social mass under which the self is subsumed.

The reappearance of the dichotomy in officially published Soviet literature was an indicator of the return of dialogic or 'heteroglot' qualities in it.[23] As David Lodge has remarked: 'You cannot begin to write novels without having read at least one, and probably hundreds; without defining yourself in relationships of apprenticeship, discipleship, rivalry, and antagonism with precursors and peers.'[24] Once 'dialogue' is a feature of literature, it is impossible for new works to ignore it. And, that being so, the ground was laid in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s for voices in Soviet literature which had once challenged the monologism of socialist realism and been ostracized for it, to return and be heard.

Glasnost' offered people their fill of much that they had already tasted either in offical literature or in *samizdat*: satire, history, sex, and religion. But the

curious literary discourse which had been taking place for decades between ideology and liberalism now gave way to a convulsive row. Historical revelations and previously unpublished literature surfaced at a rate which left readers breathless. New creative writing froze. 'There is no literature now', the critic Vladimir Lakshin remarked at the New Beginnings Arts Festival in Glasgow in 1989. 'The clock is running wild. [. . .] We can't keep up. There are too many nervous impulses. A writer disposed to philosophize and probe cannot work under such conditions. He can only respond to these frenzied rhythms like a sensitive membrane. He might transmit them, but he cannot explore their more profound significance.'[25]

Literary energy was dissipated; the élite identity of writers throughout the political spectrum had been displaced. The dissenting underground had lost its niche. The establishment felt mortally threatened by the changes. Younger writers were still said to be looking for ideas in which to couch their work; their development was not encouraged by the Writers' Union monopoly of large-scale publishing. Out of the profusion of voices the conservative force in literature spoke out most volubly and coherently. Calls from Bondarev and other prominent hardliners in the Union for consensus — a return to political and literary monologue — were duly answered by Gennadii Ianaev and his Emergency Committee in the coup of August 1990.

The coup failed; the Soviet Union collapsed and with it the paradigm which had shaped Russian literature — official and dissenting — for more than seven decades. The arts lost the semi-sacral status they had held as purveyors of the ideological myth and of non-conformist or dissenting counter-myths created not just in emigration or in *samizdat*, but in Soviet literature itself.[26]

The loss of direction and of any heroic ideal which literature in Russia appears to have undergone since then has been lamented in many quarters.[27] In August 1993, the writer and critic Viktor Erofeev was reported as saying that Russian literature had come to doubt 'everything without exception: love, children, faith, the Orthodox Church, culture, nobility, beauty, motherhood, folk wisdom. [. . .] Its scepticism has grown with time. This is a double reaction to savage Russian reality and the excessive moralising of Russian culture.'[28]

What then of the belief culture which sustained Russia for centuries, the community of 'right believers' which Berdiaev depicted in *Russkaia ideia* (The Russian Idea, 1946) when he wrote that 'Rus' is where true belief is'?[29] The urge to recover belief has been reflected in the resurgence of Russian national ideals and — at the popular level — in the astounding level of support given to the irredentist policies of Vladimir Zhirinovskii's misleadingly named Liberal Democratic Party in the December 1993 election. Meanwhile, the intellectual élite has continued to contribute towards the creation of an apolitical, 'alternative' literature aspiring to 'create spiritual values' and 'a new literary language'.[30] Journals such as *Vestnik novoi literatury* and *Glas*, or the less well

publicized *Solo* and *Mitin zhurnal*, are providing platforms for serious young writers with a low market value in a country where reading has lost its attraction in favour of videos, fruit machines and business.[31]

But doom-laden prophecies of the total demise of Russian literature have not gone unchallenged. The novels nominated for the 1993 Russian Booker Prize prompted one of its judges to remark that 'Russian fiction is alive and well, indeed flourishing in a greater variety of shapes and sizes than ever before.'[32] The range of voices, which has succeeded what Evgenii Zamiatin once called the 'unanimous *Te Deum*' of Soviet writing, may yet prove to be fertile ground for literary achievement and innovation.[33]

Under unprecedented political conditions there are indications that a new dichotomy is emerging in Russian fiction: not between animist and totemic visions nourished by a time-honoured yearning for faith, but between the writing of a belief culture and of one affected by the 'virus' of Western scepticism.[34] If in the past Russian literature has grappled with the tension between two kinds of belief — 'religious' and 'ideological' — this is now being transposed into a tension between adherence to some kind of system of cosmic order or ideological model (old or new), and the literary demolition of the principle of order itself. The first proceeds from what Erofeev has called the 'hypermoralistic' tradition of Russian literature, which includes Tolstoi and Dostoevskii as well as Proskurin or Belov.[35] It is reflected, for example, in Leonid Latynin's *Spiashchii vo vremia zhatvy* ('Sleeper at Harvest Time', 1991), an ambitious mythological epic depicting a thousand years of Russian history and a twenty-first century apocalypse.[36] The other tendency in recent writing (represented most prominently, perhaps, by Vladimir Sorokin and Viktor Erofeev) depicts a senseless and purposeless world dominated by images of the grotesque and of human estrangement.[37] It is a literature governed by the rediscovery of the potential of language rather than by an urge to historical, moral or cosmic construction. It may be presumptuous to predict that the two directions reveal a burgeoning new dichotomy in Russian literature, although some of the evidence is persuasive. For the present, however, it must suffice to say that if 1988 was the year in which religion, Christianity in particular, became a feature of Soviet public life, it was also the year when in Soviet literature voices from the past and from the outside world came flooding home to confirm that, thankfully, nothing conclusive or irreparable had yet taken place in the shape and history of literary discourse.

NOTES

1. See Chapter 2, note 136.
2. See 'Index/Index: USSR', *Index on Censorship*, vol. 17, No. 2 (1988) p. 41; vol. 17, No. 6 (1988) p. 41; vol. 18. No. 9 (1989) p. 41; vol. 18, No. 10 (1989) p. 41; vol. 19, No. 6 (1990), p. 43.

3. Howard L. Parsons, 'Moral and spiritual changes in the last years of the Soviet Union', *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 12, No. 6, December 1992, pp. 35–36; vol. 13, No. 1, February 1993, p. 1.
4. Hosking and Graffy, *Culture and the Media*, p. 136; '*Novyi zavet*', ed. by S. S. Averintsev, *V mire knig* (1988: 11), 23–32; (1988: 12), 25–31.
5. Helen Bell and Jane Ellis, 'The Millennium Celebrations of 1988 in the USSR', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 16, No. 4 (1988) pp. 296, 301.
6. Kirill of Smolensk, 'Russian Orthodox Life', p. 7.
7. Matevosian, 'My i nashi gory'; Otar Chiladze, *Shel po doroge chelovek*, Russian trans. by E. Ananiashvili (Tbilisi: [n. pub.], 1985); Oles' Hochar, *Sobor* (Kiev: Radians'kii pis'mennik, 1968).
8. Parsons, 'Moral and spiritual changes', *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 2–3.
9. Bibles were very scarce in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. See Walter Sawatsky, 'Bibles in Eastern Europe since 1945', *Religion in Communist Lands*, Supplementary Paper No. 3, 2 January 1975, pp. 12–15, 18; Keston College, 'Bibles in the Soviet Union', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 17, No. 3 (1989), pp. 257–63.
10. Ernest Gellner, 'Introduction' in Evans-Pritchard, *Anthropological Thought*, p. xiv.
11. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 12–13.
12. Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 26–27. See also Chapter 1, p. 13.
13. Tucker, *Political Culture*, pp. 162–63, 167–69, 171, 178.
14. Garrard, *Soviet Writers' Union*, p. 209.
15. Announced Radio Moscow 2, 19.30, 27 June 1987.
16. Gerald Mikkelson, 'Valentin Rasputin's Siberian Patriotism', paper delivered at IVth World Congress of Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate (1990), p. 8.
17. Riitta Pittman, 'Writers and Politics under Gorbachev', unpublished paper delivered at St Antony's College, Oxford, 18 February 1991.
18. Viktor Astaf'ev, *Tsar'-ryba, Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1981), IV, 8.
19. Numa-Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, trans. by Willard Small (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1916). See Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, pp. 50–51.
20. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976; Canto edition, 1990), pp. 33–34.
21. A. Bocharov, *Chem zhiva literatura*, p. 18; Clark, *Soviet Novel*, 2nd edn (1985), p. 267; E. Starikova, 'Zhit' i pomnit'', *Novyi mir* (1977: 11), 244.
22. William Rowe, 'Gabriel García Márquez', in *Modern Latin American Fiction: A Survey*, ed. by John King (London: Faber, 1987), pp. 192–93.
23. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 293, quoted in David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 95.
24. Lodge, *After Bakhtin*, p. 12.
25. Irena Maryniak, 'Writing as the Clock Runs Wild', *Independent*, 24 August 1991.
26. Hosking and Graffy, *Culture and the Media*, p. 5.
27. Marsh, 'Death of Soviet Literature', pp. 122–23.
28. Mark Frankland, 'Beware the Russian bear on the loose', *Observer Review*, 1 August 1993, p. 42.
29. Tucker, *Political Culture*, pp. 116, 207–09.
30. Marsh, 'Death of Soviet Literature', p. 134.
31. Michael Molnar, 'Writers without a market', and Denis Novikov, 'Street-wise, post-literate and running wild', *Index on Censorship*, vol. 22, No. 10, December 1993, pp. 11, 36.
32. Geoffrey Hosking, 'Booker comes to Russia', Ibid., p. 9.
33. Quoted in *Gorbachev and Perestroika*, ed. by Martin McCauley (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 207.
34. The word 'virus' belongs to Lévi-Strauss. See Pace, *Lévi-Strauss*, p. 200.
35. Viktor Erofeev, 'Pominki po sovetskoi literature', *Glas*, No. 1 (1991), p. 229.
36. Leonid Latynin, *Spiashchii vo vremia zhatvy, Moskovskii zhurnal*, Nos 1 and 2 (1991). Extract in *Glas*, No. 1 (1991), pp. 118–35.
37. See contents of *Glas*, No. 2 (1991).

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INDEX

The book presents an original, interdisciplinary analysis of religious and mythological perspectives in fiction published in the Soviet Union between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s. In doing so it points to ways in which anthropological theory can be used as a framework for literary criticism. It also shows how, in the two decades before *perestroika*, religion and mythology served as alternative models for the intellectual and political reorientation of Soviet society.

Selected works are explored with reference to a formative debate in anthropological studies on the nature and development of religion, based on Edward B. Tylor's theory of 'animism' and Émile Durkheim's theory of 'totemism'. It is shown how the animist/totemist dichotomy is reflected in Russian religious thought and in the literature of the Soviet period. Novels by Valentin Rasputin, Chabua Amiredzhibi, Daniil Granin, Chingiz Aitmatov, and Vladimir Tendriakov are discussed in the light of a range of mythological and religious systems. The study also shows how Durkheim's theory of religion and group identity can be related to the ideas of the Russian nationalist writers Iurii Bondarev, Sergei Alekseev, and Vasilii Belov, and suggests that examples of fiction by Petr Proskurin, Aitmatov, and Tendriakov indicate revived interest in the God-building theories of Gor'kii and Lunacharskii.

In conclusion, the book argues that subtextual religious and mythological narratives in Soviet fiction between 1964 and 1988 provided a model for new literary discourse under *perestroika* and for subsequent political transformations.